

Human Freedom and Its Connection with the Mystery of Golgotha

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Our last lectures showed the fundamental difference between man's whole conception here, from birth to death, and in the spiritual world, from death to a new birth. We have already explained that in the present epoch; i.e., ever since the middle of the Fifteenth Century, man may gain freedom during his existence between birth and death; everything on earth which he fulfils out of the impulse of freedom, gives his being, as it were, weight, reality and life. When we emancipate ourselves from the necessities of earthly existence, when we rise up to free motives guiding our will; that is to say, if we do not take anything out of earthly life for our will, then we create the possibility of independence also between death and a new birth. But in the present epoch this capacity of preserving our own independent existence after death calls for something which we may designate as the connection with the Mystery of Golgotha, for the Mystery of Golgotha may be viewed from many different aspects. In the course of the past years, we have already studied quite a number of these aspects; today we shall view the Mystery of Golgotha from a standpoint arising from the study of freedom and its significance for the human being.

Here on earth, between birth and death, the human being really does not have in his ordinary consciousness any conception of his own self. He cannot look into his own self. It is, of course, an illusion to believe, as external science does, that it is possible to obtain a knowledge of the inner constitution of the human organism by observing man's lifeless parts, indeed sometimes by studying only the corpse. This is an illusion, a deception. Here, between birth and death, man only has a conception of the external world. But of what kind is this conception? It is one which we have frequently characterized as the conception of illusion (*Schein*), of semblance, and I have again emphasized this yesterday.

When our senses are turned to the things which surround us in the world in which we live from birth to death, then the world appears to us as a semblance, as an illusion. This semblance may be taken into our Ego being. We may, for example, preserve it in our memory, and in a certain sense make it our own. But insofar as it stands before us when looking out into the world, it is an illusion which manifests itself particularly — as I have already explained to you yesterday — by disappearing with death and by re-appearing in another form; that is to say, we then no longer experience it within us, but before or around us.

If, however, in the present epoch we were not able to experience the world as an illusion during our existence from birth to death, if we were unable to experience this illusion, we could not be free. The development of freedom is only possible in the world of illusion. I have mentioned this in my book, *The*

Riddle of Man, and have pointed out that in reality the world which we experience may be compared with the images that look out at us from a mirror. These pictures cannot force us, for they are only pictures, only a semblance. Similarly the world which we experience may be compared with the images that look out at us from a mirror. These pictures cannot force us, for they are only pictures, only a semblance. Similarly the world which we perceive is a semblance, an illusion. But the human being is not completely woven into this illusion of the world. He is woven into it only in regard to his perception, which fills his waking consciousness. But when he considers his impulses, instincts, passions and temperament, and everything that surges up from the human depths without his being able to grasp it in the form of clear concepts, at least in the form of waking concepts, then all this is not only a semblance or illusion; it is a reality, but one which does not rise up in man's present consciousness.

From birth to death, man lives in a real world unknown to him, one which cannot ever give him freedom. It may implant in him instincts which deprive him of freedom; it may call forth inner necessities, but never can it enable him to experience freedom. Freedom can only be experienced within a world of pictures, of semblance. When we wake up in the morning, we must enter a perceptive life of semblance, so that freedom may unfold. But this life of semblance, which constitutes our waking perceptive life, did not always exist in this form in mankind's historical evolution.

If we go back into ancient times, which have so often been envisaged in our lectures, to times when people still had a certain instinctive clairvoyance, or remnants of this clairvoyance (which lasted until the middle of the Fifteenth Century), we cannot in the same way say that man was surrounded only by a world of semblance. Of course, everything which man saw in his own way as the world's spiritual background, spoke through this semblance. He perceived the illusion, but differently; to him it was an expression, a manifestation of a spiritual world. This spiritual world then vanished behind the semblance, and only the semblance remained. The essential thing in the development of mankind is that in older times the semblance was viewed as the manifestation of a divine spiritual world, but the divine spiritual vanished from the semblance, so that man was confronted only by illusion, in order that he might discover freedom in this world of semblance. Man must therefore find freedom in a world of illusion; he does not find it in the world of reality which completely withdrew to the darkened experiences of his inner being; there, he can only find necessity. We may therefore say that the world which man perceives from birth to death — but everything I say applies to our age — is a world of semblance, of illusion. Man perceives the world, but in the form of semblance.

How do matters stand in regard to the life between death and a new birth? In our last lectures we explained that after death the human being does not perceive the external world which he sees here, between birth and death, but between death and a new birth he essentially perceives the human being himself, man's inner being. Man's world is then the human being. What is concealed here on earth, becomes manifest in the spiritual world. Between death and a new birth, man obtains insight into the whole connection between man's soul life and his organic life, or the activity of the single organs; in short, into everything which, symbolically speaking, lies enclosed within the human skin.

But we find that in the present age man cannot live in a world of illusion after death. He can only live in a world of illusion from birth to death. But between death and a new birth he cannot live in an illusion. When he passes through death, necessity imprisons him, as it were. Here on earth, he feels that he is free in regard to his perceptions, for he may turn his eyes to the things he wants to see; he may collect his perceptions in the form of thoughts, so as to feel the freedom of action in the sphere of thought; but between death and a new birth he feels a complete lack of freedom in regard to the world of his perceptions. This world takes hold of him violently, as it were. It is just as if he perceived as he would perceive here on earth if every sense perception were to hypnotize him, as if every sense perception were to take hold of him so as to render him unable to free himself from them of his own accord.

This is the course of man's development since the middle of the Fifteenth Century. The divine spiritual worlds vanished from the semblance which confronted him, but between death and a new birth, the divine spiritual worlds imprison him so that he cannot maintain his independence. I said that if we really develop freedom on earth; i.e., if we submit completely to the semblance in life, we may carry our own being through the portal of death. By envisaging still another difference between the present time and older human conceptions, we shall realize, however, what is needed in addition to this.

Whether we consider mankind in general, or the initiates and the Mysteries of ancient times, we find that the whole conception of the world had another direction from that of today. If we remain standing by what the human being has acquired ever since the middle of the Fifteenth Century, through the form of knowledge which has arisen since that time, we come across certain definite ideas on the development of the earth and of the human race. But man lost track of the conceptions which might have given him satisfactory indications about the beginning and end of the earth. We might say that he was able to survey a certain line of development; he looked back into history; he looked back into the geological development of the earth. But when he went back still further, he began to construct hypotheses. He imagined that the beginning of the world was a nebula, a kind of physical structure. Out of it developed; i.e., not really, but people imagined that this was so — the higher beings of the kingdoms of Nature: plants, animals, etc. Again, in accordance with conceptions of physics, people thought that life on earth and the earth itself would end by heat — again, a hypothesis. A fragment was thus surveyed, which lies between the beginning and end of the earth. Beginning and end became a hazy, unsatisfactory picture.

But this was different in a more remote past. In past times people had very clear notions of the beginning and end of the world, because they still saw the divine spiritual in the semblance. Bear in mind, for example, the Old Testament, or other religious teachings of the past. In the Old Testament we find ideas which are above all connected with the beginning of the world, and they are described in a form accessible to man, which enabled him to grasp his own existence upon the earth. The Kant-Laplace nebula instead, does not enable him to understand human life on earth. If you take the wonderful cosmogonies of the various pagan nations, you will again find that they enabled man to grasp his earthly existence. The human being thus directed his gaze towards the beginning of the earth and obtained thoughts which encompassed man. Conceptions of the end of the earth remained for a longer time in

human consciousness. In Michelangelo's "Last Judgment," for example, we come across ideas connected with the end of the world, which were handed down as far as our own epoch and which encompass man; for although the conceptions of sin and atonement are difficult, they do not do away with man.

But take the modern hypothetical conception of the end of the world: viz. that everything will end in uniform heat. Man's whole being dissolves, there is no room for him in the world. In addition to the disappearance of divine spiritual life from the illusion of perception, man therefore lost, in the course of time, his conceptions of the world's beginning and end. Within these ideas he could still assert himself and view himself within the cosmos as a being connected with the beginning and end of the earth.

How did the people of past epochs view history? No matter in what form they saw it, history was something which moved from the beginning to the end of the earth, and it obtained its meaning through the conceptions of the beginning and end of the earth. Take any of the pagan cosmologies: they will enable you to picture mankind's historical development. They reach back to ages when earthly life was still united with a divine spiritual weaving. History has a meaning. If we turn to the beginning and also to the end of the earth, history acquires a meaning. Whereas the conception of the end of the earth, as an imaginative conception contained in religious feeling, continued to exist even in more recent epochs; the conception of the end of the earth lived on in historical ideas, as a kind of straggler, even in more recent times. In historical works, such as Rotteck's "World History," you may still find the influence of this idea of the world's beginning, which gives a meaning to history. The significant, peculiar fact is that at the same time in which man entered the stage of perceiving the world as an illusion, so that he perceived external Nature as an illusion, history began to lose its meaning and became inaccessible to man's direct knowledge, because he no longer had any notion of the earth's beginning and end.

Consider this fact quite seriously. Take the nebula at the beginning of the earth's development, from which undefined forms first condensed themselves, and then all the beings, rising as far as man. And consider the death by heat at the end of the earth's development, in which everything will perish. In between lies what we know, for example, concerning Moses, the great men of ancient China, the great men of ancient India, Persia, Egypt — and further on, of Greece and Rome, as far as our present time. In thought we may add all that has still to come. But all this takes place on earth like an episode, with no beginning and end. History thus appears to have no meaning. Let us realize this.

Nature may be surveyed, even if we cannot survey its inner essence. It rises up before us as a semblance together with the experience of our own self, between birth and death. Modern people simply lack the courage to admit that history has no meaning; it is meaningless, because man has lost track of the beginning and end of the world. He should really feel that mankind's historical development is the greatest of riddles. He should say to himself that the historical course of development has no sense.

Some people had an idea of this truth. Read what Schopenhauer wrote on the absence of meaning in history, when one sets out from occidental beliefs. This will show you that Schopenhauer really felt

this absence of meaning in history. We should be filled with the longing to rediscover the meaning of history in some other way. The world of semblance enables us to develop a satisfactory knowledge of Nature, particularly in Goethe's meaning, if we give up hypotheses and remain by the phenomena; i.e., by the truths based on semblance, on illusion. Natural science may satisfy us, if we eliminate all the disturbing hypotheses connected with the beginning and end of the world. But we are then imprisoned, as it were, in our earthly cave and we do not look out of it. The Kant-Laplace theory and the end of the world by heat block our outlook into Time's cosmic distances.

This is after all the situation of present-day mankind from the standpoint of ordinary consciousness: consequently mankind is threatened by a certain danger. It cannot quite penetrate into the mere world of phenomena; above all it is unable to penetrate into this world of semblance with the forces of inner life. Man would like to submit to the inner necessity, to his instincts, impulses, and passions. Today we do not see much of all that may be realized on the basis of free impulses born out of pure thinking. But in the same degree in which man lacks freedom during his life from birth to death, he is overcome by lack of freedom, by the necessity of perception arising out of the hypnotizing coercion which exists between death and a new birth. Man is therefore threatened by the danger of passing through the portal of death without taking with him his own being and without penetrating into a free realm in regard to his perceptive world, but into something which submerges him into a state of coercion, which makes him, as it were, grow rigid in the external world.

The impulse which must in future enter the life of mankind is that the divine spiritual should appear to man in a new way, not in the same way in which it appeared in ancient times. In past epochs man could imagine a spiritual essence in the physical at the beginning and end of the earth, to which he was united and which did not exclude him. But this must take place in an ever-growing measure from the centre, instead of from the beginning and end. Even as in the Old Testament the beginning of the world was looked upon as a genesis of the human being, in which his existence was ensured, even as the pagan cosmogonies spoke of mankind's development out of a divine-spiritual existence, even as the contemplation of the end of the earth, which — as stated — was still contained in the conceptions of the end of the world and the final judgment, which do not deprive man of his own self, so modern times must find in a right conception of the Mystery of Golgotha, at the centre of the earth's development, that which again enables man to see divine life united with earthly life.

We should grasp in the right way that God passed through Man in the Mystery of Golgotha. This will replace what we lost in regard to the beginning and end of the earth. But there is an essential difference between the way in which we should now look upon the Mystery of Golgotha and the old way of looking at the beginning and end of the earth.

Try to penetrate into the way in which the pagan cosmogonies arose. In the present time we often come across conceptions stating that these pagan cosmogonies were thought out in the same way in which modern men freely join thought to thought and disconnect them again. But this is an erroneous University conception which has no reasonable foundation. We find instead that in the past, man gave himself up entirely to the contemplation of the world; he could see the beginning of the world only in

the way in which it appeared to him in the cosmogony and in the myths. There was no freedom in this; it was altogether the result of necessity. Man had to envisage the beginning of the earth, he could not refrain from doing so. In the present time, we no longer conceive in the right way how in the past man's soul confronted the beginning of the world and, in a certain respect, also the end of the world with the aid of an instinctive knowledge. Today it is impossible for the human soul to envisage the Mystery of Golgotha in this way. This constitutes the great difference between Christianity and the ancient teachings of the Gods. If we wish to find Christ, we must find him in freedom and turn to the Mystery of Golgotha freely. But the content of the ancient cosmogonies was forced upon man, whereas the Mystery of Golgotha does not force itself upon him. He must approach the Mystery of Golgotha in freedom and his being must pass through a kind of resurrection.

Man is led to such freedom by an activity which I have recently designated in anthroposophical spiritual science as the cognitive activity. A clergyman who believes that he may gain knowledge of the "Akasha Chronicle" through an "illustrated luxury edition", that is to say without any inner activity on his part, for the grasping of truths which should appear before his soul in the form of concepts and become images — such a clergyman would simply show that he is predisposed to grasp the world only in a pagan way, not in a Christian way; for Christ must be reached in inner freedom. Particularly the way in which the Mystery of Golgotha should be faced, constitutes the most intimate means of an education towards freedom.

If the Mystery of Golgotha is experienced rightly, it already tears us away from the world. What arises in that case? In the first place, we live in a world of apparent perception and in it surges up something which leads us to a spiritual life guaranteed by the Mystery of Golgotha. This is one thing. But the other thing is that history ceased to have a meaning, because beginning and end were lost; it obtains a new meaning when it receives it anew from the centre. We learn to recognize that everything before the Mystery of Golgotha tends towards the Mystery of Golgotha as its goal, and everything after the Mystery of Golgotha sets out from it.

History thus once more acquires a meaning, whereas otherwise it is an illusory episode without beginning and end; the world which we perceive outside faces us as an illusion for the sake of our own freedom and also changes history into something which it should not be — an illusory episode without any centre of gravity. It dissolves into fog and mist and theoretically we already find this in Schopenhauer's writings.

By tending towards the Mystery of Golgotha, all that was once mere illusion in history obtains inner life, an historical soul, connected with everything which modern man requires through the fact that he must develop freedom in life. He will then pass through the portal of death with the great teaching of freedom. Avowal of the Mystery of Golgotha throws into life a light which must fall on everything in man that is capable of freedom. And having the disposition to freedom in the illusory aspect of the world which is given to him, he has the possibility to escape the danger of failing to develop freedom, because after death he submits to instincts and passions, thus falling a prey to necessity. By accepting a

religious faith which is quite different from those of the past, by allowing his whole soul to be filled by a religious faith which only lives in freedom, he becomes able to experience freedom.

In the present civilization, only a small number of people have really grasped that only a knowledge gained in freedom, a knowledge gained by inner activity, is able to lead us to Christ, to the Mystery of Golgotha. The Bible gave man the historical record so that he might have a message of the Mystery of Golgotha for the time when he could not yet take in spiritual science.

To be sure, the Gospel will never lose its value. It will have an every greater value, but the Gospel must be added to the direct knowledge of the essence of the Mystery of Golgotha. Christ should be felt and recognized also with the aid of human forces, not only with the aid of the forces working through the Gospel. This is what spiritual science strives for in regard to Christianity. Spiritual science seeks to explain the Gospels, but it is not based upon the Gospels. It is able to appreciate the Gospels so fully, just because it discovered, as it were, subsequently, all that lies concealed in them, all that has already been lost in the course of mankind's outer development.

You see, the whole modern development of mankind is thus connected on the one hand with freedom and the illusion of perception, and on the other, with the Mystery of Golgotha and the meaning of the historical development. The sequence of many episodes which constitutes history as it is generally described and accepted today, obtains its true weight if the Mystery of Golgotha can be set into the historical course of development.

Many people felt this in the right way and also used appropriate images for this. They said to themselves: Once upon a time, man looked out into the heavenly spaces; he saw the Sun, but not as we see it now. Today there are physicists who think that out there in the universe there swims a large sphere of gaseous matter. I have frequently said that they would be astonished if they could build a world airship and reach the Sun, for where they suppose the existence of a gaseous sphere, they would find negative space, which would transport them in a moment not only into Nothing, but beyond Nothing, far beyond the sphere of Nothing. The cosmologies developed today, the modern materialistic cosmologies, are pure fantasy. In past epochs, people did not imagine the Sun as a gaseous sphere swimming in the heavenly spaces, but they saw a Spiritual Being in the Sun. Even today the Sun is a Spiritual Being to those who contemplate the world in a real way; it is a Spiritual Being manifesting itself only outwardly in the way in which the eye is able to perceive the Sun. In Christ an older human race felt the presence of this central Spiritual Being. When speaking of Christ, it pointed to the Sun.

By recognizing the Sun as a Spiritual Being, it was possible to connect a conception worthy of man with the beginning and end of the earth. The conception of Jesus, who was Christ's abode, renders possible a conception worthy of man in regard to the middle of the earth's development, and from there will ray out towards beginning and end that which will once more make the whole cosmos appear in a light that gives man his place in the universe. We should therefore envisage a future in which hypotheses concerning the world's beginning and end will not be constructed on the basis of materialistic, natural-scientific conceptions, but in which the point of issue will be the knowledge of the Mystery of

Golgotha. This will also enable us to survey the whole cosmic development. In ancient times, the Christ was felt to be outside in the cosmos, where the Sun was shining. A true knowledge of the Mystery of Golgotha enables us to see in the historical development of the earth the Sun of the earth's development shining through Christ. The Sun shines outside in the world and also in history — it shines physically outside, and spiritually in history; Sun here, and Sun there.

This indicates the path to the Mystery of Golgotha from the aspect of freedom. Modern mankind must find it, if it wants to come out of the forces of descent and enter the ascending forces. This should be realized fully and profoundly. This knowledge will not be abstract, not merely theoretical, but one that fills the whole human being. It will be a knowledge which must be felt and experienced in feeling. The Christianity which Anthroposophy will have to teach, will not only imply looking at Christ, but being filled by Christ.

People always want to know the difference between the teachings of the older Theosophy and the truths that live in Anthroposophy. Is this difference not evident? The older Theosophy warmed up the pagan cosmology. In the theosophical literature you will discover everywhere warmed-up pagan cosmologies, which are no longer suited to modern men, and although Theosophy speaks of the world's beginning and end, this no longer means what it meant in the past. What is missing in the writings of an older Theosophy? The centre is missing, the Mystery of Golgotha is missing throughout. It is missing to an even greater extent than in external natural science.

Anthroposophy has a continued cosmology which does not blot out the Mystery of Golgotha, but admits it, so that it is contained in it. The whole evolution, reaching back as far as Saturn and forward as far as Vulcan, will take its course in such a way that the light enabling us to see it, will ray out from our knowledge of the Mystery of Golgotha. If we but recognize this fundamental contrast, we shall no longer have any doubt as to the difference between the older Theosophy and Anthroposophy.

Particularly when so-called Christian theologians again and again put together Anthroposophy and Theosophy, this is due to the fact that they do not really understand much about Christianity. For it is deeply significant that Nietzsche's friend, Overbeck, the truly conspicuous theologian of Basle, wrote a book on the Christianity of modern theology, in which he tried to prove that modern theology; i.e., the Christian theology, is no longer Christian. One may therefore say: Even in regard to this point, external science has already drawn attention to the fact that modern Christian theology does not understand anything about Christianity and knows nothing about it.

One should thoroughly understand all that is unchristian. Modern theology, in any case, is not Christian; it is unchristian through love of ease, through indolence. Yet people prefer to ignore these things, which should not be ignored, for to the extent in which they are ignored, people will lose the possibility to experience Christianity in a real way, from within. This must be experienced, for it is the other pole of the experience of freedom, which must appear. Freedom must be experienced, but the experience of freedom alone would lead us into the abyss. Only the Mystery of Golgotha can lead us across this abyss.

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