

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

The Great Virtues

GA 159

*Here, the four Platonic Virtues (described in *The Republic*) are developed in the direction of that comprehensive picture of man's threefold being — the head-system, the rhythmic system, and the metabolic and limb system — of which Steiner gave the first full description in 1917, and which is summed up in the *Foundation Stone Meditation* in 1923.*

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Translator Unknown

Our spiritual science has the task of removing for our consciousness, indeed for our whole inner life, the gulf that exists for our external human consciousness between the physical world, in which man spends the time between birth and death, and the spiritual world in which man spends the other part of the totality of his existence, the time between death and a new birth.

For one who lives in spiritual science with every fibre of his soul, such a saying is familiar, and even self-evident. But one may well say that it becomes particularly holy to us at such a moment as this. Through the grave events of war we have lost within quite a short time a number of our dear friends and members, and are soon to accompany friends upon their last paths on earth. Tomorrow morning at eleven we shall have here in Zürich the cremation of a dear member, Frau Dr Colazza, and we have just heard that our dear friend Fritz Mitscher died this afternoon about five near Davos. With these two members, souls dear to us have left the physical plane; but spiritual science has shown us the way to understand in a much higher sense than we would otherwise be able to achieve that we do not lose such souls, but remain united with them.

There are already a considerable number of souls belonging to us, who have gone through the gate of death since our work in this movement began. And from those sources from which knowledge of the spirit comes to us, it can be said that these souls have become faithful fellow-workers with us in the spiritual world, each according to his powers. With the full responsibility, with which something can be said, which should have a firm foundation in spiritual knowledge, I can say: in them we have won pillars supporting our spiritual movement. Many have passed through the gate of death, working within our spiritual movement, and looking down upon that to which their love is directed. In the period between birth and death they have grown attached to the kind of aspiration which is represented in our circle. They have left behind them in our Society something which is itself upon the path between death and a new birth.

Just as nature around us is a world upon which we look back, we can look back upon our physical life from that moment onwards, which can be compared with man's birth. Immediately after death man passes through a condition which can be compared with the embryonic life, with the life within the maternal body, except that this period in the life after death can be counted in days, and is much shorter than the embryonic life in relation to physical life. Then follows what can be compared to the entry into the physical world, with the drawing of the first breath. This can be called the awakening in the spiritual world; it is a perceiving that the will of the soul which has gone through the gate of death is received by the beings of the higher Hierarchies. Just as a human being physically entering the physical world from his mother's body finds himself able to receive the external air, and as his senses gradually awaken — in the same way there comes the moment after death when the soul feels: that power of will, which during physical life was contained within the limits of the physical body, now flows from me out into the universe. And this soul then feels how this will is really received through the activity of the beings of the next higher hierarchy, the hierarchy of the Angels. That is like drawing the first breath in the spiritual world, and the gradual growth into the spiritual environment; spiritual experience shows us this.

I would like to speak of the destiny of those who have gone from us in the course of the years, leaving the physical plane. I would like to look at those who have become attached to our spiritual movement here, and who look down upon it as something of which they know that it informs human souls while still within the physical body about that condition in which they themselves live. To be able to relate oneself in this way in memory of earthly life is something which even here in the physical world belongs already to the spiritual world. For those who have gone through the gate of death this is something infinitely precious and significant. When, like a tributary into a river, they can flow entirely into that stream which flows up to them from the physical world, taking its source from what they have experienced in our movement — the stream in the thoughts of those linked with them in love or by family ties — then the community is a much closer one than it could otherwise be in our materialistic times, because it is based on spiritual relationships.

We may say: with many a one, who has gone early through the gate of death into the spiritual world, it seems as if he had done this from intimate love to our spiritual movement, in order to help with stronger powers from the spiritual world. Among a considerable number of those who have gone from us there lives in their souls the most wonderfully clear feeling about the need for our spiritual movement. For him who can look into the spiritual world all those who have gone through the gate of death, and now gaze down upon the movement with which they were connected, are like spiritual heralds of our movement. They carry their standards before us, and call to us constantly: we were convinced while we were united with you of the necessity of this movement. But now that we have entered the spiritual world we know that we can help and how we must help at a time in which this movement is necessary.

This is something which those who are left behind on the physical plane will feel more and more, when they have lost people dear to them. For them what has been said can be the deepest comfort, for they have here all that can bring about a still deeper connection between souls when we can no longer be connected in the external realm of manifestation, through physical eyes and physical words.

This spiritual movement, of which we are to become part, has to bring a very great deal. Today I would like to choose out one particular chapter. A time like ours, in which external civilisation, in spite of the last echoes of the old religions, builds entirely upon the materialistic consciousness, can only develop the impulses of the moral life in a way that reckons only with life between birth and death. Among the many things which should come about through our spiritual movement will be a fresh development of the whole moral life of humanity. For men will learn to regard the moral life from a

point of view which extends beyond birth and death, and which reckons with the fact that the human soul goes through repeated lives on earth, and that this soul, as we bear it within us between birth and death, has passed through many lives, and can hope for other lives in the future. When we have extended our vision from a single life to a series of successive lives, we shall have a more comprehensive understanding for our existence, and a sounder and more comprehensive understanding of what virtue and morality are.

When we speak of human virtues we can distinguish four of these which we can describe in ordinary language. There is one virtue, as we shall indicate later on, which lives in the depths of the human soul, but of which we should speak as little as possible as we shall see, for reasons that are holy. All other virtues which exist in life, and which together make up morality, can be regarded as special examples of the four virtues which we shall consider, four virtues of which antiquity in particular had much to say.

Plato, the great philosopher of ancient Greece, distinguished these four virtues in particular, because he was able to draw his wisdom from the echoes of the ancient Mysteries. Under the influence of the old Mysteries Plato could distinguish the virtues better than later philosophers and much better than our times, in which knowledge of Mystery wisdom has become so remote and so chaotic.

The first virtue which we must consider, if we speak about morality from a comprehensive knowledge of human nature, is the virtue of wisdom. But this wisdom is to be understood in a rather deeper sense, more related to ethics, than is usually done. Wisdom is not something that comes to man of its own accord; still less can it in the ordinary sense be learned. It is not easy to describe what its meaning for us should be. If we pass through life in such a way that events work upon us, and we learn from them how we could have met this or that more adequately, how we could have used our powers more strongly and effectively — if we are attentive towards everything in life, so that when something meets us a second time in a comparable way we can treat it in a way which shows us we have benefited from the first experience — then we grow in wisdom. If we preserve all through life a mood of being able to learn from life, of being able to regard everything brought to us by nature and our experience, in such a way that we learn from it, not simply accumulating knowledge, but growing inwardly better and richer — then we have gathered wisdom, and what we have experienced has not been worthless for the life of our souls.

Life has been worthless for us if we pass through decades and still judge something that we have experienced in just the same way as we thought about it earlier in our lives. If we pass through life in such a way, we are most remote from wisdom. Karma may have brought it about that in youth we grew angry, and condemned this or that human action. If we retain this quality we have made poor use of our lives. We have used them well, supposing we formed harsh judgments in our youth, if at a later stage of life we do not judge harshly, but with understanding and forgiveness; if we make the effort of wishing to understand. If we have the character that from birth some things aroused furious anger in us, and if when we are old we no longer grow angry as in our youth, but our anger has left us and we have grown gentler — then we have used life in accordance with wisdom. If we were materialists in our youth, but then allowed ourselves to experience what our time could bring us as revelations from the spiritual world, then we have used our life in accordance with wisdom. If we close ourselves to the revelations of the spiritual world we have not used our life in accordance with wisdom.

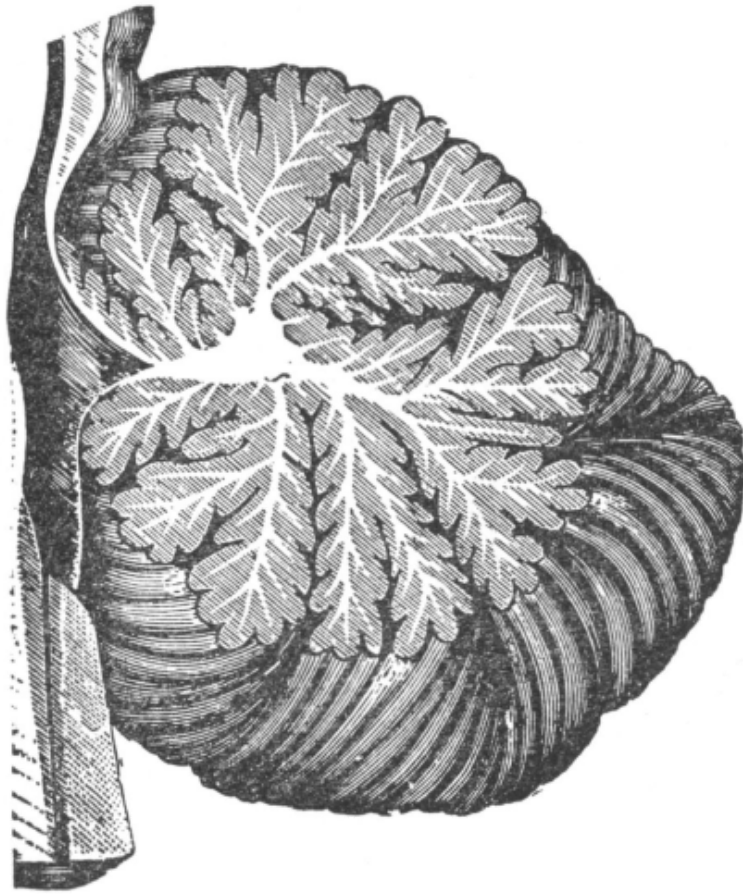
To be enriched in this way, and to achieve a wider horizon, we can call the use of life in accordance with wisdom. What spiritual science seeks to give us is able to help us in opening ourselves towards life, in order to grow wiser. Wisdom is something which strongly opposes human

egoism. Wisdom is something which always reckons with the course of universal events. We let ourselves be instructed by the course of universal events because this liberates us from the narrow judgment made by our ego. Fundamentally, a wise man cannot judge egoistically; for if one learns from the world, and grows in understanding for the world, one allows one's judgment to be corrected by the world; thus wisdom detaches us from narrow and limited vision and brings us into harmony with itself. Much else could be described, in order gradually to form a picture of wisdom. We should not attempt a definition of such ideas, but keep our hearts open, in order to grow wiser, even about wisdom.

Here in the physical world everything which man is to experience in waking life has to use the instruments of external physical and ethereal nature. Between birth and death we are only outside our physical and ethereal body with our soul-being, in so far as this is ego and astral body, during our periods of sleep. In our conscious, waking condition we use as instruments our physical and ethereal bodies. When we fill ourselves with wisdom, when we try in action and thought, in feeling and perception to live in accordance with wisdom, we use those organs of our physical and ethereal bodies which are so to speak the most perfect in our earthly life — those organs which have developed over the longest period, which were prepared by Saturn, Sun and Moon and have come into our lives as a heritage, having reached a certain completion.

I would like to give you from another point of view an idea of what can be understood by more or less perfect organs. Take on the one hand our brain. The brain is not the most perfect organ, but we can still call it more perfect than other organs, for it has needed longer for its evolution. We can compare the brain with our torso, upon which we have our hands. When we intend to do something with our hands, we have the thought: I stretch out my hand, I take the vase, I draw back my hand. What have I done ? I have stretched out not only the physical hand, but also the ethereal and the astral hand, and a part of my ego; the physical hand went with them.

If I only think, clairvoyant consciousness can see how something like spiritual arms stretch out from the head, but the physical brain remains within the skull. Just as my ethereal and astral hand belongs to my physical hand, something ethereal and astral belongs to the brain. The brain cannot follow, but the hands can follow. In a later time the hands will one day be fixed, and we shall only be able to move their astral part. Hands are on the way to become what the brain is already. In earlier times, during the old Sun and Moon periods, what today stretches out from the brain as something that is only spiritual was still accompanied by the physical organ. The skull has now covered it, so that the physical brain is held fast within it during the evolution of the Earth. The brain is an organ which has passed through more stages of evolution. The hands are on the way to become similar to the brain, for the whole man is on the way to become a brain. Thus there are organs which are more perfect, and have evolved into something more self-enclosed, and others which are less perfect. The most perfect organs are used for what we achieve in wisdom. Our ordinary brain is really used only as the instrument for the lowest form of wisdom, earthly cleverness. The more we acquire wisdom, the less we depend upon our cerebrum, the more activity is withdrawn (a thing unknown to external anatomy) to our cerebellum, to that smaller brain enclosed within our skull which looks like a tree. When we have become wise, when we have become wisdom, we find ourselves in fact under a 'tree,' which is our cerebellum and which then especially begins to unfold its activity.



Section of cerebellum, enlarged, showing tree-like structure

Imagine how a man who has become especially wise stretches out the organs of his wisdom mightily, like the branches of a tree. They originate in the cerebellum which remains within the hard covering of the skull; but the spiritual organs stretch far out, and man is under the tree, the Bodhi tree, in spiritual reality.

And so we see too that what we do in wisdom is the most spiritual thing about us, or at least belongs to the most spiritual, for the organs are already at rest. If we do anything with our hands, we must use part of our strength in the movement of the hand. If we form a wise judgment, or decide something wisely, the organs remain at rest, strength is no longer used upon the physical organ. We are there more spiritual; those organs which we use on the physical plane for the development of wisdom are those on which we need to use the least amount of energy — they are in a sense the most perfect.

Thus wisdom is something in the moral life which allows men to experience themselves in a spiritual way. It is connected with this that what man attains in the way of wisdom enables him to reap the greatest harvest from his earlier incarnations. Because we can live in wisdom within the spirit without any effort by the physical organs, we are most able through the life of wisdom to make fruitful what we have won in earlier incarnations for this life, bringing over this wisdom from earlier incarnations.

We have in German a good expression for a man who refuses to become wise. We call him a Philistine. [The German and the English meanings of the word are rather different. (Tr.)] A Philistine is a man who resists the development of wisdom, who wants to remain as he is his whole life through,

without altering his opinions. A man who seeks to become wise makes the effort to carry over the work which he has done and stored up in the course of earlier incarnations. The wiser we become, the more we bring over from earlier incarnations into the present, and if we do not wish to become wise, so that we leave barren the wisdom developed in earlier incarnations, there is then one who comes to saw it off: Ahriman.

No-one likes it better than Ahriman that we fail to grow wiser. We have the power to do it. We have gained far, far more in earlier incarnations than we believe; we won far more during the times in which we passed through the old conditions of clairvoyance. Everyone could become much wiser than he does become. No-one has the excuse that he could not bring much over from the past. To become wise means that one develops what has been won in earlier incarnations in such a way that it fills us in this incarnation.



The Buddha as Tree of Wisdom (sandstone relief from Bharhut, India, c. 2nd. Century B.C.) Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Another virtue can be called — though it is difficult to describe it exactly — the virtue of Courage. It contains the mood which does not remain passive towards life, but is ready to use its strength and activity. It can be said that this virtue comes from the heart. Of one who has this virtue in ordinary life it can be said: he has his heart in the right place. This is a good expression for our condition when we do not withdraw in a timid way from things which life asks from us, but when we are prepared to take ourselves in hand and know how to intervene where it is necessary. When we are inclined to get moving, confidently and bravely, we have this virtue. It is connected with a healthy life of feeling, which develops bravery at the right moment, while its absence brings about cowardice. This virtue can naturally be used in the physical course of life only through specific organs. These organs, to which the physical and ethereal hearts belong, are not so perfect as those which serve wisdom. These organs are on the way to alter, and will indeed become different in the future.

There is a great distinction between the brain and the heart in their relation to cosmic evolution. Suppose that a man goes through the gate of death, and passes through life between death and a new birth. His brain is altogether a work of the Gods. The brain is permeated by forces which leave him altogether when he goes through the gate of death, and for his next life the brain is built up entirely anew, not only materially, but also in its inner forces. That is not the case with the heart.

With the heart it is so, that not the physical heart itself, but the forces which are active in the physical heart, remain in existence. These forces withdraw into the astral and into the Ego, and continue in existence between death and a new birth. The same forces, which beat within our hearts, beat again next time in our new incarnation. What works in the brain has gone; that does not appear in the next incarnation. But the forces active in the heart reappear in the next incarnation. If we contemplate the interior of the head we can say: invisible forces are working there, which compose the brain. But when a man has gone through the gate of death these forces are given over to the universe. But if we perceive a human heart-beat, we perceive spiritual forces which are not only present in this incarnation, but will live too in the next incarnation, having passed through death and a new birth.

Popular feeling has had a wonderful inkling of such things. It is because of this that it is so much concerned with the feeling of the heart-beat, not because the physical heart-beat in itself is valued so much, as because we are looking at something much more eternal when we consider a human heart-beat. If we have the virtue of courage, of bravery, we can use for it only a part of certain forces. We must use the other part for the organs which are the instrument for this virtue. They are organs for which we have still to use part of the forces concerned. If we are not courageous, if we let ourselves go and withdraw timidly from life, abandoning ourselves to our own weight, then we cannot bring to life those forces which have to accompany the use of the quality of courage in life.

When we stand in life in a cowardly way, the forces which should fire our hearts remain unused. They are then seed for Lucifer. He takes charge of them, and we lack them in the next life. To be cowardly towards life means to abandon a number of forces to Lucifer; and these are missing for us, when we seek to build up our hearts in our next incarnation. For these hearts should be the organs, the instruments of courage. We come into the world with defective, underdeveloped organs.

The third virtue reckons with the least perfect organs, those which will achieve a form in the future, of which they contain at present only the seed. This virtue can be called Temperance. [The German word 'Besonnenheit' seems impossible to render adequately in English. 'Temperance' is widely used for Plato's word σωφροσύνη (Tr.)] One shade of it can be called 'Moderation.' We have thus three virtues: Wisdom, Courage, and Temperance.

Now it is possible to be intemperate in the most varied ways. One can be intemperate in excessive eating and drinking; this is its lowest form. Here the soul is absorbed into bodily desire, and we live entirely through our body. But if we take our desire in hand, if we command the body, what it may not do, we are then temperate or moderate. Through such moderation we keep in the right order those forces which ought to help us, in order that we do not abandon the organs concerned to Lucifer in the next incarnation. For we abandon to Lucifer those forces which are expended through giving ourselves up to a life of passion. We do this in the worst way when our passions intoxicate us, and we are content to live in a dreaming, drowsy state.

When we lose our clear consciousness through intemperance we are always abandoning powers to Lucifer. He takes up these powers, and thereby deprives us of the forces which we need for the organs of breathing and digestion. We return with bad organs of breathing and digestion, if we do not practise the virtue of moderation. Those who like to be carried away by their desires, who give themselves up to the life of their passions, are candidates for decadent human beings in the future, for those future human beings who will suffer from all kinds of faults in their physical body.

It can be said that this virtue of Temperance depends upon the least perfect human organs, those organs that are at the beginning of their development and have to be fundamentally transformed. When we consider our organs of digestion and all that is connected with them, they are put in motion by the use of Ego, astral body, ethereal body and physical body. It is different with those organs which are the instruments for Courage. Here our Ego remains more or less outside, and we move freely; only what is astral and ethereal in us is absorbed into the physical. If we go further to the virtues embraced by Wisdom, we retain Ego and astral body in free detachment. For as we become wiser, we develop the organisation of the astral body and achieve control over it. That is the essential thing, that through becoming wise we transform the astral into the Spirit-Self, and only the ethereal accompanies the physical. In the brain only the ethereal accompanies the physical. While during waking life in relation to the rest of the body we are closely connected, at least with our astral nature, with the physical organ, we retain for the brain the condition, which we have in sleep, in the highest degree. Thus we require physical sleep particularly for the brain. For when we are awake we are also outside the brain with our Ego and our astral body, and these have to make the greatest efforts within themselves, without being supported by the external organ.

Thus we find a connection between our human being and the virtues. We can call Wisdom a virtue, which belongs to man as a spiritual being, where with his Ego and his astral body he is freely active, using his physical and ethereal organs only as a kind of basis. We can name Courage as the virtue active where man is only free with his Ego, which is supported by his astral, ethereal and physical bodies. Finally we can speak of Temperance, where the seed contained in our Ego is becoming free; where our Ego is still bound to the astral, ethereal and physical bodies, and yet with our Ego we are beginning to work ourselves free from these bonds.

There is then a virtue which is perhaps the most spiritual of all. This is connected with the whole human being. There is an exercise of the human being which we lose early, which we possess only in the first years of childhood. I have often mentioned this. When we enter the physical plane we do not yet have the attitude which belongs to our human dignity: we crawl, on all fours. I have pointed out that we only achieve the right attitude, the upright position, through our own forces. We develop too through the forces which enter into speech. In the first years of our life we develop the forces which in the main guide us into the position which we have in the world as true men. We do not enter the world in such a way that we already have the right direction in the world. We crawl. But we are set in it rightly, when we direct the head outwards towards the stars. This corresponds to inner forces.

In later life we lose these forces. They no longer appear. There is nothing which enters human life again so radically as learning to walk and stand upright. In relation to standing upright we grow more and more weary. If we begin in the early morning to live with our brain, then when the day is ended we grow tired and need sleep. What makes us upright in childhood, when we are tired, remains tired all through life and grows feeble, and anything comparable to achieving uprightness as children is no longer done by us in later life.

And how do we direct ourselves into life when we learn to speak? Forces of direction work as well when we learn to speak. But the forces which we use in early childhood are not really lost for us in later life. They remain for us, but they are connected with a virtue; with the virtue which is related to rightness and the right, the virtue of all-comprehending Justice, the fourth virtue. The same impulse, which we use as a child when we raise ourselves up from crawling, lives in us if we have the virtue of justice, the fourth that Plato mentions.

Whoever really exercises the virtue of justice puts every thing and every being in its right place, and goes out of himself and into the others. That is what all-comprehending Justice means. To live in Wisdom means to derive the best fruits from the forces we have stored up during earlier incarnations. If we have there to point towards what was imparted to us during earlier incarnations, where we were still permeated by divine forces, with Justice we have to point out still more: we are sprung from the whole universe. We exercise justice by developing those forces which relate us spiritually to the entire universe. Justice is the measure of a man's connection with the divine. In practice Injustice is equivalent to the godless; equivalent to the one who has lost his divine origin; we blaspheme against God, the God from whom we spring, if we do any man injustice.

Thus we have two virtues, Justice and Wisdom, which guide us back to what we were in earlier times, in earlier incarnations in the times when we ourselves were still in the womb of the godhead. And we have two other virtues, Courage and Temperance, which guide us towards later incarnations. We provide all the more forces for these, the less we give to Lucifer. We have seen how what is of the nature of courage and of temperance goes into the organs, and how the organs are prepared thereby for the next incarnation. In the same way moral life extends into the future, when we fill ourselves with spirituality. Two virtues shine out over the past incarnation: Wisdom and Justice. Courage and Temperance shine out over the incarnations to come.

The time will come when men will see clearly that they are throwing themselves into the jaws of Ahriman, when they shut themselves off against justice and wisdom. What was theirs in earlier incarnations, what belonged to the divine world, they would cast over to Lucifer through intemperate or cowardly actions. All that can be seized by Lucifer is taken away from the powers available to us for building up our body in the coming life.

We cannot practise wisdom and justice without becoming selfless, as has been indicated. Only a self-seeking man can be unjust. Only a self-seeking man can be willing to remain unwise. Wisdom and justice lead us out beyond our own Self and make of us members of the whole organism of humanity. Courage and temperance make us in a sense members of the whole organism of humanity; only through experiencing courage and temperance and expressing them in our lives, do we provide for ourselves for the future with a stronger organism to take its place within humanity. We do not then lose what we would otherwise throw to Lucifer. Egoism is of itself transformed into selflessness when it is rightly extended over the whole horizon of life, and man finds his place in the light of the fourth virtue. That is what will be brought by spiritual wisdom for the future of man, and will extend over ethics and the moral life. This will pour into educational method as well. Through understanding wisdom and justice in the sense that I have indicated, the desire to learn all through life will arise. It will be seen that one has to begin learning in the right way when one has already youth behind one — while people think now that they do not need to learn anything more once their youth is past. In this way even the greatest and noblest works of art of the greatest poets are lost. We would understand them best if we took them up again in old age. If people read Goethe's Iphigenia or Schiller's Tell, they usually think: we read that at school already. That is not right; one should not forget that these writings have their best effect if they are read in later life, for then they develop justice and wisdom.

And again the education of children will bring special fruit if the virtue of courage and the virtue of temperance are seen in the right light. Where children are to be educated, these virtues must be regarded in an individual way, by showing the children again and again that they are to take hold of life courageously, and not be afraid or withdraw themselves from all sorts of things; and that they grasp life temperately and moderately, in order gradually to free themselves from their passions. An immense amount can be done for the education of children in this way. In the later course of our study of spiritual science these things will have to be developed in greater detail.

So we see that while otherwise the ethical life only provides laws concerned with life between birth and death, on the external physical plane, the considerations of spiritual science extend to an unlimited horizon. It is the same as with other things in spiritual science. Humanity has had to experience in relation to the science of nature the extension of its horizons. Giordano Bruno showed men that there is not only the earth, but many other worlds in cosmic space. Spiritual science shows men that there is not only earthly life, but many earthly lives. Before Giordano Bruno men believed that there was a fixed boundary up in the sky. Giordano Bruno showed that there is no boundary, that the blue of the sky is not a limit. Spiritual science shows that birth and death are not there, but that we introduce them into life through the limitation of our understanding.

Thus the gulf between the physical and the spiritual can be bridged over. Things which rest upon a spiritual-scientific foundation are like this for those seeking to found a genuine, truthful Monism. Those who often call themselves Monists today manage their Monism very simply. They take one part of the world and make of it a unity by throwing away the other half. True Monism comes about through allowing both halves to have their significant influence upon one another. This comes about through spiritual science. This should not only arise in a significant way for our consciousness, but for the whole of our life. We have to come more and more to the real knowledge, looking out into the world: in all that lives and works around us something super-sensible is present, not only in what is seen by our eyes, but also in what can be perceived by the understanding which is bound to the brain. There are everywhere spiritual forces, behind every phenomenon, behind the phenomenon of the rainbow, behind the movement of the hand, and so on.

If you read the lecture cycle which I held in Leipzig at the turn of the year last year, [*Christ and the Spiritual World*. The search for the Holy Grail (six lectures, Leipzig, 28th December 1913 – 2nd January 1914), published by the Rudolf Steiner Press.] you will find how the Christ Impulse worked through the Mystery of Golgotha, and how Christ lives in the most important affairs of humanity, not only in human conscious knowledge. For instance, there were quarrels about dogmas. But while men were quarrelling, the Christ Impulse lived on and brought about the necessary events.

Take the figure of the Maid of Orléans. In European history the simple shepherd girl appears. She appeared in a remarkable way; there lived in her soul not only those forces, which are otherwise to be found in human beings, but the Christ Impulse works in this personality, enlivening and sustaining her through its mighty influence. She became a kind of representative of the Christ Impulse itself for her time. This she was only able to do, because the Christ Impulse could enter and live within her.

You know that we celebrate the Christmas Festival in the time when the sun has least power, in the deepest darkness of winter, because we can be convinced that at this time the inner light, the spiritual light, has its greatest power.

Old legends tell us that over Christmas, up to 6th January, people have had special experiences, because at this time the life of the earth, and the inner forces of the earth, are most concentrated. Those who have the right disposition for it, experience then in fact the spiritual forces within the earthly forces. Countless legends describe this. The best time for this covers thirteen days before 6th January.

The Maid of Orléans passed through these thirteen days in a particular condition, in a condition in which the life of her feeling was not yet affected by the external world. It is remarkable that the time during which the Maid of Orleans was carried in her mother's body ended during the Christmas time of the year 1411. She was born, having been carried for the last thirteen days in her mother's body,

on 6th January. Before she drew the first breath, before she saw the physical life with physical eyes, she experienced what is earthly during these thirteen days in that sleep, through which man passes before he enters the physical world.

Here I am indicating something immensely significant, which shows how the world is guided from the spiritual; how what happens externally in the physical world is given its direction by the spiritual world; how, through the physical, the spiritual world is flowing.

Thus in our time we must work ever more consciously to remove through spiritual science the gulf between the physical and the spiritual. We do this for one field of our lives, when we become conscious that within our movement the powers of those are at work, who united their soul and body during their earthly life with our movement, and have passed through the gate of death. If we look across to the other bank of the stream, where they are active, feeling ourselves united with them, directing our thoughts towards them — we do this in full consciousness, the consciousness won through spiritual science. We know that we are in the most living connection with those who have gone through the gate of death, and we know that they provide the best powers among us. When we do this, or can think it, we regard life like a field that is to be sown. Between what we ourselves plant, we see plants everywhere springing up, which we could not have grown ourselves. Then we can know: these plants have been put in by those to whom it is granted to be in the world of the spirit, those with whom we feel ourselves connected, those with whom we become united.

Human brotherhood with those as well who no longer bear a physical body — that will be the characteristic sign of this movement and of those who feel themselves as members of this movement, and reckon themselves as belonging to it in the future. Other societies, founded only upon earthly things, will be able to remove many barriers between human beings. The barriers between the living and the dead will more and more be taken away by the movement which unites those men who wish to be united in the sign of spiritual science. We will carry all this in our souls, and keep as an abiding sense this characteristic quality, uniting us with this spiritual movement, which has become dear to us.

Source: https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GreVir_index.html



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