

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

On the Meaning of Life

GA 155

Lecture 1

Lecture 2

Lecture 1: Growth, Decay, Reincarnation

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In these two lectures I should like to speak to you from the point of view of Spiritual Research, on the question so frequently and urgently put: "What is the meaning of life?" If in these two evenings we are to get anywhere near this subject we shall have to create first of all a kind of foundation or basis, on which to construct the edifice of knowledge, and from this deduce the answer in outline.

When we contemplate the things around us, those which exist for our ordinary sense-perception and our ordinary experience, and then turn to our own life, the result is at best the formulation of a question — the presentation of an oppressive, a painful problem. We see how the beings of external nature arise and decay. We can observe every year in spring how the earth, stimulated by the forces of the sun and the universe, bestows on us the plants which sprout and bud and bear fruit through the summer. Towards autumn, we see how they decay and pass away. Some remain indeed throughout the year, some for very many years, for instance, our long-lived trees. But of these also we know that even though in many cases they may outlive us, they also pass away at last, disappear and sink down into that which, in the great world of nature, is the realm of the lifeless. Especially do we know that even in the greatest phenomena of nature there rules this growth and decay: even the continents on which our civilisations develop did not exist in times past, for they have only risen in the course of time, and we know for certain that they will one day pass away.

Thus we see around us growth and decay; we can trace it in the plant kingdom and in the mineral kingdom as well as in the animal kingdom. What is the meaning of it all? Ever an arising, ever a passing away all around us! What is the meaning of this arising and this passing away? When we consider our own life, and see how we have lived through years and decades, we can recognise there also this coming into being and decay. When we call to mind the days of our childhood: they are vanished and only the memory of them remains. This stirs within us anxious questionings about life. The most important thing is that we ourselves have progressed a little through it, that we have become wiser. Usually, however, it is only when we have accomplished something, that we know how it ought to have been done. If we are no longer in a position to do a thing better, we still know how much better it might have been done, so that actually our mistakes become a part of our life; but it is just through our mistakes and errors that we gain our widest experiences.

A question is put to us, and it seems as if that which we can grasp with our senses and our intellect is unable to answer it. That is the position of man to-day; all that surrounds him confronts him with the problem, with the question: "What is the meaning of existence as a whole?" and particularly "Why has man his peculiar position within this existence?"

An extremely interesting legend of Hebrew antiquity tells us that in those old Hebrew times there was a consciousness that this anxious question which we formulated as to the meaning of life, and especially as to the meaning of man, occurs not only to man, but to beings quite other than man. This legend is extremely instructive and runs as follows: — When the Elohim were about to create man after their own image and likeness, the so-called ministering angels, certain spiritual beings of a lower grade than the Elohim themselves, asked Jahve or Jehovah: "Why is man to be made in the image and likeness of God!" Then Jehovah collected — so continues the legend — the animals and the plants which could already spring forth on earth before man was there in his earthly form, and He gathered together the angels also, the so-called ministering angels — those who immediately served Him. To those He showed the animals and plants and asked them what they were called, what were their names? But the Angels did not know the names of the animals and plants. Then man was created, as he was before the Fall. And again Jehovah gathered around him Angels, animals and plants, and in the presence of the Angels he asked man what the animals whom He made to pass by in succession before man's eyes, were called, what their names were. And behold! Man was able to answer: "This animal has this name, that animal has that, this plant has this name, that plant has that," Then Jehovah asked man: "And what is thine own name?" And man said: "I must be called Adam." (Adam is related to Adama, and means: "Out of the earth: earth-being"). Jehovah then asked man: "And what am I myself to be called?" "Thou shalt be called Adonai," man replied, "Thou art the Lord of all created beings of the earth." The Angels now began to have an idea of the meaning of man's existence on the earth. Though religious tradition and religious writings often express the most important riddle of life in the simplest way, there are many difficulties in understanding them, because we have to get behind their simplicity. We must first penetrate into the meaning behind them. If we succeed in this, great wisdom and deep knowledge are revealed. It may well be so with this legend, which we shall just keep in mind for a moment, for these two lectures will give us, in some sort, an answer to the question which it contains.

Now you know that there is a religion which has put the question as to the meaning and value of life by placing it in a wonderful form into the mouth of its own founder. You all know the story of the Buddha, how it tells us that when he left the palace in which he was born, and came face to face with the real facts of life, of which in that incarnation he had as yet learned nothing, he was most profoundly dismayed, and pronounced the judgment: "Life is suffering," which as we know comprises the four statements: "Birth is suffering — disease is suffering — old age is suffering — death is suffering," and to which is added "to be united with those we do not love is suffering, to be separated from those we love is suffering, not to be able to attain that to which we aspire is suffering." We know then that to the adherents of this religion the meaning of life can be summed up by saying: "Life, which is suffering, only acquires a meaning when it is conquered, when it transcends itself." All the various religions, all philosophies and views of life, are, after all, attempts to answer the question as to the meaning of life. Now, we are not going to approach the question in an abstract, philosophical way. Rather we shall review some of the phenomena of life, some of the facts of life, from the point of view of Spiritual Science, in order to see if a deeper occult view of life furnishes us with something wherewith to approach this question as to the meaning of life. Let us take the matter up again at the point we have already touched — the annual growth and decay in physical nature, the life, growth and decay in the plant world. In Spring we see the plants spring up out of the earth, and that which we see there as germinating, budding life, calls forth our joy and delight. We become aware that the whole of our existence is bound up with the plant world, for without it we could not exist. We feel how that which springs up out of the earth at the approach of Summer is related to our own life. We feel in the Autumn how that which in a certain sense belongs to us, again decays.

It is natural for us to compare with our own life that which we see germinating and decaying. For an external observation based only on what can be perceived by the senses and judged by the intellect, it is very natural to compare the vernal springing up of the plants with, let us say, man's

awakening in the morning; and the withering and decaying of the plant world in Autumn with man's falling asleep at night. But such a comparison is quite superficial. It would leave out of account the real events with which we can already become acquainted through the elementary truths of occultism. What happens when we fall asleep at night? We have learned that we leave our physical and etheric bodies behind in bed. With our astral body and our ego we withdraw from our physical body and etheric body. During the night, from the moment of our falling asleep to the moment of our waking, we are with our astral body and our ego in a spiritual world. From this spiritual world we draw the forces which we require. Not only our astral body and our ego, but our physical and etheric bodies go through a kind of restorative process during our sleep at night, when the latter lie in bed, separated from the astral body and ego.

When one looks clairvoyantly down from the ego upon the astral, the etheric and physical bodies, one sees what has been destroyed by waking life; one sees that that which finds its expression in fatigue, is present as a destructive process and is made good during the night. The whole conscious life of the daytime is in fact, if we look at it in its connection with human consciousness and in its relation to the physical and etheric bodies, a kind of destructive process as regards the physical and etheric bodies. We always destroy something by it, and the fact that we destroy expresses itself in our fatigue. That which is destroyed is made good again at night.

Now if we look at what happens when we have withdrawn our astral body and our ego out of the etheric and physical bodies, it is as if we had left behind us a devastated field. But in the moment we are out of them, out of the physical and etheric bodies, they begin gradually to restore themselves. It is as if the forces belonging to the physical and etheric bodies begin to bud and blossom, and as if an entire vegetation should arise on the scene of destruction. The further night advances and the longer sleep lasts, the more do the forces in the etheric body bud and blossom. The nearer morning approaches and the more we re-enter our physical and etheric bodies with our astral body, the more a kind of withering or drying up sets in as regards the physical and etheric bodies.

In short, when the ego and the astral body look down from the spiritual world on the physical and etheric bodies, they see at night, at the moment of falling asleep, the same phenomenon which we see in the great world outside, when the plants bud and germinate in Spring. Therefore, to make a real comparison, we must compare our falling asleep and the earlier part of the sleep condition at night with Spring in nature; and the time of our awakening, the time in which the ego and the astral body begin to re-enter the physical and etheric bodies, with Autumn, in external nature. Spring corresponds to our falling asleep and Autumn to our awakening.

But how does the matter stand, when the occult observer, he who really can look into the spiritual world, directs his gaze to external nature and watches what takes place there in the course of the year? That which then presents itself to the occult vision teaches us that we must not compare things in an outward, but in an inward way. Occult observation shows that just as the physical and etheric bodies of man are connected with his astral body and his ego, so is there connected with our earth what we call the spiritual part of the earth. The earth also must be compared with a body, a widespread body. If we consider it only as far as its physical part is concerned, it is just as if we were to consider man with regard to his physical body only. We consider the earth completely when we consider it as the body of spiritual beings, in the same way in which, in the case of man, we consider the spirit as being connected with the body, yet there is a distinction. Man has a single nature controlling his physical and etheric bodies; a single psycho-spiritual nature belongs to that which is his physical human body and etheric human body. But there are a great many spirits belonging to the Earth-body. What in man's psycho-spiritual nature is a unity, is, as regards that of the earth, a multiplicity. This is the chief distinction. With the exception of this difference everything else is in a certain way analogous. To occult vision is revealed how in the same measure as green plants come

forth from the earth in Spring, those spirits whom we call the earth-spirits, withdraw from the earth. Only here again they do not, as is the case with man, absolutely leave the earth; they move round it, they pass in a certain way to the other side of the earth. When it is Summer in one hemisphere it is Winter in the other. In the case of the earth, the spiritual part moves from the northern to the southern hemisphere when Summer is approaching in the north. But that does not alter the fact that to the occult vision of a man who experiences the Spring on any given part of the globe, the spirits leave the earth; he sees how they rise and pass out into the cosmos. He does not see them move to the other side, but he sees them go away, in the same way as he sees the ego and the astral body leave man at the moment of his falling asleep. In the Autumn the earth-spirits approach and re-unite themselves with the earth. During the Winter, when the earth is covered with snow, the earth-spirits are directly united with the earth. In fact something similar then begins for the earth to what is found in man: a kind of self-consciousness. During the Summer the spiritual part of the earth knows nothing of what goes on around it in the universe. But in Winter the spirit of the earth knows what is happening in the universe around, just as man, on waking, knows and beholds what is taking place around him.

The analogy is thus complete, only it is the reverse of that which the outer consciousness draws. It is true that if we wish to go into the question fully, we cannot simply say: "When, in Spring, plants bud and spring from the earth, the earth spirits go away," for with the budding and sprouting of plants there arise, as if out of the depths, out of the interior of the earth, other and mightier spirits. Therefore the mythologies were right when they distinguished between the higher and the nether gods. When man spoke of the gods who left the earth in Spring and returned in Autumn, he spoke of the higher gods. But there were mightier, older, gods, called by the Greeks the Chthonic gods. These arise in Summer when everything is budding and flourishing, and they descend again when in Winter the real earth spirits unite with the body of the earth.

Now, I should here like to mention that a certain idea, taken from scientific and occult research, is of immense importance for human life. For this shows us that when we consider the individual human being, we have really before us something like an image of the great Earth-being itself. What do we see when we turn towards plants which are beginning to sprout and bud? We see exactly the same as takes place in man when his inner life is active, we see how the one exactly corresponds to the other. How single plants are related to the human body, what their significance is for the human body, can only be recognised when such connections are understood. For it is in fact true that, on close examination, one sees how, when man falls asleep, everything begins to sprout and bud in his physical and etheric bodies: how a whole vegetation springs up in him: how man is in reality a tree or a garden in which plants are growing.

Whoever follows this with occult vision sees that the sprouting and germinating within man corresponds to what is germinating and budding in nature without. Thus you can form an idea of what will be possible when, in the future, Anthroposophy — often considered as foolishness to-day — is applied to life and made fruitful. We have for example, a man who has something wrong in his bodily life-activities. Let us now observe, when he falls asleep, what kind of plants are wanting when his physical and etheric bodies begin to develop their vegetation. When we see that on earth whole species of plants are missing, we know that something must be wrong with the life of the earth. And it is the same with the deficiency of certain plants in the physical and etheric bodies of man. In order to make good the defect we have only to seek on the earth for the plants which are missing in the man in question, and introduce their juices either in the form of diet or medicine and then we shall find the relation between medicine and disease. From this example, we see how Anthroposophy or Spiritual Science will intervene directly in life, but we are only at the beginning of these things.

In what I have just said I have given you, in a comparison drawn from nature, some idea of the composition of man and the connection of his whole being with the environment in which he is placed. We shall now look at the matter from a spiritual point of view. Here I would like to call attention to a matter that is of great importance, namely, that our anthroposophical outlook on life, while letting its gaze range over the evolution of mankind from the point of view of occultism, in order to decipher the meaning of existence, gives no preference to any one special creed, or any one view of life over any other. How often has it been emphasised in our occult movement that we can point to that which our earthly humanity experienced and developed immediately after the great Atlantean catastrophe — the Flood. We passed through, as the first great post-Atlantean civilisation, the sacred civilisation of Ancient India. Here, at Copenhagen, we have already spoken of this old sacred Indian civilisation, and we laid stress upon the fact that it was so lofty, that that which has survived in the Vedas or in written tradition is only an echo of it. It is only in the Akashic Records that we can catch glimpses of the primeval teachings that issued from that time. There we gaze on heights which have not been re-attained.

The later epochs had quite a different mission. We know that a descent has taken place since then, but we know also that there will be again an ascent and that, as already mentioned, Anthroposophy or Spiritual Science has to prepare this ascent. We know that in the seventh post-Atlantean age of civilisation, there will be a kind of renewal of the ancient, holy Indian civilisation. We do not give preference to any religious view or creed, for all are measured with the same measure, in every particular they are described: in each the kernel of truth is sought.

The important thing is that essentials be kept in view. We must not allow ourselves to stray in the consideration of the nature of each separate creed, and if we keep this in mind, in approaching the various points of view, we find one fundamental difference. We find views on life which are of a more oriental nature, and others which have permeated our Western civilisation. Once we make this clear to ourselves, we have something which throws light on the meaning of existence. We then find that the ancients were already in possession of something which we have to regain with difficulty, viz., the doctrine of reincarnation. The oriental stream possessed this as something springing from the profoundest depths of existence. You can still realise how the oriental mind shapes the whole of life from this doctrine, when you look at the relation of the oriental to his Bodhisattvas and his Buddhas. If you keep in view how little it concerns the oriental to select a single figure with this or that definite name, as the ruling power in human evolution, you see at once how he attaches much more importance to tracing the individuality which goes on from life to life. Orientals say that there are such and such a number of Bodhisattvas, high beings who have sprung from men, but who have gradually evolved to a height which we can describe by saying: A Being has passed through many incarnations, and then has become a Bodhisattva, as did Gautama, the son of King Sudhodana. He was Bodhisattva and became Buddha. The name Buddha, however, is given to many, because they passed through many incarnations, became Bodhisattva, and then ascended to the next higher stage, that of Buddhahood. The name Buddha is a generic name. It denotes a degree of human attainment, and has no sense apart from the spiritual being who goes through many incarnations. Brahmanism fully agrees with Buddhism in regarding the individual who goes through the different personalities, rather than the single person. It comes to the same whether the Buddhist says: — "A Bodhisattva is destined to ascend to the highest degree of human attainment, and for this he has to go through many incarnations; but for me the highest is the Buddha." Or whether the adherent of Brahmanism says: "The Bodhisattvas are indeed highly developed beings, who ascend to Buddhahood, but they are inferior to the Avatars, who are higher spiritual individualities." You see, consideration of the persisting spiritual entity is what characterises both these oriental points of view.

But now let us turn to the West, and see what is the thing of greatest importance there. In order to enter a little more deeply into this connection, we must consider the ancient Hebrew point of view, where the personal element enters. When we speak of Plato, of Socrates, of Michelangelo, of Charlemagne, or of others, we are always speaking of a person: we place before men the separate life of the personality with all that this personality has done for mankind. In our Western life we do not direct our attention to the life which has gone from personality to personality, for it has been the mission of Western civilisation to direct attention for a time to the single life. When in the East the Buddha is spoken of, it is understood that the designation "Buddha" is an honourable title which may be applied to many personalities. When, on the contrary, the name "Plato" is uttered, we know that this refers only to a single personality. This has been the education of the West.

Let us now turn to our own day. In Western civilisation, mankind has been trained for a time to direct his attention to the personality, but the individual element, the "individuality" has now to be added to the personal element. We stand now at the point where we must reconquer the individual element, but strengthened, vivified, by the contemplation of the personal.

Let us take a definite case. In this connection we look back to the old Hebrew civilisation, which preceded that of the West. Let us turn our attention to the mighty personality of the prophet Elijah. To begin with, we may describe him as a personality. In the West he is seldom regarded in any other way. If we leave aside details and look at the personality from a wider point of view, we see that Elijah was something very important for our evolution. He gives the impression of a forerunner of the Christ-Impulse.

On looking back to the time of Moses, we see how something had been proclaimed to the people; we see that the God in man was proclaimed. "I AM the God Who was, Who is, Who is to come." He has to be comprehended as in the ego, but among the ancient Hebrews He was comprehended as the Folk-soul of the race. Elijah went beyond Moses, though he did not make clear that the ego dwells in the single human individual as Divinity, for he could not make clear to the people of his time more than the world was then able to receive. While even the Mosaic Culture of the old Hebrews was conscious of the fact that "the Highest lies in the Ego," and that this Ego found expression in the time of Moses in the Group-Soul of the people, we find Elijah already pointing to the individual human soul. We see a forward leap in evolution. But a further impulse was needed, and again a forerunner appeared, whom we know as the personality of John the Baptist. Once more it was in a significant expression that the quality of John the Baptist as a "Forerunner" found expression. A great occult fact is here indicated that man, as primeval man, once possessed ancient clairvoyance, so that he could look into the spiritual world — into Divine activity — but he gradually approached towards materialism; the vision of the spiritual world was cut off. To this fact John the Baptist alludes when he says: "Change the attitude of your soul; look no longer at what you can gain in the physical world: be watchful, a new impulse is at hand (he means the Christ-Impulse). Therefore I say unto you, seek the spiritual world that is in your midst; there the spiritual element appears with the Christ-Impulse." Through this saying John the Baptist became a forerunner of the Christ-Impulse.

Now we can direct our gaze to another personality, to the remarkable personality of the painter Raphael. This remarkable personality presents itself to us in an unusual way. In the first place, we need only compare Raphael to — let us say — Titian, a painter of a later period. Whoever has an eye for such things, even if he look at the reproductions, will find the distinction. Look at the pictures of Raphael and at those of Titian! Raphael painted in such a way that he put Christian ideas into his pictures. He painted for the people of Europe as Christians of the West. His pictures are comprehensible to all Christians of the West, and will become so more and more. Take, on the other hand, the later painters. They painted almost exclusively for the Latin race, so that even the schisms of the Church found expression in their pictures.

With which pictures was Raphael most successful? With those in which he was able to demonstrate the impulses that lie in Christianity. He is at his best where he could represent some relationship of the Jesus-Child to the Madonna, where this Christ-relation appears as something that is an impulse to feeling. These are the things which he really painted best. We have for instance, no Crucifixion of his, but we have a Transfiguration. Wherever he can paint the budding and germinating aspect, that which is self-revealing, he paints with joy and there he paints his greatest and best pictures.

It is the same with the impression which his pictures produce. If some day you come to Germany and see the Sistine Madonna in Dresden, you will realise that that work of art — of which it is said that the Germans may rejoice to have such a celebrated picture among them, Yes! that they may even regard it as the flower of the painters' art — you will realise that this work discloses a mystery of existence.

When Goethe in his time traveled from Leipsic to Dresden, he heard something quite different about the picture of the Madonna. The officials of the Dresden Gallery said something like this to him: "We have also a picture of Raphael's, but it is nothing particular. It is badly painted. The look of the Child, the whole Child itself, everything to do with the Child, is common. The same with the Madonna. One can only think that she is painted by a dauber. And then these figures down below of which one does not know whether they are meant for children's heads or angels!" Goethe heard this coarse opinion, so that at first he had no right appreciation of the picture. Everything which we hear about the picture at the present time only came to be understood later on, and the fact that Raphael's pictures made their triumphal march through the world in reproductions, is a result of this better appreciation. We have only to call to mind what England has done for the reproduction and circulation of these pictures. But what was effected in England by the trouble which has been taken for the reproduction and circulation of Raphael's pictures, will only be recognised when people have learned to look at the matter from the point of view of spiritual science.

Thus through his pictures, Raphael becomes for us the forerunner of a Christianity which will be cosmopolitan. Protestantism has long regarded the Madonna as specially Catholic; but to-day the Madonna has penetrated everywhere into Protestant countries and we are rising more to the occult interpretation, to a higher inter-denominational Christianity. So it will be more and more. If we may hope for such results as regards interdenominational Christianity, what Raphael has done will also help us in Anthroposophy.

It is remarkable that the above three personalities confront us in this manner: all three have the quality of being forerunners of Christianity. Now let us direct occult observation to these three persons. What does it teach us? It teaches us that the same individuality lived in Elijah, in John the Baptist and in Raphael. However impossible it may seem, it is the same soul which lived in Elijah and in Raphael.

When it is revealed to occult vision — which searches and investigates and does not merely compare in a superficial way — that it is the same soul that is present in Elijah, in John the Baptist and in Raphael, we may ask how it is possible that Raphael the painter becomes the vehicle for the individuality which lived in John the Baptist? One can conceive that this remarkable soul of John the Baptist lived in the forces which were present in Raphael.

Occult research comes in here again, not merely to put forth theories, but to tell us how things actually are in life. How do people write biographies of Raphael to-day? Even the best are so written that they simply state that Raphael was born on Good Friday of the year 1483. It is not for nothing that Raphael was born on a Good Friday. This birth already proclaimed his exceptional position in

Christianity and shows that in the deepest and most significant way he was connected with the Christian Mysteries. It was on a Good Friday that Raphael was born. His father was Giovanni Santi. He died when Raphael was eleven years old. At the age of eight years his father sent him as a pupil to a painter, who was, however, not of any special eminence. But if one realises what was in Giovanni Santi, Raphael's father, one gets a peculiar impression which is further strengthened when the matter is investigated in the Akashic Records. There it appears that there lived in the soul of Giovanni Santi much more than could be expressed in his personality and then we can agree with the duchess, who at his death said: "A man full of light and truth and fervent faith has died." As occultist, one can say that in him there lived a much greater painter than appeared outwardly. The outer faculties, which depend on the physical and etheric organs, were not developed in Giovanni Santi. That was the original cause why he could not bring the capacities of his soul to full expression; but really a great painter lived in him.

Giovanni Santi died when Raphael was eleven years old. If we now follow what takes place, we see that man certainly loses his body, but that the longings, the aspirations, the impulses of his soul continue to exist, and continue to be active where they are most closely connected.

There will come a time when Anthroposophy will be made fruitful for life, as it can already be made fruitful by those who have grasped it vitally and not merely theoretically. Permit me here to interpolate something before going on with Raphael. What I tell you in the examples I give is not mere speculation; on the contrary, it is always taken from real life. Let us suppose that I had children to educate. Whoever pays attention to the capabilities of children can notice the individual element in every child, but such experiences can only be made by those who educate children. Now if one of the parents of a child dies while the child is still young and the other parent is still living, the following may be noticed: Certain inclinations will show themselves in the child which were not there before and which consequently cannot be explained. But one who has charge of children has to occupy himself with these things. Such a one would do well if he said: "People generally look upon what is in Anthroposophical books as mere folly: I will not take this for granted, but will try whether it is right or not." Then he will soon be able to say "I find forces at work which were already there and again there are other forces playing into those which were already there." Let us suppose that the father has passed through the gates of death and there now appears in the child, with some strength, certain qualities which had belonged to the father. If this assumption is made and if the matter is looked upon in this way, the knowledge which comes to us through Anthroposophy is applied to life in a sensible way, and then, as is soon discovered, we find our way in life, whereas before we did not. Thus the person who has gone through the gateway of death, remains united, through his forces, with those with whom he was connected in life. People do not observe things closely enough, otherwise they would see more often that children are quite different before the death of their parents from what they are afterwards. At present there is not enough regard for these things, but the time is coming when they will receive attention.

Giovanni Santi, the father, died when Raphael was eleven years old; he had not been able to attain great perfection as a painter, but powerful imagination was left to him and this was then developed in the soul of Raphael. We do not depreciate Raphael, if, while observing his soul, we say: Giovanni Santi lives on in Raphael, who appears to us as a completed personality, as one incapable of higher attainment because a dead man gives life to his work.

We now realise that in the soul of Raphael are reborn the vigorous forces of John the Baptist and in addition, there live in his soul the forces of Giovanni Santi; that together these two were able to bring to fruition the result which confronts us as Raphael. It is true that to-day we cannot yet speak publicly of such extraordinary things, but in fifty years' time this may be possible, because evolution is progressing quickly, and the opinions held to-day are rapidly approaching their decline. Whoever

accepts such things, sees that in Anthroposophy our task is to regard life everywhere from a new point of view. Just as in the future people will heal in the way to which I have referred, so they will reflect on the strange miracle of life wherein men attract to their assistance, from the spiritual world, the achievements of those who have passed through the gates of death.

I should like to draw your attention to two things, when speaking on the riddles of life; things which so truly can illuminate the meaning of life. One is the fate that has befallen the works of Raphael. Whoever looks to-day at the reproductions of his pictures, does not see what Raphael painted. And if he travels to Dresden or to Rome, he finds them so much spoiled that he can hardly be said to see the pictures of Raphael. It is easy to see what will become of them when we consider the fate of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," which is falling more and more into decay. These pictures, in times to come, will fall into dust, and everything which great men have created will disappear. When these things have vanished, we may well ask: "What is the meaning of this creation and decay!" We shall see that really nothing remains of what the single personality has created.

Still another fact I should like to put before you, and that is the following: If when to-day, with Anthroposophy as an instrument, we desire to understand, and must understand, Christianity as an Impulse that works for the future, we have need of certain fundamental ideas through which we know how the Christ-Impulse will continue to work. This we require. And we can point to a development of Christianity for which Anthroposophy is necessary. We can point to a person who presents Anthroposophical truth in special form — namely, that of aphorisms. When we approach him we find much that is significant for Anthroposophy. This person is the German poet Novalis. When we study his writings, we find that he describes the future of Christianity from out of the occult truths it contains. Anthroposophy teaches us that we have here to do with the same individuality as is in Raphael, John the Baptist and Elijah.

We have here again to glance into the further development of Christianity. That is a fact of an occult nature, for no one reaches this result by reasoning. Let us once more put the different pictures together. We have the tragic fact of the destruction of the creations and works of single personalities. Raphael appears and allows his interdenominational Christianity to flow into the souls of men. But we have a foreboding that some day his creations will be destroyed, that his works will fall to dust. Then Novalis appears to take in hand the fulfilment of the task and continue the work he had begun. The idea is no longer now so tragic. We see that just as the personality dissolves in its sheaths, so the work dissolves, but the essential kernel lives on and continues the work it had begun. Here once again it is the individual to which our attention is directed. But because we have kept firmly in mind the Western view of life and therewith the personality, we are able to grasp the full significance of the individuality. Thus we see how important it is that the East directed its attention to the individuality, to the Bodhisattvas, who go through many incarnations; and how important it is that the West first directed its attention to the contemplation of the single personality, in order, later on, to grasp what the individuality is.

Now I think there are many Anthroposophists who will say: "Well, this is something we have just to believe, when Elijah, John the Baptist, Raphael and Novalis are mentioned." For many the main thing is that they must just believe. It is essentially the same as when from the scientific side some fact is asserted that many people have to believe, such as that this or that spectrum appears when certain metals are examined by spectrum analysis, or when for instance, the nebula in Orion is so examined. Some people have certainly investigated it, but the others, the majority, have to believe. But that is after all not the essential point. The essential point is that Anthroposophy is at the beginning of its development, and will bring souls to the point of examining for themselves such matters as we have discussed to-day. In this respect, Anthroposophy will help forward human evolution very rapidly.

I have put before you a few instances, which I submit as resulting from the occult point of view regarding life. Take only the three points which we have considered and you will see that by knowing in what way life is related to the Spirit of the Earth, the art of healing can be given a new direction and supplied with new impulses; how Raphael can only be understood when not only his personal forces are taken into account, but also those forces which came from his father. The third point is that we can educate children when we know the interplay of forces acting on them. Outwardly people admit that they are surrounded by numberless forces which incessantly influence them, that man is continually influenced by air, the temperature, his surroundings and the other Karmic conditions under which he lives. That these things do not interfere with his freedom everyone knows. They are the factors with which we have to reckon to-day. But that man is continually surrounded by spiritual forces and that these spiritual forces must be investigated is what Anthroposophy has to teach men: they will have to learn to take these forces into account and will have to reckon with them in important cases of health and disease, of education and life. They will have to be mindful of such influences as come from without, from the super-sensible world, when, for instance, some one's friend dies and he then shares those sympathies and ideas that belonged to him. What has been said does not hold good for children only, but for all ages. It is not at all necessary that people should know with their ordinary consciousness in what way the forces of the super-sensible world are active. Their general frame of mind may show it, even their state of health or illness may show it. And those things which signify the connection of man's life on the physical plane with the facts of the super-sensible worlds have a still wider bearing.

I should like to put before you a simple fact which will show you the nature of this connection, a fact which is not invented, but has been observed in many cases. A man notices at a certain time that he has feelings which formerly he did not know; that he has sympathies and antipathies which formerly he did not know; that he succeeds easily where before he found difficulties. He cannot explain it. His surroundings cannot explain it to him, nor do the facts of life itself give him any clue. In such a case it can be found, when we observe accurately (it is true that one must have an eye for such things), that now he knows things which he did not know before and does things which he could not do before. If we examine matters further and have had experience of the teachings of Anthroposophy, it may be that we shall hear something like the following from him: "I do not know what to think of myself. I dream of a person whom I have never seen in my life. He comes into my dreams, though I never had anything to do with him." If we follow the matter up it will be found that till now he had no occasion to occupy himself with this person. But this person had died and now first approaches him in the spiritual world. When he had come near enough to him he appeared to him in a dream which was yet more than a dream. From this person, whom he had not known in life, who, however, after death, gained influence on his life, came the impulses which he had not known before. It is not a question of saying: "It is only a dream." It is far more a question of what the dream contained. It may be something which, although in the form of a dream, is nearer to reality than the outer consciousness. Does it matter at all whether Edison invents something in a dream or in clear waking consciousness? What matters is whether the invention is true, is useful. So also it does not matter whether an experience takes place in dream-consciousness or in physical consciousness; what is of importance is whether the experience is true or false.

If we now summarise what we are able to understand from what has just been said, we may say "It is clear to us when we learn to apply Anthroposophy, that life appears to us in quite a different light from before." In this respect people who are very learned in materialistic ways of thought are but children. We can convince ourselves of this at any time. When to-day I came here by train I took up the pamphlet of a German physiologist in its second edition. In it the writer says that we cannot speak of "active attention" in the soul, of directing the attention of the soul to anything, but that everything depends on the functioning of the various ganglia of the brain; and because the tracks have to be made by thoughts, everything depends on how the separate brain cells function. No

intensity of the soul intervenes, it depends entirely upon whether this or that connecting thread in our brain has been pulled or not. These learned materialists are really children. When we lay our hands on anything of this kind one cannot help thinking how guileless these people are! In the same pamphlet one finds the statement that lately the centenary of Darwin was celebrated, and that on that occasion, both qualified and unqualified people spoke. The author of the pamphlet thought himself of course quite specially qualified. And then follows the whole brain-cell theory and its application. But how is it with the logic of the matter? When one is used to considering things in accordance with truth and then sees what these great children offer people concerning the meaning of life, the thought occurs to one that after all it comes to the same as if someone should say that it was simply nonsense that a human will had any part in the way the railways intersect the face of Europe! For it is just the same as if at a given time one considered all the engines in their varied parts and functions, and said that these are organised in such and such a way and run in so many directions. But the different roads meet at certain junctions and through them the engines can be turned in any direction. What would occur if this were done would be a great disarrangement of trains on the European railways. Just as little, however, can it be asserted that what takes place in the human brain cells as the life of human thought depends only on the condition of the cells. If such learned people then happen, without previous knowledge, to hear a lecture on Anthroposophy, they look upon that which is said as the most utter nonsense. They are firmly convinced that a human will can never have anything to do with the mode and manner in which the European engines run, but that it depends on how they are heated and driven.

So we see how at the present day we stand confronted by questions regarding the meaning of life. On the one side there is darkness, on the other the spiritual facts press in upon us. If we grasp what has been said to-day we can, with this as a basis, put the question before our soul in the way in which it has to be put in Anthroposophy, namely: What is the meaning of life and existence, and especially of human life and human existence?

Lecture 2: Human Participation in Evolution

24 May 1912, Copenhagen

It would be a grave error if one were to believe that the question as to the meaning of life and existence could be put in such a simple way that one could ask: "What is the meaning of life and existence?" and then someone could give a simple answer in a few words, saying perhaps: "This or that is the meaning of life." In this way no real feeling, no idea could ever be gained of the sublimity, majesty, and power which lie behind this question as to the meaning of life. It is true that an abstract answer might be given, but you will realise by what I say later on how little satisfactory such an answer would be. It might be said that the meaning of life consists in the fact that spiritual beings to whom we look up as Divine Beings gradually bring man to the stage where he is permitted to co-operate in the evolution of existence, so that man who was imperfect in the beginning of his development and was incapable of taking part in the whole construction of the universe, might in the course of evolution gradually be trained to participate more and more in this evolution.

That would be an abstract answer, telling us very little. Rather must we penetrate into certain secrets of existence and life, if we would grasp something like an answer to a question of such far-reaching importance. So we may take as a basis the facts considered yesterday: penetrating yet a little more deeply into the mysteries of existence. When we observe the world around us, it is not really enough that we see growth and decay. Yesterday we drew attention to the fact that this growth

and decay affect our souls mysteriously when we ask ourselves what is the meaning of it all. But there is something that is a still more difficult problem. We see already in the origin and growth of things something that is highly remarkable, which if only observed superficially gives us a feeling of sadness and of tragedy. If, with the knowledge gained from the physical world, we look into the depths of the ocean or into the vast fields of any other form of existence, we know that countless germs of life arise and that but few of these become fully developed beings. Only think how many germs of different fish are produced yearly in the sea which do not reach their goal of development, but disappear again before reaching it, and how only a small number of these germs attain maturity.

Yesterday we turned our attention to the fact that everything which comes into existence perishes again. But now the other fact forces itself on our attention, that out of a limitless domain of immeasurable possibilities but few realities emerge, and that already in the origin of things there is something enigmatical, in the fact that what strives to come into existence cannot really develop.

Let us take a concrete case. If we sow a field with corn, we see springing up a great number of ears of corn. We know quite well that out of every single grain in these ears of corn a new ear of corn can come into existence.

And now we ask: "How many of all those grains of corn we see on the corn-field reach this goal?" Let us think for a moment of the numberless grains which go quite a different way from that which is their object, namely to become ears of corn in their turn. In concrete form we can therefore assert that the life surrounding us only comes into existence as such, through the fact that, in its birth, it seems to push down numberless life-germs as if into an abyss of non-fulfilment. Everywhere in our surroundings, what exists is built on a groundwork of infinitely rich possibilities which may become realities in the ordinary sense of the word. Let us keep in mind that on such a foundation of possibilities realities do arise, and let us regard this as one view of the mysterious life-existence that is presented to us.

Now we shall look at the other side of the picture which also exists, but of which we are only aware when we enter deeply into spiritual truths. The other side is that which presents itself to man when he follows the path to Anthroposophy. This path is sometimes described, as you know, as dangerous. And why? Simply for the reason that if we wish to follow the path to spiritual knowledge we enter a realm which may on no account be accepted off-hand in the form in which it presents itself to us.

Let us suppose that a man were following the spiritual path by methods known to you, and which are to be found in my book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, and that such a person reached the point when what we call imaginative pictures arose out of the depths of his soul. We know what imaginative pictures are. They are visionary images, confronting a man when he is following the spiritual path as an entirely new world. If a man is really seriously following this path, he comes to the stage at which the whole of the physical world around him grows dim. In the place of this physical world there appears a world of moving images, a world of surging impressions of the nature of sounds, smell, taste and light. This presses on and whirls within our spiritual horizon and we experience what may be called imaginative visions which then surround us on all sides and constitute the world in which our souls live and move.

Now let us suppose that a man were convinced that in the visionary world which appeared before him, he had something entirely real; such a man would be subject to a very grave mistake. And here we are at the point where danger begins. The realm of visionary life is immeasurable as long as we do not ascend from Imagination, which conjures up a visionary world, to Inspiration. It is the latter which first tells us to direct our attention to one particular picture, to turn our spiritual gaze to it, and

that then we shall experience truth; and the countless other pictures that surround this one must vanish into lifeless space. This one picture will arise from countless others and will prove itself to be an expression of the truth.

Thus, when we find ourselves on the spiritual path, we enter a realm where countless visions are possible and we must develop, so that we can select, as it were, out of this realm of infinite possibilities of vision, those which express a true spiritual reality. No other guarantee is possible than the one just mentioned, for if anyone were to come and say: "I enter a realm infinitely rich in visions, tell me which are true and which are false, can you not give a rule whereby I can distinguish the one from the other?" — no genuine occultist or spiritual investigator would answer these questions with a rule, but he would have to say: "If you wish to learn to discriminate, you must go on developing yourself. Then it will happen that it will be possible for you to direct your vision to that which remains. The visions which endure are those that have reached a certain level; but those which must be wiped out by you are merely images of mist."

Now danger lies in the fact that many people feel themselves extremely pleased and comfortable in the realm of visions. When once surrounded by a visionary world they do not trouble to develop themselves further, or go on striving, because this visionary world pleases them extremely well. But it is impossible to attain reality in the spiritual life when we simply surrender ourselves to this feeling of bliss, to revelling, as it were, in the visionary world. We cannot then ascend to reality of truth. It is necessary to go on striving with all the means at our disposal; for only then does spiritual reality really emerge out of the limitless possibility of visions. Now compare the two things which I have described. On the one hand, the world without, where we find numberless possibilities for life-germs, whereof only a few can attain their goal; on the other hand the inner world to which the path of knowledge leads us: an infinite world of visions which is to be compared with the world of infinite possibilities for the life germs. A few of these are such visions to which we at last attain, and which may be compared to the few real lives which emerge from among the numerous life-germs. These two things correspond completely; they belong entirely to each other in the world.

Now let us carry this thought a little further: "Is that man right who is faint-hearted and sad about life and existence because in this life numberless germs can only, so to speak, half emerge and but few reach their goal?" Is it possible for us to be sad about these facts? Is it possible to say: "All around there is a wild struggle for existence from which only a few accidentally escape?" Let us consider our concrete example of the cornfield. Let us suppose that all the grains of corn which grow there were really to reach their goal and become ears of corn. What would be the result? The world would then be impossible, for the things which are nourished on the grains of corn would have no food. In order that certain things or beings well known to us may reach their present stage of development, other things or beings have to fall short of their goal, have to sink down into the abyss as far as their own destiny is concerned. But notwithstanding that, we have no reason for sadness, for if we concern ourselves with the world, if we concern ourselves with its existence, the world consists only of beings and those beings must be able to find nourishment. If they are to be nourished, then other beings must sacrifice themselves. Therefore, only few life-germs can really reach their goal. The others must go another way. They have to go a different way because the world has to exist, because it is really the only way in which the world can be wisely ordered. We are thus surrounded by a world which is such as it is because certain beings sacrifice themselves before they have reached their goal. If we follow the way of those which are sacrificed, we find them within other beings which are more highly organised; beings who have need of this sacrifice in order that they may exist. Here, in a nutshell, as it were, we can grasp the meaning of existence, which is so seemingly difficult to understand in the coming forth of beings into existence and their annihilation.

Yet we have discovered that it is precisely in this that wisdom and meaning in existence are revealed, and that it is only our reflection that does not go far enough, when we lament that so many things must apparently disappear without reaching their goal.

Now let us turn to the other, the spiritual side. Let us take what we have called the limitless world of visions. Here we must in the first place understand what this boundless world of vision really means. It is not simply false in such a sense that we can say: that which disappears is false, that which finally remains is true. Not in this sense is this world false. That would be as short-sighted a judgment as if we were to believe that the life-germs which do not come to fruition are not really life-germs at all. Just as in external life the fact confronts us that only a few beings reach their goal, so it is only possible for a few things out of the limitless spiritual life to enter our horizon. And why?

This question as to the "why" will be extremely instructive for us. Let us suppose that a man would simply surrender himself to the visions floating in on him in immeasurable variety. If once this visionary world is opened, the visions pour in incessantly, one after another, they come and go and surge and flow into one another. It is quite impossible to shut ourselves off from the pictures and impressions which pulsate around us in the spiritual world. But on closer observation we find something very peculiar in a person who thus simply surrenders himself to this visionary world. In the first place we find when we encounter a person who does not want to develop any further, but just wishes to remain at the visionary stage, that he has experienced something, that he has had this or that experience.

Good, we say, you have experienced things that are realities to you. Excellent, that is a manifestation from the spiritual world. But very soon we shall notice that when another person comes and tells us what visions he had in connection with the same thing, and this second one is no further advanced than the first, that his visions about the same thing have quite a different form, so that two different statements may be presented on the same subject. Indeed, we may even make worse discoveries. We find that such men who wish to remain at the mere visionary world even give different statements about one and the same matter; that sometimes they tell us one thing and sometimes another. Only it is unfortunate that visionaries generally have bad memories and have forgotten what they related the first time. They are not themselves aware of what they have related. In short, we have to do with a numberless variety of phenomena. If, as human beings with our present ego we would rightly judge of everything which presents itself in the visionary world, we should have to compare an infinite number of visions. But that would lead to no result. It must be taken as a principle that this visionary world is in the first place a manifestation of the spirit, but that it has not the slightest value as information. However many visions may come to us, they are manifestations of the spiritual world, but they are not realities. If they are to become truths, the different visions of many persons would have to be compared and that is impossible. Instead of that there is the possibility of further development to the stage of Inspiration, we find that all their statements are alike. Then there are no more differences nothing which appears differently to different persons. Then the experiences are actually the same in the case of all who have reached the same stage of development.

Now we pass to the other question, which also in a certain way corresponds to what we find in the outer world. There the few life-germs which reach their goal can be compared to the many which sink down into the abyss. We know that this loss is necessary in order that the outer world may exist. But how is it in the spiritual world, with these visions and inspirations? Here we must first of all understand that what we have before us, when we have selected the visions, stands before us as a spiritual reality, that in them we have not mere images which only give us knowledge in the ordinary sense of the word. That is not the case, and the fact that it is not so I shall make clear to you by a very important example. I shall explain how the selected visions stand in relation to the world just as

we previously made it clear to ourselves how the life-germs which have reached their goal stand related to life-germs in general. These are used as nourishment by the others. How is it now with the selected visions, with those which really live in man as visions?

Here I must draw attention to one thing. You must not believe that the person who has become clairvoyant has reached a point at which the world of the spirit lives in him and does not live in others. You must not think of clairvoyance in such a way that you say: "Here is a clairvoyant and here is another person; in the soul of that clairvoyant lives the expression of the spiritual reality, but not in the soul of the other." That would not be right. Rather must you say, if you would express it correctly: "Here we have two men, the one is clairvoyant, the other not. That which the clairvoyant sees lives in both. In the non-clairvoyant as well as in the clairvoyant the same things, the same spiritual impulses live; these things are also present in the soul of the non-clairvoyant." The clairvoyant only differs from the non-clairvoyant in the fact that he sees them, whereas the other does not. The one bears them within him and sees them, the other bears them within him and does not see them. Whoever believes that the clairvoyant has something within him which the other has not would be making a great mistake. Just as the existence of a rose does not depend on whether man sees it or not, so it is with the clairvoyant. The reality lives in the soul of the clairvoyant and in the soul of the non-clairvoyant. The reality lives in the soul of the clairvoyant, although the latter does not see it; the distinction consists in the fact that the one sees it and the other does not. Thus the fact is that there live in the souls of all men on earth all the things which the clairvoyant can perceive by means of his clairvoyance. Let us impress this on our minds before going on. We shall now pass on to an apparently different realm of observation which will later bring us back again to what has been said. We shall turn our attention to the animal world. The animal world surrounds us in manifold forms, in forms of lions, bears, wolves, lambs, sharks, whales, etc. Man distinguishes between these animal-forms by forming ideas of them, by forming the idea of the lion, the wolf, the lamb, etc. But now we must not confuse that which man forms as an idea with what the lion or the wolf is in reality. In Anthroposophy we speak of so-called group-souls. All lions have a common lion group-soul, all wolves a wolf group-soul. It is true that certain abstruse philosophers say, that that which the animals have in common only exists in ideas, that "wolf-hood" does not exist externally in the world. That is not true. Whoever believes that the "wolf-hood" as such, that is, that which exists objectively in the spiritual world as the group-soul, does not exist apart from our ideas, has but to consider the following. In the outer world there are beings which we call wolves. Let us now assume that the soul nature and characteristics of the wolf result from the kind of substance which forms the body of the wolf. We know that the substance of an animal's body changes continually. An animal assimilates new substance and eliminates the old. In this way the consistency of the substance changes continually. But what matters is the fact that something is present in the wolf which changes the substance it assimilates into wolf-substance. Let us suppose that with all the means and methods of science we had found how long the wolf needs to renew his substance. Let us suppose further that we shut up a wolf for that time and feed it on nothing but lambs, so that for the time necessary to renew the substance of its physical body, it was fed on nothing but lamb-substance. If the wolf were nothing more than the physical substance from which its body is built, then it ought to have become a lamb by that time. But you will not believe that the wolf by eating lamb for ever so long becomes a lamb. So you will see that the ideas we form of the different animals correspond to realities which are superphysical in regard to that which is in the outer sense world.

It is the same with all animals. The group-soul, that which lies behind the whole animal species, causes one animal to be a wolf, another a lamb, one a lion, and another a tiger. We must however form clear ideas regarding the group-souls. The ideas which we generally form of the animal world are very incomplete. That they are incomplete is due to the fact that man in his present condition penetrates but very little into realities, that he really only clings to the surface of things. Were he to penetrate more deeply, then on forming the idea of a wolf, he would have not only the abstract idea

in his mind, but he would have the state of feeling which corresponds to this idea. With the idea, a state of feeling would be evoked, and while forming the idea of the wolf man would experience that which constitutes wolf-nature; he would feel the ferocity of the wolf, the patience of the lamb.

That this is not the case to-day is due to the fact that man, after having come under the Luciferic influence, was prevented by the gods from having the "life" as well as the "knowledge." He was not to eat of the "Tree of Life." Therefore he has only the knowledge and cannot experience the reality of the life. This he can only do when, in an occult or spiritual way, he penetrates into this realm. Then he not only has the abstract idea, but lives in that which we describe with the expressions "the ferocity of the wolf" and "the patience of the lamb." Now you will understand how great is the difference between these two things; how all these things are surging within us because our ideas are permeated by the most inward life of the substance of the soul. But these ideas the occultist and the clairvoyant must form for himself; he must rise to these ideas. When the clairvoyant has ascended thus far it may be said that something of the soul-substance is already living in him. Indeed a living reflection of the whole animal world that is without does live within him. One might say here: "How fortunate it is for those who have not become clairvoyants." But I have already pointed out that in this connection the clairvoyant does not differ from other men. What is in the one is also in the other. The difference is that the one sees it and the other does not. The whole world of which I have spoken is really within the soul of every man, only the ordinary man does not see it. This whole world surges up out of the hidden depths of the soul, makes man restless, throws him into doubt, draws him hither and thither, and makes him unbalanced in his desires and instincts. That which does not rise beyond a certain threshold and which only faintly finds expression, is none the less present. The person whose mental disposition makes him sensitive to these influences is so connected with the world that these feelings possess him, enter into his life struggles and bring him into serious relations with men and other beings. This is a fact — and why?

If this were not so, then the development of our earth along with the animal kingdom would in a certain respect come to an end. The animal kingdom, as it is, would then have been a kind of final stage, it could not have progressed. All the group-souls of the animals which live around us would not be able to carry their development over into subsequent incarnations of our earth. That would be a remarkable thing. These group-souls of the animals would be in the position (pardon the comparison, but it will make it clear to you what is meant) of a community of Amazons where never a man was allowed, which would of necessity die out as a community of human beings. It is true that it would not die out spiritually, for its soul would pass over into other realms, but as a community of Amazons, this would be its fate. In the same way the community of the animal group-souls would have to die out if nothing else were there. For that which lives in the animal group-souls must be fertilised, and it cannot otherwise bridge the gulf in earthly evolution, which leads to the Jupiter incarnation, if not fertilised as I have described. The outer forms of the animals of the earth die out, but the group-souls are fertilised and appear on Jupiter ready for a higher state of being and thus they attain their next stage of development.

What is it that takes place through man's furthering down here the development of the living form of the group-souls? He provides thereby the fertilising seed for souls which otherwise could not develop further. If we keep this in mind, then we can say: Hence we see that where man looks on the animal kingdom outwardly, he evolves from within certain inner impulses which have to be stimulated from without; these are fertilising seed for the animal group-souls. These impulses, which are the fertilising seed for the animal group-souls, arise through stimulus from without. But not from outward stimulus do the visions of the clairvoyant arise, nor those visions either which are selected as real. These exist only in the spiritual world, and live within the souls of men.

But you must not believe that nothing takes place in the spiritual world when out of a multitude of grains of corn certain of them are consumed, while but few develop again into heads of corn. While the grains are consumed, the spiritual part connected with the grain passes over into man. This is most evident to clairvoyant vision when directed towards a sea in which there are many fish-germs, and it is seen how few develop into full-grown fish. In those which develop into full-grown fish small flames may be observed, but those which do not develop physically, which disappear into the abyss physically, develop huge flaming light-forms. In these the spiritual element is so much the more considerable. So it is also with the grains of corn which are eaten. The material part of them is eaten. When crushed, a spiritual force which fills the space around, issues from those grains of corn which have not reached their goal. It is just the same for the clairvoyant, when he looks at a man who is eating rice, or something similar. When he assimilates the material, the spiritual forces connected with the corn flow forth in streams. All this is not such a simple matter for spiritual observation, especially when the nourishment is not of a vegetable kind. But I will not enter into this to-day, because Anthroposophy must not agitate for any party movement, and therefore not even for vegetarianism!

Thus it is that spiritual beings are linked together. Everything that apparently perishes, gives up its spiritual part to the environment. This actually unites with what lives within man when he becomes clairvoyant, or is by any other means in his visionary world; and the selected visions (after Inspiration) are what fertilise the spiritual part that has been forced out of those life-seeds that do not reach their goal; the visions fertilise it and bring it to further evolution.

So our inner nature, through that which it inwardly evolves, is in continual relationship with the outer world, and works in connection with this outer world. This outer world would be condemned to perish, could not develop further, if we did not bring to meet it fertilising germs. Outside in the world spirituality exists, but only a half spirituality, as it were. In order that this spirituality outside may have offspring, the other spirituality that is within us must approach it. That which lives within us is by no means a mere reflection of the other, perceived mentally, but something that appertains to it. It unites with that which is outside us, and evolves further, just as the north and south poles have to come together as magnetism or electricity in order that something may be achieved. That which takes form in our inner world of visions must unite with that which flashes forth from those things which apparently perish. These are wonderful mysteries, which are however, gradually solved, and which show us how the inner is connected with the outer.

Now let us glance at what surrounds us in the outer world and at what we possess as selected visions, singled out from the measureless possibility of visions. That which we exalt as a vision that is worthy serves for our inner development. That which sinks down when we overlook all the immeasurable field of visionary life, that which disappears, does not sink away into nothingness; it merges with the outer world and fertilises it. What we have selected from the visions serves to our further development. The other visions leave us, and unite with what is around us, with the life which has not reached its goal. Just as living beings must assimilate that which has not attained to life, so we must absorb that which we do not hand over to the outer world in order to fertilise it. This has also its aim. All that is continually coming to birth spiritually in the world must perish, if we do not let our visions go, and do not select those only which are revealed in accordance with Inspiration. Now we come to the second point, to the danger of the visionary life. What does the person do who simply takes the innumerable and varied visions for truth, who does not select what is right for him, and extinguish by far the greater number of the visions! What does such a person do? He does spiritually the same as a man would do (when we interpret it physically you will at once see what he does) who, confronting a cornfield would not use the greater part of the corn for nourishment but who would utilise all the grains as seed. It would not be long before there was no room on the earth for all the corn. Such a thing could not go on, for all other creatures would die out, there would be no

nourishment left for them. It is the same with the man who looks on everything as truth, who does not destroy a single vision and retains everything within him. He does the same as if he were to gather all the grains of corn and sow them again. Just as the world would soon be covered with nothing but cornfields and grains of corn, so the man who did not select his visions would be overwhelmed by them.

I have described what is around us, physically as well as spiritually, the animals and also the ideas which man forms of them. I have also shown how man has to assign an aim to his visions, and how this visionary world must be united with the outer world, in order that evolution may proceed. But how is it now when we turn our attention to man? He meets an animal, considers its group-soul, and says: "wolf," that is, he has formed the idea "wolf," and while saying "wolf" the picture has arisen in him of which the non-clairvoyant, to be sure, has not the "feeling-substance," but only the abstract idea. That which lives in the "feeling-substance" unites with the group-soul and fertilises it at the moment the man pronounces the word "wolf." If he were not to pronounce the name, the animal kingdom as such would die out. And the same holds good for the vegetable kingdom.

What I have described with regard to man, holds good for him alone; not for the animals, nor for the angels; these have quite other missions. Man alone exists in order that with his own being he can confront the world around him, so that life-giving germs may arise that find expression in "names." It is thus that the possibility of further development is implanted in the inner nature of man. Let us now go back to the starting point we chose yesterday. Jahve or Jehovah was asked by the ministering angels for what purpose he wished to create man. The angels could not understand why. Then Jehovah gathered the plants and the animals and asked the angels what were the names of these beings. They did not know. They have tasks other than fertilisation of the group-souls. Man, however, was able to tell the names. In this way Jahve shows that He has need of man, because otherwise creation would die out.

In man those things evolve which have come to an end, and which have to be stimulated anew in order that evolution may go forward. Man had therefore to be created, so that the life-giving germ might be born which finds expression in "names."

Thus we see that we are not placed in creation without a purpose. Think man away, and the transitional kingdoms would not be able to develop further. They would meet the fate which would befall a plant world that is not fertilised. Only through the fact that man is placed into Earth existence, is the bridge built between the world which was and the world which is to be, and man takes for his own path of development that which exists as "name" in the vast sum of created beings; thus does he bring about his own ascent together with that of the rest of evolution.

Here, but in no simple abstract way, we have answered the question, "What is the meaning of life?" although, after all, the abstract answer is contained therein. Man has become a co-worker with spiritual beings. He has become so through his whole nature. What he is has come about through his whole nature. He must exist, and without him there could be no creation. Knowing himself to be a part of creation, man thus feels that he is a participator in Divine spiritual activity.

Now he knows also why his inner life is such as it is, why outside is the world of stars, the clouds, the kingdoms of nature, with all that spiritually belongs thereto, and within there is a world of the soul. He now sees that these two worlds belong to one another, and that only through their mutually reacting on each other does evolution proceed. Outside in space, the infinite world is unfolding to our view. Within is our soul-world. We do not notice that that which lives within us shoots forth and blends with that which is outside, we are not aware that we are the stage on which this union is carried out. What is within us forms as it were the one pole, what is outside in the universe — the

other; these two must unite in order that the evolution of the world may proceed. Our meaning, the meaning of man, consists in this — that we take part in it. The ordinary knowledge of the normal consciousness knows little of these things. But the more we progress in the knowledge of such things, the more we become conscious that in us lies the point where the North and the South Poles of the world (if I may make the comparison) exchange their opposite forces, and unite, so that evolution may advance. Through the teaching of the spiritual world we learn that in us is the stage where the adjustment of forces takes place. We feel how within us, as in a focal point, the Divine world of spirit dwells, how it unites with the world outside, and how these two mutually fructify one another.

When we feel ourselves to be the scene where all this takes place, and know that we take part in it, we find our right place in life, grasp the whole meaning of life and realise that that, which at first is unconscious in us, will become more and more conscious through our progress in Anthroposophy. All magic is based on this. While it is not given to the normal consciousness to know that something within us unites with something outside, it is given to the magic consciousness to see it all. That which belongs to the outer world develops of its own free will. Hence it is necessary that a certain state of maturity be reached and that what is within should not be indiscriminately mixed up with what is without. For as soon as we ascend to a higher stage of consciousness, what lives in us is reality; it is appearance only as long as we live in the ordinary normal consciousness. We shall participate in Divine spiritual activity. But why shall we thus participate? Is there then, after all, sense in the whole thing if we are only an apparatus for balancing opposing forces? A very simple consideration shows us how the matter stands. Suppose that here is a certain quantity of force: one part within, the other without. That they confront each other is not owing to us. At first we keep them apart. Their coming together depends on us. We bring them together within ourselves. This is a thought that stirs the very deepest mysteries within us if we consider it rightly. The gods present the world to us as a duality: without is the objective world, within us the life of the soul. We are present and are those who close the current, as it were, and thus bring the two poles together. All this takes place within us, on the stage of our consciousness.

Here enters freedom for us. With this we become independent beings. We have to regard the whole universe not merely as a stage, but as a field for co-operation. It is true that this induces a thought which the world does not easily understand, not even if it be presented philosophically, for that is what I tried to do years ago in my booklet *Truth and Science*, in which it is stated that first the sense-activity appears and then the inner world, but that union and co-operation between them are necessary. There the thought is developed philosophically. I did not at that time try to show the spiritual mysteries behind, but the world did not at that time understand even the philosophy of it.

Now we see in what way we have to think of the meaning of our life. Meaning enters into it. We become co-actors in the world process. That which is in the world is divided into two opposing camps and we are placed in the midst in order to bring them together. It is by no means the case that we have to imagine this as a work within narrow limits. I know a humorous gentleman in Germany who writes much for German periodicals. Lately he wrote in a newspaper that it was necessary for the evolution of the world that man should ever remain at the point of not being able to solve the ordinary problems of existence and that it would not be right if he should be able intellectually to grasp and solve them. For if man should have solved the intellectual problems there would be nothing left for him to do. Thus there must always be a doubt about these intellectual problems and imperfect things must always occur. But this man has no idea that when the normal consciousness has come to an end, consciousness itself progresses and a new polarity appears which represents a new task, the poles of which have to be again united. How long will they take to be united? Till man has actually reached the point at which the Divine consciousness has been recapitulated in his own consciousness.

Now, after we have gained an idea of the immeasurable greatness of the problems, we can proceed to the abstract answer, for we know that in us fertilising germs are springing up for a spiritual world, which without us would not be able to develop further. Now we shall see also how it is with regard to the meaning of life, for now we are working on a broad basis. Now we can say: "Once, at the beginning of evolution, there was the Divine consciousness." It was there in its infinity. Therewith we stand at the beginning of existence. This Divine consciousness first forms copies of itself. In what way do the copies differ from the Divine consciousness? In that they are many, whilst the Divine consciousness is one. Further, in that they are empty, whilst the Divine consciousness is full of content, so that in the first place the copies exist as a multiplicity, and further they are empty, just as our empty Ego was confronted by a Divine Ego that contained a whole world. But this empty Ego becomes the stage where the Divine contents which are divided into two opposing camps continually unite, and because the empty consciousness is continually bringing about adjustment it becomes more and more filled with what was originally in the Divine consciousness. Thus evolution proceeds in such a way that the individual consciousness becomes filled with what in the beginning was contained in the Divine consciousness. This is brought about through the perpetual adjustment of individuals.

Has the Divine consciousness need of this for its own development? So ask many who do not quite understand the meaning of life. Does the Divine consciousness need this for its own perfection, for its own development? No, the Divine consciousness does not need it. It has everything within itself. But the Divine consciousness is not egoistic. It wishes that an infinite number of beings may have the same content as itself. But these beings must first fulfil the law, so that they may have the Divine consciousness within them and that thereby the Divine consciousness may be multiplied, That which existed at the beginning of world-evolution as unity then appears in multiplicity, but in course of time it falls away again on the path of complete permeation with Divinity.

Evolution as it has now been described was really always so as regards humanity; it was so during the Saturn period; it was similar during the Sun and Moon periods. We have explained it clearly today as regards the earthly period. On Saturn this activity created the first rudiments of the physical body and at the same time fructified in an outward direction; on the Sun it created the first beginnings of the etheric body and so on. The process is the same, only it becomes more and more spiritual. There remained outside ever less and less which still needed fructification. As humanity evolves further, ever more and more will enter into life and ever less will remain outside that has still to be fructified. Therefore, in the end, man will have more and more within him of what had been outside. The outer world will have become his inner world. Making things "inward" is the other side of forward development.

To unite Divinity with what is external, to make inward what is external — these are the two directions in which man makes progress in evolution. He will resemble Divinity more and more and will at last become more and more inwardly enriched. In the Vulcan stage of evolution everything will have been fructified. Everything external will have become internal. To become inwardly enriched — is to become Divine. That is the aim and the meaning of life.

But we only get at the truth of the matter when we think of it in such a way that we do not merely set up abstract ideas, but really enter into details. Man must go deeply into the matter and so enter into details, that when he pronounces the name of plants or animals, something rises within him that unites the content of the word with that which lies at the basis of the plant or animal germ, and then lives on in the spiritual world. Our view of life needs improvement in the course of its evolution; for what has Darwinism performed in this direction? It speaks of the struggle for existence, but it does not take into account that that, which, from its point of view, is defeated and destroyed, is also undergoing further development. The Darwinist sees only the beings which reach their goal and the

others which perish. The spirit, however, flashes out of those which perish so that it is not only that which conquers in the physical struggle which is developing. That which apparently perishes goes through a spiritual development. That is the important point.

In this way we penetrate into the meaning of life; nothing, not even that which is defeated, or that which is eaten, is destroyed, it is being spiritually fertilised and springs up again spiritually. Much has disappeared in the whole course of the evolution of this earth and of humanity without man having anything directly to do with it. Let us take the whole of pre-Christian development. We know what this pre-Christian development was like. In the beginning man came forth from the spiritual world and gradually descended into the physical sense-world. That which he possessed in the beginning, that which lived in him, has vanished, just as have the life germs which have not reached their goal. Throughout human evolution we see countless things sink down as into an abyss. Whilst innumerable things are perishing in the outer development of human civilisation and of human life, the Christ-Impulse is developing above. Just as man develops life-giving germs for the world that is around him, so does the Christ-Impulse give what is necessary for the development of that which apparently perishes in man. Then the Mystery of Golgotha takes place. This is the fructification from above of what has apparently perished. Here actually a change takes place in that which apparently had fallen away from the Divine and sunk into the abyss. The Christ-Impulse enters and fertilises it. And from the Mystery of Golgotha onwards, we see in the course of the further development of the earth a renewed blossoming and a continuation through the fructification received with the Christ-Impulse.

Thus what we have learned about polarity is also proved true in this greatest event of the earthly evolution. In our epoch the seeds of civilisation sown in the old Egyptian civilisation are coming to life. They are there in the earth evolution. The Christ-Impulse has come and has fertilised them and as a result of this fertilisation we have a repetition in our own epoch of the Egypto-Chaldean civilisation. In the civilisation which will follow our own, the old Persian civilisation will re-appear fructified by the seed of the Christ-Impulse. In the seventh age the old Indian civilisation, that lofty spiritual civilisation which came from the holy Rishis, will reappear in a new form, fructified by the Christ-Impulse.

We see in this continuous development, that what we have learned with regard to man may also become a reciprocity; an inner and an outer, a spiritual and a physical, mutually fertilising each other. Fertilisation with the Christ-Impulse is active above and below. Below the progressing earthly civilisation; from above, entering with the Mystery of Golgotha — the Christ-Impulse.

Now we can also understand the meaning of the Christ-Event. The earth has to participate in the cosmic mysteries just as the individual man has to participate in the Divine mysteries. Through this, polarity was implanted in man, as it is in the earth. That which is above the earth and that, which, through the Mystery of Golgotha, first united with the earth, have evolved like two opposite poles. Christ and the earth belong to one another. In order to be able to unite they had first to develop apart from one another. Thus we see that it is necessary, in order that things may really come to fruition, that they differentiate into polarities, and that the polarities then reunite in order that life may progress. That is the meaning of life. If we look at it like this, then it is true that we feel ourselves standing in the centre of the world, feel that the world would be absolutely nothing without us. As deep a mystic as Angelus Silesius made the remarkable statement which at first may astound people: "I know that without me no God can live; were I brought to naught, he would of necessity have to give up the ghost." Sectarian Christians may disagree with such a statement, but they should not forget the historical fact that Angelus Silesius, even before he became a Roman Catholic (which he did in order according to his opinion to stand entirely on the ground of Christianity), was a very pious man, and yet he pronounced this dictum. Whoever knows Angelus Silesius will know that this statement was not prompted by impiety. All things in the world would stand opposed to other things,

like poles that cannot meet, were man to be thought away. Man stands in the midst and forms a part of it. If man thinks, the world thinks in him. He is the stage on which the action takes place; he only brings the thoughts together. When man thinks and when he wills, it is even so.

We can now estimate what it means when, directing our gaze into vastness of space we say: It is Divinity that fills it, and Divinity is that which must be united with the Earth-seed. "In me is the meaning of life!" — man may exclaim. The gods have set before them certain aims; but they have also chosen the stage on which these aims are to be carried out. The souls of men are the stage. Therefore, if the human soul looks but deeply enough into itself, and does not only try to solve problems in the vastness of space, it finds within itself the stage where gods are accomplishing their deeds — and man himself is taking part in them. That is what I tried to express in the words which can be found in my Mystery Play, *The Soul's Probation* how in man's inner being the gods work, how the meaning of the world finds expression in the soul of man and how the meaning of the world will live on in the soul of man. What is the meaning of life? It is, that this meaning lives in man himself. This I tried to express in the words which the soul addresses to itself: —

*"Within thy thinking cosmic thought doth live,
Within thy feeling cosmic forces play,
Within thy will do cosmic beings work;
Abandon thou thyself to cosmic thought,
Experience thyself through cosmic force,
Create thyself anew from cosmic will.
End not at last in cosmic distances,
By fantasies of dreamy thought beguiled.
Do thou begin in farthest spirit-realms
And end in the recesses of thy soul.
The plan Divine then shalt thou recognise
When thou hast realised thy Self in thee."*

See Four Mystery Plays

If we wish to say something that is true, not something which has merely occurred to us, it must always be said out of the depths of spiritual secrets. That is extremely important. Therefore you must not think that words which are used in occult works, be it in the form of prose or poetry, arise in the same way as do words in other works. Such spiritual or occult works which really spring from truth, truth about the world and its mysteries, come into existence when the soul really allows world-thoughts to speak through it, really lets world-feelings not its own personal feelings inflame it and has really created these feelings and thoughts from beings of cosmic or universal will.

It is part of the mission of the Anthroposophical movement that man should learn to discriminate between what is sounding forth out of the cosmic mysteries and that which his own arbitrary imagination has invented. Ever more and more the development of civilisation will rise to the point where, in the place of arbitrary invention, there will appear that which lives in the human soul in such a way that it is the other pole of the corresponding spirituality. Things created in this way are in their turn life-giving seed which unite with the spirit. They have a purpose in the world process. It gives us quite a different feeling of responsibility as regards what we do ourselves, when we know that what we bring about are living germs — not sterile ones which simply perish. Then we must allow these germs too to spring up from the depths of the World-Soul.

Now it may be asked: But how is this to be attained? By patience. By approaching more and more to the stage where all personal ambition is killed out. Personal ambition tempts us ever more and more to produce that which is merely personal, without listening to that which is the expression of the Divine. How are we to know that the Divine is speaking in us? We must kill out everything that only comes from ourselves and first of all we must kill out every tendency to ambition. This generates the right polarity in us and produces real fructifying germs in the soul. Impatience is the worst guide in life. It is that which destroys the world. If we are successful in this, you will see, as I have been explaining to you, that the meaning of life is reached in the way described, through the fructification of what is outward by that which is inward. Then we shall also understand that, if our inner nature is not right, we sow wrong fertilising seed in the world. What is the result of that? The result is that deformities are born into the world. Our present civilisation is rich in such deformities. All over the world, books are written to-day one could almost say by steam-power; whilst even in the eighteenth century a celebrated author wrote: "A single country to-day produces five times as many books as the earth requires for its good." To-day it is much worse. These are things which surround the present civilisation with spiritual entities which are not fit for life, which would not and should not come into existence, if man had the requisite patience. That will also come to birth within the human soul as a kind of opposite pole — patience: so that the human soul does not simply scatter around what is merely a product of ambition and egoism!

This must not be taken as a kind of moral sermon, but as the representation of a fact. It is a fact that productions springing from ambition and desire for renown give rise in our souls to such seeds as bring deformities to birth in the spiritual world. To suppress these and also gradually to transform them is a fruitful task for the far future. It is the mission of Anthroposophy to accomplish this task, and it is the meaning of life, that in doing so the anthroposophical world conception should take its place in the whole meaning of life; that everywhere meaning should flow in on us in life, that everywhere life should be full of meaning. What Spiritual Science desires to teach men is this: that we are in the midst of this meaning, and can express it truly thus: —

*"Within thy thinking cosmic thought doth live,
Within thy feeling cosmic forces play,
Within thy will do cosmic beings work;
Abandon thou thyself to cosmic thought,
Experience thyself through cosmic force,
Create thyself anew from cosmic will.
End not at last in cosmic distances
By fantasies of dreamy thought beguiled.
Do thou begin in farthest spirit-realms
And end in the recesses of thy soul,
The plan Divine then shalt thou recognise
When thou hast realised thy Self in thee."*

That, my dear anthroposophical friends, is the meaning of life, as man must understand it at present. This is what I wished to consider with you. If we understand it fully and make it entirely our own, the souls which have become Divine will make it effective in your souls.

What is difficult to understand in these lectures you must ascribe to the circumstance that Karma obliges us to restrict such an important subject as "The Meaning of Life" to two short lectures; much could therefore merely be hinted at, which can only be developed in the soul of each one for himself. Consider this also as a polarity: an impulse must be given which through meditation is developed

further, that through this further development all our intercourse acquires meaning — reality; it ought to become so full of meaning that our souls should be able to play one into the other. It is of the essence of real love that it is also an equilibrium of polarities. At the point where anthroposophical thoughts find entrance to a soul, the other pole is stimulated and agreement found. It is this that can work like an anthroposophical "Music of the Spheres." When we work thus in harmony with the spiritual world, when we really are living anthroposophical life, we also live united in this life.

This is the way in which I should like you to take our meeting here in these two days. Such spiritual subjects are an expression of the Spirit of Love and are consecrated to the Spirit of Love amongst true anthroposophists. This love, through the touchstone we possess, will be instrumental in the exchange of our spiritual content; it will be something through which we not only receive, but through which we are also stimulated more and more to anthroposophical efforts. In this way Anthroposophy will become a means of spreading a love that touches the inmost depths of the human soul. Such love lives on. For as members of the Anthroposophical Movement, we have something that causes the love of those who are separated in space to endure until Karma again unites us on the physical plane. So we remain united and find the true cause for remaining so in the fact that with all the best in our souls, with the best of our spiritual powers, we have together risen to Divine spiritual heights. In this way, we also desire, my dear friends, to continue to be united with one another.

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