

**Spiritual Soul Instructions  
and  
View of the World**

**GA 52**

**Rudolf Steiner**

(Not a real cover)

RUDOLF STEINER

**Spiritual Teachings Concerning the Soul  
and Observation of the World**

*Eighteen public lectures held in Berlin from 6th September 1903  
until 8th December 1904*

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## Preface to this Edition

The talks of this volume belong to that part of Rudolf Steiner's lecturing work with which he turned to the general public. "Berlin had been the starting point for this public lecturing activity. What was treated in other cities in single talks could be expressed here in a coherent course of lectures whose topics merge into each other. They thereby received the character of a well-founded methodical introduction to spiritual science and could count on a regularly returning audience to which it was crucial to penetrate deeper and deeper into the fields of knowledge being revealed to it anew, while the bases of the understanding of the offered material were given to the newcomers." (Marie Steiner)

Since Rudolf Steiner could correct the transcripts only in few cases because of lack of time, his reservation has to be taken into consideration with all publications of talks: "It has just to be accepted that mistakes may be found in the transcripts not checked by me."

The first of five lecture courses of this volume deals with the eternal core of the human being, the soul, the concept of God, and Christianity in the theosophical view and in the scientific discussion. In the second course, Rudolf Steiner — like in his *Philosophy of Freedom* — indicates the hopelessness and consequences of Kant's philosophy and shows the way to a knowledge of the spirit. There follows the representation of the relation of the soul to the body, to destiny and to the spirit. The historical soul doctrines are compared with the contemporary ones. The explanations about the soul in the hypnotic state already point to the fourth course of lectures which deal with the search for the supersensible experience in spiritism, hypnotism, and somnambulism. In doing so, Rudolf Steiner shows the justified meeting points and the necessary differences between these movements and theosophy. Four talks on challenges of theosophy by questions of the human beings and by the criticism of science finish the volume.

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## The Eternal and the Transient of the Human Being

*Berlin, 6th September 1903*

The object about which I will talk here is certainly one in which all people are interested. Who could say that he is not interested in the question of immortality with all his thoughts? We need only to realise that the human being thinking of death feels a horror. Even the few people who are weary of life and look for rest in death cannot get through this horror completely. One has tried to answer this question in the most different way. Remember, however, that nobody can speak about anything impartially in which he is interested. Will he be able to speak then impartially about this question which is of the deepest interest for his whole life? And, besides, you must take something else into consideration: how much does depend on it for the culture. The development of our whole culture depends on it how this question is answered. The standpoint of somebody to the cultural questions is quite different if he believes in the eternal of the human being.

One hears saying that it was wrong to give the human being this hope of a next world. The poor man would be put off until the next world and would be thereby prevented from creating a better life here. Others say that only in this way existence can generally be endured. If with such a matter the wishes of the human beings are considered so strongly, all the reasons are looked out for it. It would have mattered a little to the human being to prove that two times two are not four if his happiness had depended on this proof. Because the human being could not omit to let his wishes have a say in this question of immortality, it had to be put over and over again. Because the subjective feeling of happiness is involved in this question.

However, just this fact has made this question so suspicious to the modern natural sciences. And rightly so! Just the most significant men of this science expressed themselves against the immortality of the human being. [Ludwig Feuerbach](#) says: "one thought immortality first and then proved it." Thus he suggests that the human being tried to find arguments because he wishes them. [David Friedrich Strauss](#) and recently [Ernst Haeckel](#) in his *World Riddles* express themselves in a similar way. If now I had to say something that violates the modern natural sciences, I would not be able to speak about this question. But just the admiration of Haeckel's great achievements in his fields and for Haeckel as one of the most monumental spirits of the present time lets me take a stand in his sense against his conclusions. Today, something else than fighting against the natural sciences is my object.

Theosophy is not against the natural sciences, but goes with them. But, besides, it does not stop. It does not believe that we have gone so wonderfully far only in the 19-th century; while during all centuries before unreason and superstition would have held sway, now truth has been brought to light only by the science of our time. If truth stood on such weak feet, one could have little confidence. However, we know that truth formed the core in the teachings of wisdom of Buddha, of the Jewish priests et cetera. It is the task of theosophy to search for this core in all different theories. But it also does not spare the science of the 19-th century. Because this is in such a way, we are certainly allowed to deal with the question also from the standpoint of science. It can form the basis that way from which we start if we search for the eternal in the human being.

Feuerbach is certainly right with his remark quoted before if he turns against the method of the science of the last fourteen centuries. However, he is wrong concerning the wisdom of former times. Because the way to guide the human being to the cognition of truth in the ancient schools of wisdom was totally different. Only during the later centuries of Christianity the faith was demanded to which then the scholars produced the proofs. That was not the case in the mysteries of antiquity. That wisdom which was not disseminated just like that, which remained a possession of few people, which was delivered to the initiate by instructions of the priests in holy temple sites, had another avenue to lead their pupils to truth. They kept the knowledge secret to those who were not prepared. One would have regarded it as profaned if one had informed anybody without selection. One only regarded somebody as worthy who had developed his cultural life by means of long exercise to understand the truth in higher sense.

One tells in the traditions of Judaism that when once a rabbi pronounced something of the secret knowledge his listeners reproached him: “o old man, had you been quiet! What have you done! You bewilder the people.” — One saw a big threat betraying the mysteries if they were in everybody’s mouth and would be desecrated and distorted that way. Only in holy shyness one approached them. The probation was strict which the pupils of the mysteries had to go through. Our time can hardly imagine the severe probations which were imposed on the pupil. We find with the Pythagoreans that the pupils called themselves listeners. For years they are only silent listeners, and it is according to the spirit of this time that this silence extended up to five years. They are silent in this time. Silence, that is in this case: renunciation of any discussion, of any criticism. Today where the principle applies: “test everything and keep the best” — where everybody believes to be able to judge about everything where with the help of journalism everybody forms his judgment quickly also about that which he does not understand at all, one has no notion of that which one demanded from a pupil at that time. Every judgment

should be quiet; one had to make oneself able only to take up everything in oneself. If anybody passes sentence without this precondition, starts practicing criticism, he rebels against any additional instruction. Somebody who understands something of it knows that he has to learn for years only and to let a long period pass. Today one does not want to believe this. But only somebody who has understood the matters internally gets to a correct judgment of his own.

At that time, it was not the task to teach faith to anybody by lessons; one led him up to the nature of the things. The spiritual eye was given him to behold; if he wanted, he could test it. Above all, the lessons were purifying ones; the purifying virtues were required from the pupil. He had to take off the sympathies and antipathies of the everyday life which are only justified there. Every personal wish had to be eradicated before. Nobody was introduced to the lessons who had also not taken off the wish of continual existence of his soul. That is why the sentence of Feuerbach does not hold good to this time. No, at first the confidence in the profane immortality was eradicated in the pupils, before they could progress to the higher problems. If you see it that way, you understand why the modern natural sciences turn against the teaching of immortality with a certain right. However, only so far.

David Friedrich Strauss says that the appearance would be contradictory to the idea of immortality. Now, a lot is contradictory to the appearance what an approved scientific truth is. As long as one judged the movement of the earth and the sun according to the appearance, one got no correct judgment about that. One recognised them correctly when one did no longer trust to the eye only. Perhaps, just the appearance is not at all this to which we have to keep in this question. We have to realise: is it the eternal in the human being what we see being passed on or transforming itself? Or do we find it outside? The single flower blossoms and passes, but only that remains and lasts which leaves its stamp on every flower of the genus again. Just as little we find the eternal outside in the history of the states. What once constituted the external forms of the state has passed, what presented itself as a leading idea has remained.

Let us test how transient and eternal come to the fore in nature. You know that all substances of your bodies were not in you seven or eight years ago. What formed my body eight years ago is scattered in the world and has to fulfil quite different tasks. Nevertheless, I stand before you, the same which I was. If now you ask: what has remained of that which made an impression on the eye? — Nothing. That has remained what you do not see and what makes the human being a human being. What does remain of human facilities, of the states? The individuals who created them disappeared, the state has remained. Thus you see that we are wrong if we take the eye for the essential part which only sees the changes, while the essential part is the eternal. It is the task of the spiritual to understand this eternal. What I



was fulfils other tasks. Also the substances which today form my body do not remain the same; they enter other connections and are that which constitutes my physical body today. The spiritual holds it together. If we retain this thought, we recognise the eternal in the human being.

In a different way the eternal appears in the animal realm, plant realm, and mineral realm. But also there we can look at the permanent. If we crush a crystal to powder, for example cooking salt, dissolve it in water and allow it to crystallise again, the parts take on their characteristic shape again. The creative power being inherent in them was the permanent; it has remained like a germ to awake to new work if the cause is given to it. We also see from the plant countless seeds originating, from which new plants arise if they are sowed to the fields. The whole creative power rested invisibly in the seed. This force was able to wake the plants to new life.

This goes up through the animal and human realms. Also the human figure comes from a tiny cell. However, it does not lead us to that which we call human immortality. Nevertheless, if we look closer, we also find something similar. Life develops from life; the invisible stream goes through. However, nobody is probably content with the immortality of the type. The principle of humanness goes in it from generation to generation. But it is only one of the ways to preserve the permanent. There are still other types where the interplay comes to the fore. We take an example from the plant realm to illustrate this.

Hungarian wheat which was brought to Moravia and sown there becomes soon similar to the indigenous one there. The law of adaptation comes into force here. Now it also keeps the once acquired qualities in future. We see how something new happens: the concept of development. The complete world of organisms is subordinate to this law. An idea of development forms the basis after which the imperfect living beings transform themselves to more perfect ones. They change their external constitutions; they receive other organs, so that that which remains preserved develops progressively.

You see that we come to a new kind of the permanent. If the naturalist explains a form of life today, he does not give himself the answer of the naturalists of the 18th century who said: there are as many types of living beings as God created once. — This was an easy answer. Everything that had originated was brought to life by a creation miracle. The natural sciences of the 19-th century freed us in their area of the concept of the miracle. The physical forms owe their origin to the development. Today we understand how the animals transformed themselves up to the monkey to higher forms of life. If we consider the different animal forms as temporal sequence, we recognise that they were not created as those, but came into being developing apart. However, we see even more.

The flowers of some plants possibly experience such substantial changes that one would not believe that they belong to the same type. Nature simply makes jumps, and thus it also lets arise one type from the other under given circumstances. But in every type something remains that reminds of the preceding type; we understand them only apart, not from themselves, but from their ancestors. If one pursues the temporal development of the types, one understands what stands in space before us. We see the development through millions of years and know that in millions of years everything looks differently again. The substances are exchanged perpetually; they change perpetually. In thousands of years the monkey developed from the marsupial. But something remains that connects the monkey with the marsupial. It is the same that holds the human being together. It is the invisible principle that we saw as something permanent in ourselves which was active millennia ago and works on among us even today. The external resemblance of the organisms corresponds to the principle of heredity.

Now, however, we also see how the shapes of the living beings are not only hereditary, but also change. We say: something is inherited, something changes; there is something transient and something remains preserved in the change of times.

You know that the human being corresponds to the physical qualities of his ancestors. Figure, face, temperament, also passions go back to the ancestors. I owe the movement of the hand to an ancestor. Thus the law of heredity projects from the plant and animal realms into the human world. Can this law be applied now in the same way also to all fields of the human world? We must search for own laws in every field. Would Haeckel have done his great discoveries in biology, would he have limited himself to examine the brains of the different animals only chemically?

The great laws exist everywhere, but in every field in own way. Transfer this question to the human life, to the field in which the human beings particularly believe in miracles still today. Everybody knows today that the monkeys developed from more imperfect forms of life. However, people have an exceptional belief in miracles concerning the human soul. We see different human souls; we know that it is impossible to explain the soul by means of physical heredity. Who may explain, for example, the genius of Michelangelo from his ancestors? Who may explain his head form, his figure? Who may get good explanations from the pictures of his ancestors? What points in them to the genius of Michelangelo? This does not only apply to the genius, it applies to all human beings in the same way even if one chooses the genius to prove clearly that his qualities are not to be owed to the physical heredity. Goethe himself felt in such a way speaking in the famous verses for what he has to thank his parents:

From the father I got the stature  
And the serious way of life,  
From mummy I got my cheerful nature  
And the desire of telling stories.

These are, even the gift of telling stories, basically external qualities. However, he could not derive his genius from father or mother; otherwise one would have to sense this also in the parents. We may have to thank our parents for temperament, inclinations, and passions. We cannot search for that which is the most essential of the human being which makes him his real individuality with his bodily ancestors. Our natural sciences only know the external qualities of the human being and try to investigate them. Thus they come to the belief in miracles of the human soul. They investigate the constitution of the human brain. Are they able to explain the human soul from the physical constitution of the brain et cetera? Is that the reason why Goethe's soul is a miracle? Our aesthetics wanted to regard this point of view as the only correct one which one is allowed to take concerning the genius, and think that the genius would lose all magic by explaining. But we cannot be content with this view.

Let us try to explain the nature of the soul in the same way as we investigated the botanical and animal species; that is to explain how the soul develops from lower to higher levels. Goethe's soul stems also from an ancestor like his physical body. How did anybody want to explain, otherwise, the difference between Goethe's soul and that of a savage? Every human soul leads back to its ancestors from which it develops. And it will have successors who come into being from it. However, this advancement of souls does not coincide with the law of physical heredity. Every soul is the forefather of later soul successors. We will understand that the law of heredity which holds sway in space cannot be applied to the soul in the same way. However, the lower principles last beside the higher ones. The chemical-physical laws which hold sway in space determine the external organism. Also we are spun in a web with our bodies in this life. Being in the middle of the organic development, we are subject to the same laws like animal and plant. Regardless of that, the law of the psychic refining takes place. Thus Goethe's soul must have been there once in another form and has developed from this soul form, regardless of the external form, as the seed develops to another type, depending on the law of transformation. However, like the plant has something remaining which outlasts the transformation, also that which remained preserved in the soul has entered into a germinating state, like the grain in the top soil to appear in a new form, when the

conditions have come. This is the teaching of reincarnation. Now we understand the naturalists better.

How should that remain which was not there once? But what is the remaining preserved? We cannot consider that which constitutes the personality of the human being like his temperament, his passions, as the remaining preserved; only the actually individual which was before its physical appearance and remains preserved, hence, also after death. The human soul moves into the body and leaves it again to create a new body after the time of maturity again and to enter in it. What has descended from physical causes passes with our personality at death; we have to look at that for which we cannot find physical causes as the effect of a former past. The permanent part of the human being is his soul which works from the deepest inside and survives all changes.

The human being is a citizen of eternity because he carries something eternal in himself. The human mind feeds itself from the eternal laws of the universe, and only thereby the human being is able to understand the eternal laws of nature. He would only recognise the transient in the world if he were not himself a remaining preserved one. That remains from that which we are today which we incorporate into our imperishable being. The plants are transformed under given conditions. Also the soul has adapted itself; it has taken up a lot in itself and has improved itself. We carry into another incarnation what we experience as something eternal. However, if the soul enters a body for the first time, it resembles a blank sheet, and we transfer on it what we do and take up in ourselves. As true as the law of physical heredity holds sway in nature, as true the law of mental heredity holds sway in the spiritual realm. And as little the physical laws apply to the spiritual realm, as little the laws of physical heredity holds sway over the continued existence of the soul. The old sages, who did not demand belief, before they had founded it by knowledge, were fully aware of this fact.

How is the relationship of the soul in its present condition to its former condition? — This question, which could suggest itself upon you, I would like to answer to you in the following way. The souls are in perpetual development. Differences thereby arise between the single souls. A higher individuality can only develop if it experiences many incarnations. In the usual state of consciousness the human beings have no memory of the former conditions of their souls, but because this memory is not yet attained. The possibility of that is given. Nevertheless, Haeckel speaks of a kind of unaware memory which goes through the world of the organisms and without which some natural phenomena were inexplicable. Hence, this memory is only a question of development. The human being thinks consciously and acts accordingly, while the monkey acts unconsciously. As he has risen gradually from the condition of consciousness of the monkey to conscious

thinking, in the same way he remembers the former incarnations later with progressive perfection of his consciousness. As well as Buddha says of himself: I look back at countless incarnations -, it is true that in future every human being has the memory of a number of former incarnations if this ego-consciousness has developed with every individual human being, as well as it is sure that it exists with single advancers already today. Becoming more perfect in the course of time, more and more human beings will have this ability.

This is the concept of immortality as the theosophist understands it. This concept is new and old at the same time. Once those have taught that way who did not want to teach faith only but knowledge. We do not want to believe and then to prove, but we want to make the human beings able to search for the proofs independently and to find them. Only somebody who wants to co-operate in the development of his soul attains it. He walks from life to life to perfection, because neither the soul came into being at birth nor it disappears at death.

One of the objections which are often made against this view is that it makes the human being unable to cope with life. Let me still go into it with some words. No, theosophy does not make unable to cope with life, but more capable, just because we know what the permanent and what the transient is. Of course, somebody who thinks that the body is a dress which the soul only puts on and takes off again as it is sometimes said becomes unable to cope with life. But this is a wrong picture which should be used by no researcher. The body is not a dress, but a tool for the soul. A tool the soul uses to work with it in the world. And he who knows the permanent and invigorates it in himself uses the tool better than somebody who only knows the transient. He strives for invigorating the eternal in himself by means of constant activity. He carries this activity over to another life, and he becomes more and more capable. This picture lets the thought disappear to nothing that the human being becomes unfit to cope with life because of knowledge. We are able to work even in a more competent and more permanent way if we recognise that we work not only for this one short life but for all future times.

The strength which arises from this consciousness of eternity I may express using the words which [Lessing](#) put on the end of his significant treatise about *The Education of the Human Race*: “is not the whole eternity mine?”

## Notes

Ludwig **Feuerbach** (1804 – 1872), German philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig\\_Feuerbach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Feuerbach)

David Friedrich **Strauss** (1808 – 1874), German theologian and writer  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Strauss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Strauss)

Ernst **Haeckel** (1834 – 1919), German biologist, naturalist, philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst\\_Haeckel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Haeckel)

Gotthold Ephraim **Lessing** (1729 – 1781), German writer, dramatist, philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotthold\\_Ephraim\\_Lessing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotthold_Ephraim_Lessing)

## The Origin of the Soul

*Berlin, 3rd October 1903*

Somebody who speaks today about the nature of the soul exposes himself to misunderstandings and attacks from two sides. Above all, the theosophist, who speaks from his standpoint, from the standpoint of knowledge and cognition, is attacked by the official science, on the other hand, also by the adherents of the various confessions.

Today science wants to know little about the soul, the psyche, even that science which carries psyche in its name, psychology. Even the psychologists would like to refrain completely from that which one calls, actually, the soul. That is why one could stamp the catchword: **psychology without soul**. — The soul is said to be something questionable, something uncertain that one simply investigates, for example, the appearance of different mental pictures like one also investigates a physical process; but one wants to know nothing about the soul itself. The modern natural sciences can impossibly assume anything like a soul. They say that the human mental pictures are also subject to the physical laws like all other phenomena in nature, the human being is nothing else than a higher disposed natural product. Therefore, we should not ask what the soul is. In doing so, one refers to Goethe's word:

According to eternal, Iron,  
great laws  
We all must complete  
Our existence's circle.

Like a rolling stone moves, the human being has to develop according to the eternal laws. On the other side, the religions are against it, which rest on tradition and revelation.

Theosophy is neither an adversary of religion nor of science. It wants to attain truth like the researchers by knowledge, and it does not deny the basic truth of the religions.

This basic truth is often little understood by those who represent the religions. Original, eternal truth forms the basis of all religions. The religions existing today developed from it. Then, however, later ingredients overgrew them. They lost their deeper truth. The core of truth lies behind them. However, science has not yet

advanced so far that it has ascended from the matter to the spirit. It is not yet so far that it investigates the spiritual with the same enthusiasm as it investigates the natural phenomena. Science finds its core of truth in future. So, this higher truth of religion got lost, and science has not yet found it. Today, theosophy stands between them. It falls back on the past, on the lost, and it tries to investigate in the future what has not yet been found. In return, it is attacked by both sides. The habits and the external customs of today are different from those of former times, but in spite of the frequently praised tolerance of our modern time one still tries to intimidate those who represent an uncomfortable opinion. Somebody who speaks of the soul today, like the naturalist speaks of the external facts, is no longer burnt, indeed, but also methods are found to burden and to suppress him.

Nevertheless, we get a certain consolation looking at the future if we judge the present-day relations by the events of the past. When in the 17-th century the Italian researcher [Redi](#) put up the assertion that the lower living beings do not simply arise from something lifeless, he only just escaped the destiny of [Giordano Bruno](#). At that time, one was of the view in general that the lower living beings developed from inorganic substances. The view of Redi is generally valid today, and somebody, who denies the sentence: nothing living comes from the non-living would be regarded as being backward.

In general, [Virchow's](#) sentence is valid: only life from life. — However, the sentence: soul only from soul does not yet find belief even today. But as knowledge has advanced to the insight that life can only originate from life, science takes over the sentence: no soul comes from something without soul. — Then one also looks down at the limited science of our days as it happens today in regard to the opinion of Redi's contemporaries. We stand with regard to the soul on the same standpoint as the scientists of the 17-th century with regard to life. According to the present-day view the spiritual is said to develop from life only; the soul is said to come from the animal being just like that. With compassionate smile one will look down at this view in later times as one smiles today at the view that life comes from something without life. The soul did not grow up from the very basis of the mere life; the soul arose from something spiritual. As life only seizes the form of the animal to present itself, the soul once touched the animal form to spread out. Our knowledge is woven into the current of the external reality, and in doing so we forget what should occupy us mostly. The soul is endlessly close to us. We ourselves are it. If we look into ourselves, we see the soul. This is hard to understand for the human beings. Our observation is directed predominantly to that which is outside us. But should that be closer to us than that which we are ourselves?



The human beings realise the external research today, they are strange to themselves. Why do the human beings understand the truth of the external research so easily and ignore what is the next to them? Nevertheless, the soul is closer and more familiar to them. Any natural phenomenon has only to take the way through the senses. These change and often fake the picture. The colour-blind sees the colours in a different way than they are real. And apart from such exceptional phenomena, we know that all eyes are different; not two human beings see the colours in the identical nuances. According to the eye of the seeing human being, to the ear of the hearing one, the impressions are different. But we ourselves are our souls; we are able to look for it at every moment. It is peculiar that on this knowledge the influence of a great poet is based, namely: how much closer do our souls touch us than everything that is outside us. Tolstoy's emotionalism is based on this knowledge stupefying him. From this view he goes into battle against culture, fashions, and moods.

We do not see our soul only because we have not got used to considering it in its own figure. Today our confidence in the material is invigorated, whereas our ways of thinking have become dull for the soul. Even those who do not adhere to religions make themselves comfortable with researching. Goethe is quoted with preference to their justification. One should think only as little as possible and do research. "Feeling is everything; name is but sound and smoke." With these words by Goethe one wants to disprove the reasons of the soul researchers. Everybody should find everything in his feeling; one believes to remain preserved in a lack of clarity, disregarding the reasons. One seems to take a kind of lyrical approach for the most suitable concerning the soul. Because everybody is so near to the soul, he believes to be able to understand everything out of feeling.

Should these really be Goethe's own views which he allows to pronounce Faust in these words? The dramatist must have the right to let his persons speak out of the situation. If these words which Faust uses towards the childish Gretchen were his creed, why Goethe would let Faust explore all wisdom of the world? "Have now, oh! Philosophy" et cetera. It would be a strange denial of his researching, of his doubtfulness. If we wanted to resign ourselves with nothing else than unclear feelings concerning the soul, would we not resemble to a painter who offers no clear outlines, no copy of that in his picture what he has seen outside, but would be content to express his feeling only? No, the soul cannot be explained by uncertain feeling. Theosophy wants to announce real scientific wisdom and turns just as little exclusively to the feeling as science does it if it explains electricity. Not wallowing in feelings theosophy tries to further the cognition of the soul. No, it turns to frank striving for knowledge. The own soul leads somebody, who tries to investigate it, to those who sat at the feet of the Masters.

Since the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875, it has nurtured real science of the soul. It wants to teach the human beings to behold the soul. Today everybody wants to talk about soul and mind without having taken care seriously to recognise them. Everybody likes to disregard the difficulties which bar his way, therefore, the most dilettantish attempts spread. Theosophy wants to help those who thirst for mental wisdom, and wants to do psychology as seriously as one investigates nature scientifically. These are the difficulties which oppose the soul researcher today where everybody who has not studied them is not allowed to talk about natural sciences; however, everybody is allowed to talk about the soul who has not investigated it.

Of course, the method of investigating is different. The scientist works with physical apparatuses. Using them, he penetrates deeper and deeper into the secrets of nature. The word applies to the soul research that the secrets can be disclosed neither with levers nor with screws. The more the field of observation extends, the more natural sciences can progress. These observations only require the usual healthy human reason. But what the researcher uses of reason in the laboratory is not substantially different from that which is also necessary in business or technology, it is only a little more intricate; however, it is no other procedure.

The spiritual truth deals not only with the healthy human mind; it turns to other forces which rest in the depth of the human soul. It requires a development of the cognitive faculties. The possibility of this development always existed. The origin of all religions goes back to them. Everything that Buddha, that Confucius, that all the great founders of the different religions taught goes back to this deeper spiritual truth. At the moment when the human race was there in such a way as it still exists, the soul was there also, and it could be investigated developing the cognitive faculties.

It was less necessary to extend knowledge than to develop the internal cognition to behold what rests in the soul. In the fields of the external sciences everybody depends on the time in which he lives. Aristotle, the great scholar of antiquity, could not do some scientific observations in the 4-th century B. C. which are possible only today with the help of modern natural sciences. But the soul was there always as something complete, and today one stands more distant to this knowledge only than our ancestors in the dim antiquity because one does not want to investigate the own soul. The Theosophical Society is there to develop this good will. Doing this it does nothing new. This has happened at all times. But as it is easier to investigate what presents itself us physically, soul and mind are also more difficult to recognise and not so easily accessible and to everybody violent. But already in grey antiquity the human beings have observed this multi-formity, this composite character of the soul.

What is the soul? As long as we believe that the soul is something that only lives in the body and leaves it then again, we cannot get knowledge of the soul. No, it is something that is active in us and lives and penetrates all performances of the body. It lives in the movement, in the breathing, in the digestion. But it is not steady in all our activities.

We have arisen from a small cell, like the plant arises from the seed. And like the plant builds itself from the organic forces, from the germ, the human being also develops from organic forces, from the small gametes. He forms the organs of his body as the plant forms its leaves and flowers, and the growth of the human being is the same as that of the plant. Therefore, the old researchers also attributed a soul to the plant. They spoke of the plant soul. They found that the human beings have this activity of building the organs in common with all plants. What builds up all the organs in the human being is something that corresponds to the plant soul. They called it the vegetative soul and regarded the human being as related to nature, to everything organic. The first that forms the human being is something plant-like, hence, one considered the plant soul as the first level of the soul. It created the human organism. It built our body with its limbs, eyes, ears, and muscles, it built our whole body. We resemble the plant concerning growth and structure of our body like every organic being.

If we only had the plant soul, we would not advance beyond the only organic life. But we possess the ability of percipience, of feeling. We suffer pain if we pierce one of our limbs with a needle, while the plant remains untouched if a leaf is pierced. That points to the second level of the soul, to the animal soul. It gives us the abilities of sensing, desiring and moving, what we share with the whole animal realm and call it, therefore, animal soul.

That is why we get the possibility to grow not only like the plants, but to become the mirror of the whole universe. The vegetative soul induces us to take up the substances which form the organism, the animal soul moves us to take up the subordinated soul-life. The sentient life is based on desire and pain. As our vegetative soul could not develop organs if there were not substances around us in the world, also the animal soul can scoop the feeling, the desire only from the world of desires, of the impulses around us. Like without the driving force of the germ no plant could develop from its seed, just as little an animal-like being could originate if it could not fill its organs with impressions if it could not fill his life with desire and pain. Our vegetative soul constructs the organic body from the material world. From the world of desires, the world of kama or the kamaloka, the animal soul takes up the materials of desire in it. If the body were lacking the ability to take up desires in it, then desire and pain would stay away from the plant soul forever. Nothing originates from nothing.

The human being has the soul of desires in common with the animal. The naturalists are right to ascribe the lower soul qualities also to the animal. It concerns, however, a difference of the level. The miraculous facilities of the bee state and the ant state, the dens of the beavers whose regular arrangement corresponds to intricate mathematical calculations prove it. But also in other way the soul increases in the animal up to something similar to the human reason. Technical skills as the human being practices them consciously can be aroused particularly with our pets by training. However, a big distance is present; there is only a dim sensing with the lowest animals, the most developed animals have something like reason to a high degree.

Now this third level of the human soul-life forms the intellectual soul. We would get stuck in the animal realm if we only had an animal soul as we would not advance beyond the plant if we had a vegetative soul only. That is why the following question is so important: does the human being not really differ from the higher animals? Is there no difference?

Somebody, who puts this question to himself and checks it unreservedly, finds that the mind of the human being, nevertheless, towers all animals. If the Pythagoreans wanted to prove the higher soul of the human beings, they emphasised that only the ability of counting would be given to them. Even if anything similar is found with certain animals, the immense difference comes clearly to the fore between animal and human being, because we deal with an original ability of the human soul organs, whereas it is training with the animal. Because the human being can count, he differs from the animal, but also because he advances beyond the animal and the immediate need. No animal advances beyond the immediate need of the temporal and the transient. No animal rises to the real and true, beyond the immediate sensory truth. The sentence that two times two is four must apply at any rate, may the transient truth of the senses lose their validity under other circumstances. May beings live on the planet Mars of which kind ever, may they hear the tone by means of their ears differently, may they perceive colours differently, all thinking beings on all planets must equally accept the correctness of the calculation two times two is four. What the human being gains from his soul, is valid for all times. It was valid for millions of years and will be valid in millions of years because it is descended from the imperishable.

Thus the imperishable part in us which makes us citizens of eternity rests in our transient part, in the animal-like part. As the animal soul is built from the substances of kama, the higher mind soul builds itself from the spiritual realm. Nothing comes into being from nothing. Aristotle, the master of those who had knowledge who was, however, no initiate, arrives at the concept of miracle where he speaks of the spiritual. He constructs the body strictly lawfully from nature, but

he lets the soul come into being every time anew by a miracle of the creator. The soul is a creation from nothing for Aristotle. A new creation is every soul also for the exoteric Christianity of the later centuries. However, we do not want to assume the perpetual miracle of soul creation. Like the origin of the vegetative soul has resulted from the plant, that of the animal soul from the world of the instinctual life, the mind soul has to come into being — unless nothing has to originate from nothing — from the spiritual of the world. We are led to the spirit, to the soul of the universe as [Giordano Bruno](#) expresses it in his works: by the organic forces of the universe and the soul forces of the universe.

Why do we all have a particular soul? Why does every soul have its particular qualities? Science explains the particular qualities of the animals by means of natural development of a species from a species. But every animal species still carries qualities in itself which point to its origin from other animal species.

The spiritual soul can develop only from something individual-spiritual. Just nobody would think that a lion originated directly from the cosmic forces of the universe, as absurd it would be to suppose that the individual soul developed from the general spiritual contents of the universe, from the spiritual reservoirs of the universe. Theosophy stands there on the ground which just corresponds to a scientific view. As sciences let a species develop from a species theosophy lets a soul develop from a soul. It also lets the higher arise from subordinated.

The single soul develops from the universal soul like the animal formed from the general animal principle. According to the soul principle a soul comes into being from a soul. Every soul is a result of a soul and is again cause of a soul. The soul which itself is eternal rises from the eternal origin. Theosophy goes back to the so-called third human race with whose appearance the higher soul element could come to the fore as an impact in the organic. One calls this human race the Lemurian one. Prior to this, the soul element was in the animal. For also the animal world comes from the soul element. It has only taken hold of the animal to fulfil its functions. From there it works from soul to soul.

Hence, education means to develop what rests as an individual in the human being. The first principle of education is to wake this higher soul element resting in every human being. With the animals the single animal coincides with the concept of the genus; a tiger is on a par with the other tiger in any essential part. However, one is not justified to regard a human being as of the same kind as the other human being. The soul of every human being differs from that of the other human being. In order to arouse the soul element in the human being, the art of education must also be different for any individual human being. Because the awakening of the soul forces was the beginning of any education, higher beings had to be there when that third human race rose to spiritual life. The soul did not develop from wildness,

from ignorance. Millions of years ago, when the human beings rose from the only impulsive condition, it did not happen by itself, but by the great teachers helping this human race.

There must also be great teachers who tower above humankind surrounding them, who draw them up to a higher point of view. Also today there are teachers who tower above the present knowledge who reproduce the soul germ. I discuss in an additional talk where these teachers come from. One has known about these leaders of humankind at all times. One of the most excellent philosophers, [Schelling](#), who himself was no theosophist, speaks in one of his often misunderstood works also of them.

These great teachers who can give information about the spiritual who are experts of the soul element whose wisdom is of etheric kind, is a mental cognition, they have supported and led humankind. The Theosophical Society wants to lead the human beings again to these soul researchers. In their middle are these who can give information about the nature of the soul. They cannot come to the fore in the world, they cannot say: accept our truth, because the human beings would not understand their language. The great truth is hidden to most people. The task of the Theosophical Society is to lead the human beings to the sources of wisdom. We have these goals in luminous clearness before us.

Our era has advanced so delightfully far that it denies the existence of the own soul. The task of our movement is to give back this era the confidence in itself and in the eternal and imperishable in us, in the divine core of our being.

### *Notes*

Psychology without soul: Friedrich Albert **Lange** (German philosopher and sociologist, 1828 – 1875) in his work *History of Materialism and Critique of Its Present Significance* (1866)

Redi: Francesco **Redi** (1626- 1697), Italian physician  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco\\_Red\\_i](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco_Red_i)

Giordano **Bruno** (1548 – 1600), Italian Dominican friar, philosopher.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giordano\\_Bruno](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giordano_Bruno)

Rudolf **Virchow** (1821 -1902), German anthropologist, pathologist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf\\_Virchow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Virchow)

Leo **Tolstoy** (1828 – 1902), Russian writer  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo\\_Tolstoy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Tolstoy)

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph **Schelling** (1775 – 1854), German philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich\\_Wilhelm\\_Joseph\\_Schelling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Wilhelm_Joseph_Schelling)

## The Nature of God from the Theosophical Standpoint

*Berlin, 7th November, 1903*

The theosophist does not dare so easily to speak about the knowledge of the primary source of all matters. Theosophy should be the way to be able to seize, finally, this concept with our mental faculty; it should show us the way which would lead us to get clearness, as far as it is to be got, about this idea. This way is long and leads through some stations, and we are not allowed to pass any single station only, but on every station we have to stop and learn.

Not only the starting point, but also the keystone is important. If we have this in mind, we have to go a little into the nature of theosophical life to see which views theosophy has on the concept of God. Theosophy is — as it is striven for since 1875 in the society founded by Mrs. Blavatsky — something different from that which one calls western science, which our western civilisation and its scholarship strives for in the external life. The way how the western knowledge is gained differs basically from the theosophical wisdom.

Theosophical wisdom is very old, as old as the human race, and somebody who becomes engrossed in the evolution of the human being gets to know more about the starting point of the human being than that which our history of civilisation of the last decades has believed in such a thoughtless way that the human beings started from a lack of culture and from ignorance. We shall see how it is in reality if we become engrossed in the life of primeval times. There we see that the development of human mind started from a strong spiritual strength of beholding that in the beginning of the human development real divine wisdom existed everywhere. Who studies the old religions receives the light of this wisdom. Now our time, according to the sense of our life, gives the theosophist a renewal of this cultural life which flows through the whole humankind.

Our western cultural life is based on our mind first of all. It is based on the one-sided mental strength. If you go through our whole civilisation in the West, you find our great discoveries and inventions, our sciences and what they have contributed to the clarification of the riddle of the world. You find thinking, sensible thinking, observation with the senses et cetera. In this manner the western mind spreads out its knowledge to all directions. It investigates the cosmic space with the help of instruments, with the telescope and penetrates with the microscope into the world of the smallest bodies. It connects everything with the mind. Our western knowledge thereby spreads in all directions. We know more and more



about our surroundings, but we never get to a deepening of our knowledge, namely penetrating of the matters. That is why it may not surprise us if the western science does not cope with the concept of God. We must get to the spring of existence, to the spiritual being. They cannot be connected and perceived by the senses; they must be perceived in a different way.

Those who know that there is another way than the western one try to attain wisdom in quite a different way. Go back to the wisdom of Egyptian priests, back to the Greek mysteries, back to India, go back to all these religions and world views and you find that those who looked for wisdom did this in quite a different way than the European scholarship. It was a self-education, a self-development what was searched for by the pupils of wisdom above all.

They searched for self-education through honest struggle of the human soul, and tried to gain higher wisdom. From the start they were convinced that the human being, as he is born in the world, is determined for advancement, for higher development. They were convinced that the human being is not perfect that he cannot attain the top level of perfection immediately in one single life that a development of the human being and his soul capacities have to take place, like with the plant whose root remains even if leaves and flowers dry up. It is similar if we are going to have to take the self-education in our own hands correctly which produces flowers and fruit in the life on earth if we work on it seriously.

The pupil strove for wisdom that way. He looked for a guide for himself. This gave him clues how he could develop his astral organs by an appropriate way of life. Then he developed upward step by step. His soul became able to behold farther and farther, it became more and more sensitive for the primary sources of existence. On every new level he attained new insights. With every level he approached the being whose concept we have to discuss today. He realised that he did not understand God using his intellect. That is why he tried to advance above all. He was convinced that in the whole nature and also in the human soul the God being is to be found. This God being never is anything ready and finished; it is as developing factor in all living beings, in all things. We ourselves are this God being.

We are not the whole, but we are droplets of the same quality, of the same essence. Deeply below us in concealed abysses and bottoms, which are not on the surface of the day, there is our real divine nature. We have to search for it and to get it up. Then we also get up a little bit what hovers about our usual existence, and then we also get up in ourselves what is divine in us. Each of us is as it were a beam of divinity or, we say, a reflection of divinity. If we imagine the divinity as the sun, each of us is like a reflection of the sun in the drop of water. As well as the drop of water reflects the sun completely, every human being is a true, real

reflection of the divine being. The God being rests in us, only we know nothing about it; we must get it out of ourselves. We must only approach it. Goethe says: he cannot understand how somebody would want to immediately reach the divinity. We must approach it more and more. Self-development leads us gradually to the understanding of the primary foundation of life.

If we develop this way, we exercise nothing else than theosophical life. Everything that spiritual science teaches and recommends living, all great laws which it makes clear to us and which its students who want to co-operate really make it the living truth in them. They get to know the teaching of reincarnation and karma, the law of destiny, of the intermediate beings, of the primary source of all being which controls the whole universe. This is the internal world which we call the astral one and the mental one, the world of buddhi and the world of atma. We experience something of all those worlds, and what we experience of those worlds is the steps to wisdom which lead us to the loftiest. If we try to climb up these steps, it is a long way. Only those who have arrived at the highest summit of human development are able to see once that they have an inkling of the size of that concept which we want to discuss today as intimation.

Hence, the shyness with which theosophy speaks about the concept of God. The theosophist speaks about these concepts possibly in the same attitude as a Hindu speaks of Brahma. If you ask him: what is Brahma? — Then he maybe mentions to you: Mahadeva, Vishnu and Brahma. Brahma is one of the divine beings or rather an expression of the divine being. But behind all that something different rests for the Hindu. Behind all beings to which he ascribes the origin of the world something rests that he calls Brahma or Brahman. Brahman is neuter. If you ask him what is behind the beings of which he speaks, he says nothing about it.

He says nothing about it, because one cannot speak about it anymore. Everything that the human being is able to say in this direction is hints, hints in that perspective at whose end the divine being is for us. — That also leads to the motto of our Theosophical Society. Perhaps, you know this motto. It expresses nothing else than what I tried to outline now with some words. This motto is normally translated with the words: no religion is higher than truth. — We want to see how far the whole theosophical striving goes in that direction. — What do we know about the human striving? Human knowledge has to make every effort to penetrate the secrets of existence and to find the primary sources of life with the help of the different philosophies and world views.

Let us have a look at the different religions. Apparently they are contradictory to each other; however, they are contradictory only if one looks at them cursorily. If we consider them deeper, they are connected. Indeed, they do not have the same contents: Christianity, Hinduism, Zarathustrism, and natural sciences do not have

the same contents, too. Nevertheless — all these different world views show nothing else than attempts of the human mind to approach the primary source of all being. On different ways you can get to the summit of a mountain. From different points of view a region looks different, and thus the original truth also looks different from different points of view.

We all are different from each other. The one has this; the other has that character, this or that mental development. However, we all also belong to a people, a race, and an age. It was always this way. But because we belong to a people, a race, and an age and have characters, we have a sum of different sensations and feelings with the human beings. They form the different languages in which the human beings put questions to themselves and communicate about the riddles of life. The Greek could not form the same mental pictures as the modern human being because the look was totally different by which he saw the world. Thus the theosophist sees different aspects, different kinds of wisdom everywhere. If we look for the reason of it, we see that we have a concealed original wisdom, which reveals itself time and again and which is identical with the divine wisdom.

What have the human beings formed in the course of time, and what will they always form? They form opinions. We deal with opinions. The one opinion is different from the other; the one stands above the other. We have the obligation to ascend to higher and higher opinions. But we have to realise that we must go far beyond the sea of opinions. Truth itself is still hidden in the opinions at the moment, it is still covered, and it still appears in different forms and aspects. However, we are allowed to absolutely have these opinions if we take the right point of view on the opinions and truth.

We are never allowed to believe to understand truth — which Goethe regards as identical with the divine — with our limited abilities. We may never dare to believe that an end of thinking is possible. If we are aware of that, we feel something that goes beyond it, and then we have something of that which theosophy calls wisdom-filled modesty in the higher sense of the word. The theosophist comes out of himself with his sensations and his thinking. He says to himself: I must have opinions, because I am only a human being, and it is my spiritual obligation to form thoughts and concepts of the riddles of existence; but I have something in myself that cannot be brought in a restricted concept; I have something in myself that is more than thinking that goes beyond thinking: this is life.

This life is the divine life which flows through all things which also flows through me. — It is that which helps us along, that which we can never encompass. We will never be able to encompass it. If, however, we admit that we will have reached something higher in distant future, we have to admit also that we have other opinions in distant future which are higher than those we have now. But you cannot

have the lively life which is in us in different way. You cannot have this in a different way; for this life is the divine life which leads to the higher thoughts which still come to us which we also have once. If we have this sensation of the concepts — especially of the concepts of the divine nature, then we say to ourselves: truth is identical with divinity, the divine lives in my veins. It lives in all things and it also lives in me. — If we think this thought in ourselves, it is divine, but it is not God himself and cannot enclose God. There we must say to ourselves: beyond any human opinion, beyond any temporal or national opinion the original truth goes which reveals itself to you which we must feel and which we must look for ambitiously. But no human opinion is higher to us than this living sensation for the unfathomable wisdom and divinity which expresses itself in that which I told now. We may be convinced that we are enclosed in the divinity that God works in us if we are living beings. This is the sense of the theosophical motto: No human opinion stands higher than the living sensation of the divine wisdom which always changes and never shows itself as a whole. — Then we may also not wonder if we look at the matter in such a way that Goethe's saying is right:

Somebody is as his God is; Therefore,  
God is mocked so often.

Indeed, we human beings can form no other concept of the divine being as such which is adjusted to our respective capacities. But if we have a look at the matter in such a way as we have just looked at it, we have to say: however, we are also justified to form a suitable concept of the divine. Only one thing is necessary, and this is: having the good will not to stop there. It would be presumptuous to believe that we have reached the original wisdom. It is also presumptuous by science if it believes to have now explained the concept of God. In this regard our present civilisation is really once again on one of those low points on which humankind is sometimes.

Our present civilisation is somewhat presumptuous concerning the concept of God as you know. Just those who want to have a new Bible, a so-called story of natural creation were often presumptuous so that they could not advance. There is a writing by [David Friedrich Strauss](#) with the title *Old and New Faith* which appeared in 1872 and supports the opinion that it is a new Bible compared to the old Bible and that that which comes from sciences is true. For they undermine the Bible in such a way that these concepts must be thrown away.

Believe me that these are the best who are set on such a mania today that they are the best who think in good confidence that we reach the very basis of existence spreading the human knowledge that we come from matter and energy. What is this

materialistic belief in God which meets us there? These are often excellent personalities who have advanced so far that they say: matter is our God.

These whirling atoms which attract and push off themselves mutually should cause what constitutes our own soul. What is the materialistic belief in God? It is atheism! This can be compared with a religious level which exists, otherwise, in the world which we can find, however, only correctly if we have the typical concepts of the materialistic new faith. It is dead matter and dead energy the materialist offers and adores. Let us look back at the times of ancient Hellenism and not take the deep mystery religions, but the national religion of the Greeks. Their gods were human, were idealised human beings.

If we go back to other levels of existence, we find there that the human beings adored animals that plants were symbols of the divine to them. But these all were living beings. These were higher levels than that which the completely savages had who walked towards a stone block and adored it as animated. The stone block differs in nothing from that which is energy and matter. As incredible it sounds, the materialists stand on the level of such fetish adorers. They say, of course, that they do not adore energy and matter at all. If they say this, we reply to them: you have no correct concept of what the fetish adorer feels to his fetish. The fetish adorers are not yet able to rise to a higher idea of God. Their culture does not allow it to them. It is a legitimate opinion for them to adore an image they make for themselves. Of this opinion are today not only the savages but also the materialists. Somebody, who is today a scientific fetish adorer, who makes the image of matter and energy to himself and adores it, is to blame for something. He could see by virtue of the cultural level achieved by us if he only wanted it, on what a low level he has stopped.

As we are today surrounded by this virtually paralysing idea of God, we say to ourselves: this is a reason why we speak of the idea of God. — Hence, I may point to a book. One says it is a great merit of [Feuerbach](#), the philosopher, that he represented a so-called “fantastic” God. Feuerbach published a book in 1841 and took the view that we should turn round the sentence: God created the human being according to his image — and say: the human beings created God according to their image. — We have to realise the fact that the wishes and needs of the human being are in such a way that he likes to see something above himself. Then his imagination creates an image of him. The gods become images of the human being. — With it Feuerbach, one says, expressed a lofty wisdom.

If we go back to the times of the ancient Hellenism, back to the Egyptians et cetera, again and again the human beings formed ideas of the gods in such a way as they were themselves. Thus they could also form bull and lion images of gods. If the human beings were similar to bulls in their souls, then the bulls became their

gods. The gods became similar to bulls. If people were similar to lions, the lions and lion-like images became their gods. This is no new wisdom. It is a wisdom which spreads in our time only again.

However, is it then not true that really the human being creates his gods to himself? Is it not true that our opinions about the gods arise from our own chests? Is it not true that — if we look around in the world — we do not see the divine with the eyes, with our senses? Somebody who wants to look with the senses and understand with his mind speaks that way as for example Du Bois-Reymond, the great physiologist: I would believe in a ruler of the universe if I could prove him; if I could prove him like the human brain. Then, however, I would be able to prove nerve strands also outside in the world, as well as I can prove nerve strands in the human body. In the outside world, as Du Bois-Reymond and the younger ones want it, we cannot find the divine. Their opinions are created from their own chests like Feuerbach says.

But one can also say: what speaks in the human soul if this human soul forms thoughts and opinions? — We know that we ourselves are parts of this divine being; we know that God lives in us. We know that we human beings are the last member of all things that surround us in the physical world, so to speak, the noblest and most perfect beings within this world. Have we not to say that the human being, in so far as he forms himself physically, forms himself according to God as the most perfect being? Who does not agree with Goethe as he expressed his opinion with the nice words:

“If the healthy nature of the human being works as a whole if he feels being in the world like in a great, nice, worthy and valued whole if the harmonious pleasure grants a pure, free delight to him: then the universe if it could feel would rejoice because it would have reached its purpose and would admire the summit of its own evolution and being.”

The human being forms thoughts; the thoughts stream from the human breast. But what speaks out of the human breast? God himself speaks out of it — if the human being is only inclined to hear this inner voice unselfishly, not to let drown it by his interests and inclinations of the everyday life. It is this: indeed, it is a human voice, but God’s voice is in the human voice. That is why it does not come as a surprise if we have different aspects, different views about the old divine wisdom in the human voice. A higher spiritual modesty is that which must penetrate the theosophist if he wants to obtain this concept of God. Above all, he has to realise that life is a continual study that he never closes with an opinion; that everything is developing. Also the human soul is developing. Then it turns out that there are

souls of lower and higher levels. There are also souls which have not yet far advanced in their idea of God, and on the other side there are souls which have advanced beyond the ordinary for a long time and have acquired lofty world concepts and also lofty concepts of God.

European and American knowledge regards itself as wise and elated that nothing outstrips it. Everybody believes that he has the sum of all wisdom. Somebody who adheres to oriental or to theosophical wisdom is completely different. He says to himself: every day you can overtake what you have achieved if you continue the way. Everything you have achieved is your inner possession. But you are not allowed to rest; you must go on and hear to the voice in nature and in your own breast.

Nothing is as perishable for the western culture as our criticism getting out of hand. Because it is never prepared from the point of view that one has to develop that one is never allowed to have a closed judgment about a matter. The theosophist will never have this. He says to himself with boldness and courage what he has recognised as true: I arouse the same sensation in everybody, who wants to hear me, that I long for higher levels and higher summits of existence and wisdom. — The theosophist talks to himself that way. We never reach the end of soul development; we never have a closed world. We look for the way which leads us to knowledge beyond our senses to the higher worlds which gives us a right sensation above all. Even if each of us were an advanced being, we would have to look deeper and deeper into the world, to recognise the sources of life deeper than we are able today standing within the western life and feeling. We should behave as advanced human beings. That is why it is also so difficult to fulfil the wisdom which flows to us from advanced beings who have already developed to a higher level than the everyday person. These are beings who have to say a lot to us. We must have a sensation of grandeur; then we learn to listen.

In this attitude theosophy wants to build up a spiritual current and to bring up a centre of humankind which believes honestly and really that the human soul is a product of development. If the worm which lived at that time had said millions of years ago: I have arrived at the summit of existence, then the worm could not have developed to the fish, the fish not to the mammal, not to the monkey and not to the human being. Unconsciously they have believed that they have to go beyond it that they have to grow up to higher and higher levels. They believed a little bit in that which takes up their being and that is the strength of their development. We human beings cannot really feel against nature. We should feel with nature. What nature has unconsciously as strength of development in itself which we should become more and more aware of, this consciousness should be the strength of our development. We have to realise that we must develop beyond ourselves. Just as

outside in the animal realm the imperfect mammal lives beside the perfect one, as the one lagged behind as it were on a lower level, the other reached a higher level earlier and lives beside the lower one, just the same also applies to the human beings. In humankind the different human beings live side by side on different levels of development.

We have to admit that our concept of God is a petty one compared to that which a lofty being has. We have also to admit that our present-day concept of God is pettier compared to that which humankind will have in millions of years if it has developed further. Therefore, we have to move the concept of God in an infinite perspective and to carry it as life in ourselves. The theosophical concept of God distinguishes from all other that we have to approach it that we have to take care for it. We deny none of these concepts. We realise that they all are justified according to the human abilities. But we also realise that none of them is exhaustive. We realise that we cannot join those who sow discord between the different opinions. The different religions have to be side by side and not against each other.

And now what do we call the concept of God? It is not pan-theism, not a pantheistic concept, not an anthropomorphic concept, not an outlined concept. We do not adore this or that God, we adore Brahman behind Brahma whom the Hindu reveres who is more sensitive of the matters about which he remains silent. We realise that we can experience this God Being in life. We cannot imagine it, but it lives in us as life. This is not knowledge of God, not science of God; theosophy is also not theology. Theosophy wants to find the way; it is the search for God. A German philosopher said only short but striking words concerning this matter. [Schelling](#) said: can one prove the existence of existence? — The different proofs of the existence of God cannot be guides to God; they deliver an imagination of God at most. A real proof is only necessary if a matter has to be reached by our concept. God lives in our actions, in our words. It cannot be a matter of proving the existence of God but of gaining opinions of it only and of taking care that they become more and more perfect. It is that which it concerns, and the Theosophical Society has set it as its goal to collaborate on it.

Those who represent the theological point of view have no sensation, no inkling which sensations pointed the way in this regard in past times. I would like to remind you of a spirit of the 15-th century who set the tone and was actually theosophist even then, theosophist completely in our sense. He was a Catholic cardinal. I would like to remind of the sensitive theosophist [Nicholas of Cusa](#) because he can be an ideal for the modern theosophists. He expressed that in all religions a core is contained that they are different aspects of an original religion that they should be reconciled that they should be deepened. One should search for truth in them, but not claim to be able to grasp the original truth immediately.



Cusanus tries to get the concept of God clear in his mind in a profound way. If you understand this view of Cusanus, you get an idea of the fact that Christianity had significant, deep spirits also in the Middle Ages, spirits of a type that one cannot have any concept of them using our ideas. Thus Cusanus says — and also still some other predecessors: we have our concepts, our thoughts. Where come all our human ideas from? From our surroundings we have experienced. What we have experienced, however, is only a small part of the infinite. If we go to the highest concept and take the concept of being: is this not also a human concept? Where we have the concept of being from? We live in the world. It makes an impression on our senses of touch, on our eyes. We say of that which we see or hear: it is. We attribute the being to it. “A thing is” means basically as much as: I have seen it. — “Being” (*German: sein*) has the same root as “seeing” (*sehen*). If we say: God is, we attribute an idea to God which we have got only from our experience. We say nothing other than: God has a quality which we have perceived in different things. Therefore, Cusanus expressed a word which is deeply characteristic. He says: not the being has to be attributed to God, but the super-being.

This is not an idea which we can get with our senses. That is why the sensation of the infinite also lives in Cusanus. It is deeply affecting if this cardinal says: I have studied theology in my whole life, have also pursued the sciences of the world and have also understood them — as far as they are to be recognised with reason. But then I noticed in myself, and thereby I have got to know: in the human soul a self lives which is woken more and more by the human soul. — You read that with Cusanus. The meaning of that which he says goes far beyond that which we think and conceive today.

As necessary as it is that we come to clear and sharply outlined concepts of all that which we experience in the world, it is also necessary that we are aware at every moment concerning the concept of God that our sensation must go beyond everything that we perceive with the reason and with the senses. Then we realise that we should not recognise God but search for Him. Then we see more and more the way of the knowledge of God and develop to this. If God is not closed life, but living life, we wait, until the methods of theosophy have developed higher spiritual forces in us. God rules not only in this world, but also in those worlds which only somebody can behold whose spiritual eye is opened for all those worlds of which theosophy speaks. It speaks of seven levels of the human consciousness. It knows that human development means: not stopping at the physical level of consciousness, but ascending to higher and higher levels.

Somebody, who does this, experiences a subordinated concept of it at first. Nevertheless, we are never allowed to despair, but have to realise that we are justified to form higher and higher opinions of the God being that it is, however,

presumptuous to believe that one day an opinion exhausts the object. We have to realise that we must have the right sensations and feelings in ourselves, then our feeling becomes devout again, then we become reverent again. We have lost reverence because of our European thoughts. We have to wake reverence and devotion anew. What could arouse our reverence more than that which exists as a divine being, as a primary source of existence! If we learn to develop devotion again, our soul is warmed up and set aglow by something totally different, namely by that which flows through the universe as blood of life. This becomes a part of our being.

[Spinoza](#) speaks about that, too. Spinoza developed concepts of the divinity in his *Ethics*, and he closes his *Ethics* with a literary hymn on the divinity. He closes them in this sense: only that human being has got to freedom, only that human being also creates a deep feeling, a feeling, which allows the divinity to flow into him, whose knowledge combines in love. Amor dei intellectualis — recognising love for God, that is: the love for God resting in the knowledge of the spirit is God's love. This is not a concept, not a restricted idea, but living life.

That is why our concept of God is not a science of God, but we let flow everything we can experience as science together into a lively feeling, into a feeling of the divine. The word theosophy should not be translated as “wisdom of God,” but as “divine wisdom” or even better: the search for a way to God, the search for a perpetually increasing apotheosis. “Search for wisdom”, that is it.

Those who exerted themselves and advanced to higher levels of existence stood always on this ground more or less. Among others also Goethe who was much more theosophist than one normally suspects who is, above all, the theosophical poet of the Germans. He can be understood completely when he is illuminated with the light of theosophy. Among many other truths which rest covertly in Goethe's works the motto of theosophy can also be found there. At a prominent place, Goethe expressed: no religion is higher than truth. — Goethe was deeply convinced of that.

As well as any existence is formed also our thoughts are formed. As any formed being is an allegory, our ideas of God are also allegories of God — but never the divine itself. Concerning the transient concept of God and the image of the imperishable Goethe's word is correct:

Everything is transitory  
Is only a symbol.

Faust II, verse 12 104 f.

## *Notes*

David Friedrich **Strauss** (1808 – 1874), German theologian and writer  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Strauss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Strauss)

Ludwig **Feuerbach** (1804 – 1872), German philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig\\_Feuerbach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Feuerbach)

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph **Schelling** (1775 – 1854), German philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich\\_Wilhelm\\_Joseph\\_Schelling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Wilhelm_Joseph_Schelling)

**Nicholas of Cusa** (1401 – 1464), German theologian, philosopher, astronomer  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas\\_of\\_Cusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_of_Cusa)  
Cf. CW 7 Mystics after Modernism (Anthroposophic Press, 2000, 71ff)

Baruch **Spinoza** (1632 – 1677), Jewish-Dutch philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch\\_Spinoza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch_Spinoza)

## Theosophy and Christianity

*Berlin, 4th January 1904*

Often one still confuses the Theosophical Society with the Buddhist world view. On occasion I ventured to remark in these monthly meetings that at the Theosophical Congress in Chicago in 1893 the Indian Brahman [G. N. Chakravarti](#) himself said that also for him theosophy has brought something absolutely new or at least a complete renewal of the world view. At that time he expressed that any spiritual world view, also of his people in India, has given way to materialism, and that it was the Theosophical Society which renewed the spiritual world view in India.

From that one can already conclude that we did not get theosophy from India, as well as one has to admit, on the other hand, if one follows the theosophical movement, as it has developed in last decades, that it has tried more and more to explain all other religious systems that it has tried more and more to bring the core of truth to light not only of the more oriental, but also of the western religions.

Today it is only my task to outline the way how true, real theosophy is to be found in the really understood Christianity, or rather, it is my task to characterise the standpoint of the Theosophical Society compared with Christianity.

The theosophical movement wants to be nothing else than a servant of Christianity. It wants to serve trying to extract the deepest core, the real being from the Christian denominations. Thereby it expects to take nothing away from anybody who is attached to Christianity whose heart is connected with Christianity. On the contrary, those who understand the theosophical movement know that just the Christian can receive a lot that many disputes, which have today taken place everywhere in the Christian confessions, must disappear if the true core, which can be, nevertheless, only a core, comes to the fore.

Of course, I cannot exhaust this big topic in great detail and comprehensiveness, and, hence, I ask you to make do with few lines which I am able to give. But it is time to give this just now what I am able to give.

Our present is not a time which likes to rise to the lively spirit. Indeed, there are ideals at which the human beings look up, and they speak a lot of ideals, but that they could realise the ideals that the spirit could be active and that it is the task to recognise it, the 19-th and the beginning 20-th centuries do not want to know. Our time thereby differs quite substantially from the time of the great spirits who developed Christianity originally following the founder of Christianity. Go back to the early times of Christianity, possibly to [Clement of Alexandria](#), and you will find

that at that time all scholarship, all knowledge was there only to understand one matter: to understand how the living word, the light of the world could become flesh. Our time does not like to rise to such heights of the spiritual view. As well as we have limited ourselves with regard to the scientific view to see the purely actual what the eyes see what the senses can perceive, also the confessions are really full of such materialistic views. Just the representatives of such materialistic views will believe to understand the confession best of all. They do not know how strongly unconsciously materialistic thoughts have taken place there. Let me only give a few examples.

The 19-th century has tried to put up with Christianity in serious work. One went to work critically above all and tried to investigate the documents in strictly scientific way, to which extent historical-actual truth exists in them. Yes, “actual” truth, this is that which also religious scholars strive for today. To the letter one investigated in every way whether the one or the other evangelist says the pure, actual truth what could have really occurred what could have taken place before the eyes of the human beings once. It is the object of the so-called historical-critical theology to investigate this. We see how under these tasks the image of the God Who became flesh has taken on a materialistic colouring gradually. Let me state something that always preoccupies those who search for truth.

David Friedrich Strauss started during the thirties of the 19-th century to historically investigate the actual core of the Gospels. After he had tried to make clear what such a core of historical truth is, he tried to outline a picture of Christianity independently. Now this picture which he outlined is really out of the spirit of his time, out of the spirit which could not believe that once something could have been realised in the world that outshines humankind by far, something that comes from the heights of spirit, something that is born out of the real spirit. What did David Friedrich Strauss find? He found that the real Son of God cannot present himself in a single personality. No, only the whole humankind, the human kind, the type can be the real representation of God on earth. The struggle of the whole humankind, symbolically understood, is the living God, but not a single individual. All the stories about the person Jesus Christ that formed in the times in which Christianity came into being are nothing else than myths which the imagination of the peoples created. — The Son of God evaporated to a divine ideal with David Friedrich Strauss as a result of his endeavours to show the Son of God as the struggle and striving of the whole humankind.

Now, look around in the Gospels, look in the Christian confessions — you never will find a certain word in them, and you will nowhere find a certain idea with Jesus: the idea of the ideal human being in the way as Strauss formed it. One does nowhere find the human type, thought in the abstract. This is characteristic that the

19-th century has come to an image of Jesus from an idea which Jesus did never suggest nor express in his life.

Also still others tackled this task bit by bit to verify the content of the Gospels critically. I cannot give you examples of the different phases; this would go too far. But during the last years a word was often said which shows how little sympathetic it is to our time to look up to God, to the spiritual being, which should have found fulfilment in a personality, in similar way as in the first Christian century when all scholarship, all wisdom, all knowledge was to be used to understand this unique phenomenon. A word was said there, and this word is: the simple man from Nazareth. One dropped the concept of God. One wants — this is, finally, the trend which is included in these words — one wants to accept this personality which stands at the beginning of Christianity only as a human being and wants to understand everything that one regards as dogma as imagination floating in the clouds. One wants to remove everything and consider the personality of Jesus only as a human being, who is of a higher rank, indeed, than the other human beings who is, however, a human being among human beings who is equal in certain respects to the other human beings. Thus also the theologians want to pull down the image of Christ to the field of the purely actual.

These are two extremes which I have demonstrated, on the one side, the concept of God evaporating the image of God, presented by David Friedrich Strauss, on the other side, the simple man from Nazareth, which contains nothing but a doctrine of general humanness. This is basically nothing else than what also those can accept who want to know nothing at all about a founder of Christianity.

We have also seen adherents of a general moral philosophy working out that Jesus basically had and taught the same moral philosophy as it is preached today by the “Society for Ethical Culture.” They believe to raise Jesus if they show that already before the 19-th century people have born witness to that which we got from Kant’s speculation or from the Enlightenment. — However, in truth we deal with doctrines which were once the highest mystery, and the contents of this wisdom were only given to those who had risen to the heights of humanity.

Do we ask ourselves, are we still anyhow on the ground of the Gospels if we take the one or the other of these concepts of Christ? Today I cannot explain why I do not share the view of many of the learnt theologians that the fourth Gospel should be less significant than the three other ones. Somebody who checks the procedure clearly sees no reason why the St. John’s Gospel — which just raises us so much — was deposed, so to speak, because one strove for real facts.

One believes that the three Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke show more the human being, the simple man from Nazareth, while the John’s Gospel demands to recognise the Word that became flesh in Jesus. Here the unaware wish which lives

in the souls was the father to the thought. If, however, the John's Gospel is less entitled to authenticity, it is impossible to keep up Christianity. Then we cannot say anything about the Christian doctrine of the personality of Jesus than that he is the simple man from Nazareth. But nobody, neither I nor others who look into the old confessional writings can say anything different as those who spoke originally of Christ Jesus, really spoke of the God Who had become flesh, of the higher spirit of God which manifested itself in Jesus of Nazareth.

It is the task of theosophy to show how we have to understand "the Word became flesh" used by John above all. You do not really understand the other Gospels if you do not take St. John's Gospel as basis. What the other evangelists tell is getting bright and clear, if you add the words of St. John's Gospel as an interpretation, as an explanation.

I cannot describe in all details what leads to any statement I make today. But I can at least point to the central issue which is indecent to the materialistically minded theologian. Already the story of the birth belongs to it which says that Jesus should not be born like other human beings. David Friedrich Strauss also had this as an objection to the truth of the Gospels.

What did the higher birth mean? It becomes clear to us easily if we understand St. John's Gospel correctly. The first sentences of this Gospel, the real message of the Word that became flesh are: "In the beginning the Word already was. The Word was in God's presence, and what God was, the Word was. He was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; without him no created thing came into being." It is said that the Word was always there in other way that it finds fulfilment, however, in this externally visible personality. We hear then that through the same Word, or we say, through the spirit of God who lived in Jesus, the world itself came into being. "In him was life, and that life was the life of mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never mastered it. There appeared a man named John. He was sent from God, and came as a witness to testify the light, so that through him all might become believers. He was not himself the light; he came to bear witness to the light." — What should come to Jesus Christ? But immediately we hear that it was already there. "He was in the world; but the world, though it owed its being to him, did not recognize him. It came to his own, and his own people would not accept him. But to all who did accept him, to those who put their trust in him, he gave the right to become children of God, born not of human stock, by the physical desire of a human father, but of God."

Here you have the meaning of the Word that became flesh in a fairly right translation giving the gist and at the same time the meaning of the saying: "Christ is not born of human stock." The "Word" was there always, and every single human

being should bear Christ in his inside, in his primal beginning. In our heart we all have claim to Christ. But while this living Word, Christ, should have room in every single human being, the human beings have not perceived him. It is this just what is shown us in the Gospel that the word existed forever that the human being could accept it and did not accept it. It is said to us that single human beings accepted it. Always were there single human beings who waked up the living spirit, the living Christ, the living Word in themselves, and those who called themselves Christians did not come into being from the blood, from the desire of the flesh, from human will, but always from God.

This finally throws the right light on the St. Matthew's Gospel. Now we understand why the birth of Christ is called "from God". This refutes best of all what David Friedrich Strauss wants. Not the whole human genus was able to accept Christ in itself; although he was for the whole human genus and for the whole humankind. Now somebody should come who once showed the whole fullness of the infinite spirit in himself. This personality thereby got his unique significance for the first Christian teachers who understood what was there. They understood that it concerns neither an abstract, shadowy concept nor a single human being in its reality, but really the God-Man, a single personality in the fullness of truth.

That is why we can understand that all those who proclaimed Christ in the first times of the good news stuck not only to the teaching and to the actual person, but above all to the view of the God-Man that they were convinced that He whom they had seen was a lofty real God-Man. Not the teaching held the first Christians together, not that what Christ taught; it was not that through which the first Christians thought to be connected with each other. — Already only this contradicts those who wanted to replace Christianity with an abstract moral philosophy. However, then they are no longer Christians.

It was not a matter of indifference who brought this teaching to the world, but its founder had really become flesh in the world. Hence, in the beginning of Christianity one attached less value to proofs than to the living memory of the Lord. This is always emphasised. It is the personality, the God-imbued personality who holds the biggest communities together.

Therefore, the first Church Fathers say to us again and again that it is the merit of the historical event from which Christianity made its start. We have the information from [Irenaeus](#) that he himself still knew people who had for their part still known apostles who had seen the Lord face to face. He emphasises that the fourth pope, Pope Clement I, had still known many apostles who had also seen the Lord face to face. This is fact. And why does he emphasise this? The first teachers wanted to speak not only about the teaching, not only about logical proofs, but they wanted above all to speak about the fact that they themselves saw with their eyes that they



perceived with their hands that which entered the world from above; that they were not there to prove something, but to bear witness to the living Word. However, this was not the personality who one could see with eyes, perceive with senses. Not that personality who announces the first teaching of Christianity is that who could then be called the simple man from Nazareth. One single word of an indeed significant witness must speak for the fact that something higher forms the basis. One cannot emphasise this word of Paul enough: "If Christ was not raised, our faith and message is null and void." Paul calls the risen Christ the basis of Christianity, not the Christ who walked in Galilee and Jerusalem. The faith would be null and void if Christ had not risen. The Christian is null and void if he cannot bear witness to the risen Christ.

What did they understand by the risen Christ? We can also learn this from Paul. He says it to us clearly on what the confession of resurrection is based. Everybody knows this; everybody knows that Paul is, so to speak, a posthumous apostle that he had the appearance of Christ to thank for his conversion to Him who did not stay long since on earth. Only the theosophist can truly recognise this appearance of a lofty spiritual being. Only he knows what an initiate, like Paul, means, if he speaks of the fact that the risen Christ appeared to him as a living being. Paul says to us even more, and we have to take this to heart. He says to us in 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8: "First and foremost, I handed on to you the tradition I had received: that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised to life on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas and afterwards to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred of our brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, and afterwards to all the apostles. Last of all he appeared to me too; it was like a sudden, abnormal birth."

He equated his experience with that on which the higher faith of the other apostles was based. He equated it with the appearance of Christ that the apostles had generally received after He had died. We have to do it with a spiritual appearance which we have to imagine not in shadowy way, as shadowy ideal, but as reality, as the theosophist imagines the spirit; with an appearance of the spirit which is not physical, indeed, but real and more real than any external, sensory reality. If we keep this in mind, we realise that it cannot be different at all, as that one has to do it during the first Christian centuries with the Word that became flesh that the God-Man is not the simple man from Nazareth, but the higher spirit of God which fulfilled itself. If we look at this, we stand completely on the ground of theosophy. Perhaps, nobody is more to be called a theosophist in the true sense of the word than the preacher of the miracle of resurrection: the apostle Paul. No theosophist

would deny that the apostle Paul is a lofty initiate, one of those who know what it concerns.

I have still to emphasise one matter, and this is that one not allowed to pull down this sublime appearance, which stands there as a unique one in the world, to the materialistic world view; the fact that the way of understanding the founder of Christianity is not found in the regions where only “simple men” where only ideals are, but that it must lead up to the lofty spirit of Christ. The first Christians did this; they wanted to go this way to understand the living Word.

Now you can say that you believe that everything has changed bit by bit, and this is well founded. Only because in the course of the centuries the factual sense has developed that the human being learnt above all to train the senses to arm them with instruments, he has progressed in the knowledge of the external world. But this enormous progress of international trade and communication, penetrating the starry heaven with the Copernican world view, penetrating the smallest living beings with the microscope, they all brought us, as anything throws its shades, their negative sides too. They brought us particular ways of thinking, which stick to the real, to the sense-perceptible. Then it has happened that in the most natural way of the world this kind of thinking turning only to the purely sensory has become habit that it has also approached the highest religious truth and tried to understand the spirit and its contents as the naturalist tries to understand the external nature with his senses.

The materialistic naturalist can still imagine the ideals at most which contain abstractions. Then he speaks of truth, beauty, goodness which should be realised in the world more and more. He imagines shadowy ideas. He can still rise to “simplicity” in the human imagination, but to something even higher, to seizing real spirituality this scientific sense cannot progress with his way of thinking instilled for centuries. These habits of thinking have arrived at their top height. As everything that has formed unilaterally needs a supplement, the justified materialistic sense needs the spiritual deepening on the other side. It needs that knowledge which raises us to the heights of spirituality. Theosophy wants this raising to the spirit and its reality. Therefore, it wants to stick to that about which one does not speak in materialistic views, but which rises to the highest levels of human knowledge. From there is to be understood what it means that the Word became flesh, what it means to conceive the spirit out of the divine in the human body.

Christ could not always express frankly what he meant. You know the word: he spoke to the people in parables; however, if he was together with his disciples, he explained these parables to them. — Where did this intention of the founder of Christianity come from to speak two languages, so to speak? The simple

comparison can say it to us. If you need any object, a table, you do not go to anybody but to somebody who knows how to make a table. If he has made it, you did not claim to have made the table yourself. You admit calmly to be a layman of making tables. However, people do not want to admit that one can also be a layman with regard to the highest matters that the simple reason, which is, so to speak, in the natural state, must climb the top heights first. The longing has arisen from that to pull down this highest truth to the level of the general human reason. But just as we know as laymen of making tables if a table is good how we have to use it, we know if we have heard the true whether it speaks to our hearts whether our heart can use it. But we must not claim to be able to produce the knowledge from our hearts, from our simple human minds. The differentiation which was forever made in old times between priests and laymen arose from this view. We deal with priest sages in ancient times and with the loftiest truth which was not proclaimed outdoors in the streets but in the mystery sites.

The highest truths were only explained to those who were sufficiently prepared. Those who were rich of spirit heard them because they are the deeper truths of the world, the human soul and God. One had to become an initiate, and then a Master, and then one got the concept, the immediate image of that which the highest wisdom contained. It was in such a way that wisdom had flowed into the mystery temples for centuries. Outdoors, however, there stood the crowd and got nothing to hear as that what the wisdom of the priests thought to be good for them. The gap had become bigger and bigger between the priesthood and the laymen. Initiates are those who knew the wisdom of the living God. One had to go up many steps, until one was led up to the altar at which one was informed what the wisest men had explored and revealed of the wisdom of the living God.

That was the custom for centuries. Then there came a time, and this is the time of the origin of Christianity when on the big scene of world history as a historical fact that took place before the eyes of the world, for all human beings which had only taken place before those who were rich of spirit, for those who were initiated into the mysteries. Only those who beheld the secrets of existence in the mystery temples could come in ancient times to real salvation, according to the view of the priest sages. However, in the founder of Christianity the higher compassion lived to go another way with the whole humankind and also to let become blessed those who did not behold there that is they could not penetrate into the mysteries, those who should be led only by the weak feeling, only by faith to this salvation. Thus a new confession, good news had to sound according to the intentions of the founder of Christianity which speak in other words than the old priest sages had spoken; a message which is spoken out of the deepest wisdom and the immediate spiritual cognition which could find response in the most simple human heart at the same time. Hence, the founder of Christianity wanted to bring up disciples and apostles for him. They should be initiated into the mystery if there were stones that mean

human hearts, to strike sparks out of them. Thus they had to experience the highest that is the victory of the Word. He spoke to the people in parables; but when he was alone with the disciples, he explained the parables to them.

Let me only give a few examples how Christ tried to enkindle the living Word how he wanted to knock life out of the single human hearts. We hear that Christ leads his disciples Peter, James and John up to the mountain and that he experiences a transfiguration there before the eyes of his disciples. We hear that Moses and Elijah were at both sides of Jesus.

The theosophist knows what the mystic term means: going up to the mountain. One has to know such expressions, know competently, exactly as one has to know the language, before one is able to study the spirit of a nation. What does it mean: leading up to the mountain? It means nothing else than to be led into the mystery temple where one can get through beholding, through mystic beholding the immediate conviction of the eternity of the human soul, of the reality of the spiritual existence.

These three disciples had to get an even higher knowledge than the other disciples by their Master. They had to get the conviction here on the mountain above all that Christ was really the living Word that had become flesh. Therefore, He appears in his spirituality, in that spirituality which is elated above space and time; in that spirituality for which “before” or “after” do not exist in which everything is present. Also the past is present. The past is essential there, when Elijah and Moses appeared beside the presence of Jesus. The disciples now believe in the spirit of God. But they say: nevertheless, it is written in the scriptures that Elijah comes and announces Christ before He comes.

Read the Gospel now. These are really the words which follow that which I have told. They are significant to the highest degree: “Elijah has already come, but they failed to recognize him, and did to him as they wanted.” – “Elijah has already come”; we keep these words in mind. Then you read further: “Then the disciples understood that he meant John the Baptist.” And before: “Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone of the vision until the Son of Man had been raised from the dead”. We are led into a mystery. Christ considered three disciples only worthy of experiencing this mystery. Which is this mystery? He informed that John is the reincarnated Elijah.

Reincarnation was taught within the mystery temples at all times. Christ has informed his close disciples about no other than this occult theosophical teaching. They should get to know this teaching of reincarnation. However, they should also get the living Word which must come from their mouths if it is invigorated and spiritualised by conviction, until something different would enter. They should have the immediate conviction that the spirit has risen. If they have this behind themselves, they should go out into the world and strike the sparks out of simple

hearts which have been kindled in them. This was one of the initiations, this was one of the parables that Christ gave and explained to his confidants.

I give another example. The Communion is also nothing else than an initiation, an initiation into the deepest meaning of the entire Christian teaching. Somebody who understands the Communion in its true meaning understands the Christian teaching in its spirituality and in its truth only. It is risky to express this teaching which I want to report to you now, and I probably know that it can experience attacks from all sides because it is contradictory to the letter. The letter kills, the spirit brings back to life. Only laboriously one can ascend to the insight of the true meaning of the Communion. You do not hear about that in detail today, but allow me to suggest that which belongs to the deepest mysteries of Christianity, actually. Christ gathers his apostles to celebrate the installation of the bloodless sacrifice with them. We want to understand this.

To clear the way to us to understand this event, let us once come back to another fact which is little attention paid to and which should show us how we have to understand the Communion. We hear in the Gospel that Christ passed a blind-born man. And those who were around asked Him: "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Christ answered: "It is not that he or his parents sinned, but he was born blind, so that God's power might be displayed in curing him". Or better: "so that God's way of ruling the world becomes obvious." The words "God's way of ruling the world" justify that he is born blind. Because neither he sinned in this life nor his parents, the cause has to be looked for somewhere else. We cannot stop at the single personality and not at the parents and forefathers, but we have to regard the inside of the soul of the blind-born as something eternal, we have to be clear in our mind to look for the cause in the souls existing before, in those souls which have experienced the effect of a former life. What we call karma is suggested here, not expressed. We hear immediately why it is not expressed. Christ lived in a surrounding in which the doctrine prevailed that the sins of the fathers are avenged in the children and grandchildren. The sins of the fathers are expiated in children and grandchildren. This doctrine does not correspond to the view which Christ expressed towards the blind-born. If anybody sticks to the doctrine that it can only be the sin of the fathers that there is guilt and atonement only within the physical world, then he has to suffer for the deeds of his fathers.

This shows us that Christ raises his adherents to a quite new concept of guilt and atonement, to a concept which had nothing to do with that which takes place in the physical world, to a concept which cannot be valid in the sense-perceptible reality. Christ wanted to overcome the old concept of sin, the concept which fixes to physical heredity and physical facts. Was it not such a concept of guilt which keeps to the physical-actual which formed the basis of the old offerings? Did they not go,

the sinners, to the altar and did offer their expiatory sacrifices, was it not a merely physical event to take off the sins? The old sacrifices were physical facts. But in the physical reality, Christ taught, one cannot look for guilt and atonement. Therefore, even the highest; the spirit of God, the living Word, can become enslaved by the physical reality up to death by which Christ became enslaved without being guilty. Any external offering cannot align with the concept of guilt and atonement. The Lamb of God was the most innocent; it is able to do the sacrificial death.

With it should be testified on the scene of history to the whole world that guilt and atonement do not have their embodiment in the physical reality, cannot exist in the physical reality, but has to be looked for in a higher region, in the region of spiritual life. If the culprit only made himself liable to prosecution in the physical life if the culprit only needed to make sacrifices, the innocent lamb on the cross would not have to die. Christ took the sacrifice of the cross on Himself; so that the human beings are released from the belief that guilt and atonement are found in the sense-perceptible reality that it should be a result of the externally inherited sin. That is why He really died for the faith of all human beings to bear witness to the fact that the consciousness of guilt and atonement is not to be searched for in the physical consciousness. Therefore, everybody should remember this: even the sacrifice on the cross does not matter, but if the human being rises above guilt and atonement to search for the cause and effect of his actions in the spiritual region, and then only he has reached truth. Therefore, the last sacrifice, the bloodless offering is also the proof of the impossibility of the external sacrifice at the same time, so that the bloodless offering is established, so that the human being has to seek for guilt and atonement — the consciousness of the connection of his actions — in spiritual realm. This one should remember. Therefore, the sacrificial death should not be considered as that on which it depends, but the bloodless spiritual sacrifice, the Communion, should replace the bloody sacrifice. The Communion is the symbol that guilt and atonement of human actions live in the spiritual realm. However, this is the theosophical teaching of karma that everything that the human being has caused anyhow in his actions has its effects according to purely spiritual laws that karma has nothing to do with physical heredity. An external symbol of that is the bloodless offering, the Communion.

But it is not expressed in words in the Christian confession that the Communion is the symbol of karma. Christianity just had another task. I have already indicated it. Karma and reincarnation, the concatenation of destiny in the spiritual realm and reincarnation of the human soul were deep esoteric truths which were taught inside of the esoteric temples. Christ, like all great teachers, taught his adherents in the inside of the temple. Then, however, they should go out into the world, after the

strength and the fire of God had been kindled in them, so that also those who could not behold could believe and become blessed.

Therefore, he called his disciples together, immediately in the beginning, to say to them that they are not only teachers in the spiritual realm, but that they should be something else. This is the deeper sense of the first words of the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdoms of Heaven are theirs." If it is correctly translated one can understand how it is possible to come to knowledge out of living beholding. Now, however, the poor in spirit should find the ways to the spirit, to the kingdoms of Heaven because of their simple hearts.

The apostles should not talk about the highest knowledge outdoors; they should dress this knowledge in simple words. But they themselves should be perfect. Therefore, we see those who should be bearers of the Word of God teaching a truthful theosophy, spreading a truthful theosophical teaching. Take and understand the words of Paul, understand the words of Dionysius the Areopagite and then [Scotus Eriugena](#) who taught in his book *De divisione naturae (On the Division of Nature)* the sevenfold nature of the human being like all theosophists, then you know that their interpretation of Christianity was identical with that of theosophy. Theosophy wants to bring to light again nothing else than what the Christian teachers taught in the first centuries. It wants to serve the Christian message; it wants to explain it in spirit and truth. This is the task of theosophy toward Christianity. Theosophy is there not to overcome Christianity but to recognise it in its truth.

You need nothing else than to understand Christianity in its truth, then you have theosophy in its full size. You do not need to turn to another religion. You can keep on being Christians and need to do nothing else than what real Christian teachers did: ascending to exhaust the spiritual depths of Christianity. Then also those theologians are disproved who believe that theosophy is a Buddhist doctrine, but also the belief is disproved that one should not recognise the deep teachings of Christianity ascending to the heights but pulling down to the depths. Theosophy can only lead to better and better understanding of the mystery of incarnation to understand the word which, in spite of all rationalistic denials, is in the Bible. Who sinks in the Bible cannot bear witness to rationalism, to David Friedrich Strauss and those parroting him. He can bear witness solely to the word which Goethe said who saw deeper into these matters than some other. He says: nevertheless, the Bible remains the book of books, the world book which — understood correctly — must become the Christian aid to education of humankind in the hand not of the wise guys but of the wise human beings.

Theosophy is a servant of the Word in this regard, and it wants to produce the spirit that is willing to ascend to the founder of Christianity; to produce that spirit

which does not have only human, but cosmic significance, that spirit which had understanding not only for the simple human heart, which moves in the everyday, but such a deep understanding just for the human heart because He beheld into the depths of the world secrets. There is no better word to show this, as a word which is not, indeed, in our Gospels, but has come down in another way. Jesus with his disciples passed a dead dog which had already started to rot. The disciples turned away. But Jesus looked at the animal with pleasure and admired his nice teeth.

This parable may be paradoxical; however, it leads us to the deeper understanding of the being of Christ. It is a testimony that the human being feels the word living in himself if he passes no thing of the world without understanding if he knows how to become engrossed and to sink in everything that is there and cannot pass anything apparently disgusting, without tolerance without practicing understanding. This understanding allows us to look into the smallest and raises us to the highest, to which nothing is hidden which passes nothing which allows everything to come close in perfect tolerance. It carries the conviction in its heart that really everything is “flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood” in any form. Somebody who fought his way to this understanding only knows and understands what it means: the living spirit of God was realised in one single human being, the living spirit of God Who created the universe.

This is the sense which the theosophist wants to animate again. That sense which, by the way, had not completely become extinct during the past centuries, that sense which does not look for the criterion of the highest from the average mind, from a subordinated point of view but above all it tries to raise itself and to develop the highest knowledge because it is convinced: if it has purified itself, has spiritualised itself, the spirit bows down to it. “[If Christ is born](#) a thousand times in Bethlehem and not in you, you are still lost forever.” The great mystic [Angelus Silesius](#) said this. He also knew what a teaching means, if it becomes the highest knowledge if it becomes life. Jesus said to Nicodemus: somebody who is born again who is born from above speaks that which he says no longer only from human experience, he expresses it “from above.” — He speaks words like Angelus Silesius has spoken them at the end of the ***Cherubinic Wanderer***: “If you want to read more, go and become yourself the word and the being.”

This is the demand which somebody makes who speaks out of the spirit. You should not listen to him, not to his words only, but let evoke in yourself what speaks out of him.

To such a word, to such good news Jesus chose those who said there: that which was there from the beginning, the eternal world law, what we have seen with own eyes, what we have felt with hands of the word of life we preach this to you. — It



was He Who was a single human being, and lived in the word of the disciples at the same time.

But he still said one matter of which theosophists must be aware above all that He not only was there in the time in which He taught and lived, but the important word came down us: “I will be with you always, to the end of time.” Theosophy knows that He is with us that He can stamp our words today as well as at that time, that He can inspire our words that He can also lead us today like at that time that our words express that which He is Himself. However, theosophy wants to prevent one thing. It wants to prevent that one must say: He has come, He is there, but they have not recognised Him. The human beings wanted to do with Him as they wished. — No, the theosophist wants to go to his own sources. Theosophy should raise the human beings spiritually to spirituality, so that they recognise that He is there, so that they know where they have to find Him, and that they hear the living Word from Him who said there:

“I will be with you always, to the end of time.”

### *Notes*

G. N. **Chakravarti** (1861 – 1936)

**Clement of Alexandria** (150 — ~215), Church Father

**Irenaeus** (~140 — 202), Greek Church Father

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irenaeus>

**Scotus Eriugena** (~ 815 — ~ 877), Irish theologian and philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Scotus\\_Eriugena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Scotus_Eriugena)

**Angelus Silesius** (1624 – 1677), German mystic and religious poet

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelus\\_Silesius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelus_Silesius)

Cf. *CW 7 Mystics after Modernism* (Anthroposophic Press, 2000, 120ff.)

**If Christ is born ...** :: *Cherubinic Wanderer (Cherubinic Pilgrim)*, vol. I, no. 61



## The Epistemological Bases of Theosophy. Part I

*Berlin, 27th November 1903*

It will be nothing strange to many among you that one can find if the word theosophy is pronounced nothing else than a smile with many of our contemporaries. Also it is not unknown to many that just those who demand scholarship or, we say, philosophical education in the present look at theosophy as something that one must call a dilettantish activity, a fantastic belief. One can find in particular in the circles of scholars that the theosophist is regarded as a type of fantastic dreamer who bears witness to his peculiar image worlds because he has never made the acquaintance with the bases of knowledge. You find particularly in the circles which consider themselves as the scientific ones that they presuppose easily that the theosophist is basically without any philosophical education, and even if he has also acquired it or speaks of it, it is a dilettantish, a picked up matter. These talks should not deal with theosophy directly. There are enough others. It should be a discussion with the western philosophical education, a discussion how the scientific world behaves to theosophy, and how it could behave, actually. They should disprove the prejudice, as if the theosophist is an uneducated, dilettantish person with regard to science. Who has not heard often enough that philosophers of the most different schools — and there are enough philosopher schools — state that mysticism is an unclear view filled with all kinds of allegories and feeling elements, and that theosophy has not achieved a strictly methodical thinking? If it did this, it would see that it walks on nebulous ways. It would see that mysticism could root only in the heads of eccentric people. This is a well-known prejudice.

However, I do not want to begin with a reprimand. Not because it would not correspond to the theosophical conviction, but because I do not consider theosophy as anything dilettantish from my own philosophical education and speak, nevertheless, out of the depths of its conviction. I can understand absolutely that somebody who has taken up the western philosophy in himself and has the whole scientific equipment has it hard to see something else in theosophy than what is just known. For somebody who comes today from philosophy and science it is much more difficult really to familiarise himself with theosophy, than for that who approaches theosophy with a naive human mind, with a natural, maybe religious feeling and with a need to solve certain riddles of life. Because this western philosophy puts so many obstacles to its students, offers them so many judgments which seem to be contradictory to theosophy that it makes it apparently impossible to get involved with theosophy.

Indeed, it is true that the theosophical literature shows little of that which resembles a discussion with our contemporary science and which one could call philosophical. Therefore, I have resolved to hold a series of talks on it. They should be an epistemological basis of theosophy. You will get to know the concepts of the contemporary philosophy and its contents. If you look at this in a real, true and deep sense, you see — but you must really wait till the end — the basis of the theosophical knowledge following from this western philosophy. This should not happen juggling with expert dialectic concepts, but it should happen, as far as I am able to do it in some talks, with any equipment which the knowledge of our contemporaries provides us; it should happen with everything available to give something that can be experienced of a higher world view also to those who do not want to know it.

What I have to explain would not have been possible in another age to explain in the same way. But it has been necessary to look around, maybe just in our time, at Kant, Locke, Schopenhauer or at other writers of the present, we say at Eduard von Hartmann and his disciple Arthur Drews, or the brilliant theorist of knowledge Volkelt or Otto Liebmann, or at the somewhat journalistic, but not less strictly rational Eucken. Who has looked around there who has familiarised himself with this or that of the shadings which the philosophical-scientific views of the present and the latest past took on understands and conceives — this is my innermost conviction — that a real, true understanding of this philosophical development does not lead away from theosophy, but to theosophy. Just somebody who has argued thoroughly with the philosophical doctrines has to come to theosophy.

I would not need to deliver this speech unless the whole thinking of our time were influenced just by a philosopher. One says that the great mental achievement of Immanuel Kant gave philosophy a scientific basis. One says that what he performed to the definition of the knowledge problem is something steadfast. You hear that anybody who has not tackled Kant has no right to have a say in philosophy. You may examine the different currents: Herbart, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, from Schopenhauer up to Eduard von Hartmann — in all these lines of thought only somebody can find the way who orientates himself to Kant. After different matters were striven for in the philosophy of the 19-th century, the calling resounds from Zeller in the middle of the seventies, from Liebmann, then from Friedrich Albert Lange: back to Kant! — The lecturers of philosophy are of the opinion that everybody has to orientate himself to Kant, and only somebody who does this can have a say in philosophy.

Kant dominated the philosophy of the 19-th century and of the present. However, he caused something else than he himself wanted. He expressed it with the words: he believes to have accomplished a similar action like Copernicus. Copernicus

turned around the whole astronomical world view. He removed the earth from the centre and made another body, the sun, to the centre which was once imagined to be movable. However, Kant makes the human being with his cognitive faculties the centre of the physical world view. He really turns around the whole physical world view. It is the opinion of most philosophers of the 19-th century that one has to turn around. You can understand this philosophy only if you understand it from its preconditions. One can understand what has flowed from Kant's philosophy only if one understands it from its bases. Who understands how Kant came to his conviction that we can never recognise the things "by themselves", because all things we recognise are only phenomena who understands this can also understand the development of the philosophy of the 19-th century, he also understands the objections which can be made against theosophy, and also how he has to behave to them.

You know that theosophy rests on a higher experience. The theosophist says that the source of his knowledge is an experience which reaches beyond the sensory experience. You can see that it has the same validity as that of the senses that what the theosophist tells about astral worlds et cetera is as real as the things which we perceive with our senses round us as sensory experience. What the theosophist believes to have as his source of knowledge is a higher experience. If you read [Leadbeater's \*Astralebene \(Astral Plane\)\*](#), you think that the things are as real in the astral world as the cabs and horses in the streets of London. It should be said how real this world is for somebody who knows them. The philosopher of the present argues immediately: yes, but you are mistaken, because you believe that this is a true reality. Has the philosophy of the 19-th century not proved to you that our experience is nothing but our idea, and that also the starry heaven is nothing else than our idea in us? — He considers this as the most certain knowledge which there can only be. Eduard von Hartmann considers it as the most natural truth that this is my idea, and that one cannot know what it is also. If you believe that you can call experience "real", then you are a naive realist. Can you decide anything generally about the value experience has facing the world in this way? This is the great result to which Kantianism has come that the world surrounding us must be our idea.

How did Kant's world view come to this? It came from the philosophy of the predecessors. At that time when Kant was still young, the philosophy of [Christian Wolff](#) had the mastery over all schools. It distinguished the so-called knowledge of experience which we acquire by the sensory impressions and that which comes from pure reason. According to him, we can get to know something of the things of the everyday life only by experience, and from pure reason we have things which are the objects of the highest knowledge. These things are the human souls, the free

will of the human being, the questions which refer to immortality and to the divine being.

The so-called empiric sciences deal with that which is offered in natural history, in physics, in history et cetera. How does the astronomer get his knowledge? He directs his eyes to the stars; he finds the laws which are commensurate with the observations. We learn this while opening our senses to the outside world. Nobody can say that this is drawn from mere reason. The human being knows this because he sees it. This is an empiric knowledge which we take up from life, from the experience in ourselves, not caring whether we order them in a scientific system or not; it is knowledge of experience. Nobody can describe a lion from his very reason. However, Wolff supposes that one can draw that which one is from pure reason. Wolff supposes that we have a psychology from pure reason, also that the soul must have free will that it must have reason et cetera. Hence, Wolff calls the sciences which deal with the higher capacities of the soul rational psychology. The question whether the world has a beginning and an end is a question which one should decide only from pure reason. He calls this question an object of rational cosmology. Nobody can decide on the usefulness of the world from experience; nobody can investigate it by observation. These are nothing but questions of the rational cosmology. Then there is a science of God, of a divine plan. This is a science which is also drawn from reason. This is the so-called rational theology, it belongs to metaphysics.

Kant grew up in a time when philosophy was taught in this sense. You find him in his first writings as an adherent of Wolff's philosophy. You find him convinced that there is a rational psychology, a rational theology et cetera. He gives a proof which he calls the only possible proof of the existence of God. Then he got to know a philosophical current which had a stupefying effect on him. He got to know the philosophy of [David Hume](#). He said that it waked up him from his dogmatic slumber. — What does this philosophy offer? Hume says the following: we see that the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening. We have seen this many days. We also know that all people have seen sunrises and sunsets that they have experienced the same, and we get used to believing that this must take place forever.

Now another example: we see that the solar heat falls on a stone. We think that it is the solar heat which warms up the stone. What do we see? We perceive solar heat first and then the warmed up stone. What do we perceive there? Only that one fact follows the other. If we experience that the sunbeams warm up the stone, then we have already formed the judgment that the solar heat is the cause that the stone becomes warm. That is why Hume says: there is nothing at all that shows us more than a sequence of facts. We get used to the belief that there a causal relationship

exists. But this belief is only a habituation and everything that the human being thinks of causal concepts exists only in that experience. The human being sees a ball pushing the other, he sees that a movement takes place through it, and then he gets used to saying that lawfulness exists in it. In truth we deal with no real insight. What is the human being considered from the knowledge of pure reason? This is nothing else — Hume says — than a summary of facts. We have to connect the facts of the world. This corresponds to the human way of thinking, to the tendency of the human thinking. We have no right to go beyond this thinking. We are not allowed to say that it is something in the things which has given them lawfulness. We can only say that the things and events flow past us. But the things “in themselves” do not show such a connection.

How can we speak now of the fact that something manifests itself to us in the things that goes beyond experience? How can we speak of a connection in experience that is due to a divine being, that goes beyond experience if we are not inclined to turn to anything other than to the ways of thinking?

This view had the effect on Kant that it waked up him from dogmatic slumber. He asks: can there be something that goes beyond experience? Which knowledge does experience deliver to us? Does it give us sure knowledge? Of course, Kant denied this question immediately. He says: even if you have seen the sun rise hundred thousand times, you cannot infer from it that it also rises tomorrow again. It could also be different. If you inferred only from experience, it could also turn out once that experience convinces you of something different. Experience can never give sure, necessary knowledge.

I know from experience that the sun warms up the stone. However, I am not allowed to state that it has to warm up it. If all our knowledge comes from experience, it can never exceed the condition of uncertainty; then there can be no necessary empiric knowledge. Now Kant tries to find out this matter. He looks for a way out. He had made himself used through his whole youth to believe in knowledge. He could be convinced by Hume’s philosophy that there is nothing sure. Is anywhere anything where one can speak of sure, necessary knowledge? However — he says — there are sure judgments. These are the mathematical judgments. Is the mathematical judgment similar to the judgment: in the morning the sun rises and sets in the evening?

I have the judgment that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is 180 degrees. If I have given the proof with one single triangle, it suffices for all triangles. I see from the nature of the proof that it applies to all possible cases. This is the peculiar of mathematical proofs. For everybody it is clear that these must also apply to the inhabitants of Jupiter and Mars if they generally have triangles that also there the sum of the angles of a triangle must be 180 degrees. And then: never can be two

times two anything else than four. This is always true. Hence, we have a proof that there is knowledge which is absolutely sure. The question cannot be: do we have such knowledge? But we must think about the possibility of such judgments.

Now there comes the big question of Kant: how are such absolutely necessary judgments possible? How is mathematical knowledge possible? — Kant now calls those judgments and knowledge which are drawn from experience judgments and knowledge a posteriori. The judgment: the sum of angles of a triangle is 180 degrees; however, is a judgment which precedes all experience, a judgment a priori. I can simply imagine a triangle and give the proof, and if I see a triangle which I have not yet experienced, I can say that it must have a sum of angles of 180 degrees. Any higher knowledge depends on it that I can make judgments from pure reason.

How are such judgments a priori possible? We have seen that such a judgment: the sum of angles of a triangle is equal 180 degrees, applies to any triangles. Experience has to submit to my judgment. If I draw an ellipse and look out into space, I find that a planet describes such an ellipse. The planet follows my judgment formed in pure knowledge. I approach the experience with my purely in the ideal formed judgment. Have I drawn this judgment from experience? — Kant continues asking. There is no doubt, forming such purely ideal judgments, that we have, actually, no reality of experience.

The ellipse, the triangle — they have no reality of experience, but reality submits to such knowledge. If I want to have true reality, I must approach experience. If, however, I know which laws work in it, then I have knowledge before all experience. The law of the ellipse does not come from experience. I myself build it in my mind. Thus a passage begins with Kant with the sentence: “[Even if all our knowledge starts](#) from experience, nevertheless, not everything does arise from experience.” I put what I have as knowledge into experience. The human mind is made in such a way that everything of its experience corresponds only to the laws which it has. The human mind is made in such a way that it must develop these laws inevitably. If it moves up to experience, then experience has to submit to these laws.

An example: Imagine that you wear blue glasses. You see everything in blue light; the objects appear to you in blue light. However the things outdoors may be made, this concerns me nothing at all provisionally. At the moment when the laws which my mind develops spread out over the whole world of experience the whole world of experience must fit into it. It is not right that the judgment: two times two is four is taken from experience. It is the condition of my mind that two times two must give always four. My mind is in such a way that the three angles of a triangle are always 180 degrees. Thus Kant justifies the laws out of the human being himself. The sun warms up the stone. Every effect has a cause. This is a law of the mind. If the world is a chaos, I push the lawfulness of my mind toward it. I conceive the



world like a string of pearls. I am that who makes the world a knowledge mechanism. — You also see how Kant was induced to find such a particular method of knowledge. As long as the human mind is organised in such a way as it is organised as long everything must submit to this organisation, even if reality changes overnight. For me it could not change if the laws of my mind are the same. The world may be as it wants; we recognise it in such a way as it must appear to us according to the laws of our mind.

Now you see which sense it has, if one says: Kant turned the whole theory of knowledge, the whole epistemology. One assumed before that the human being reads everything from nature. Now, however, he lets the human mind give the laws to nature. He lets everything circle around the human mind like Copernicus let the earth circle around the sun.

Then, however, there is something else that shows that the human being can never go beyond experience. Indeed, it appears as a contradiction, but you will see that it corresponds to Kant's philosophy. Kant shows that the concepts are empty. Two times two is four is an empty judgment if not peas or beans are filled into it. Any effect has a cause — is a purely formal judgment if it is not filled with particular contents of experience. The judgments are formed before in me to be applied to the observation of the world. **“Observations without concepts are blind — concepts without observations are empty.”** We can think millions of ellipses; they correspond to no reality if we do not see them in the planetary motion. We have to verify everything by experience. We can gain judgments a priori, but we are allowed to apply them only if they correspond to experience.

God, freedom and immortality are matters about which we can ponder ever so long about which we can get knowledge by no experience. Therefore, it is in vain to find out anything with our reason. The concepts a priori are only valid as far as our experience reaches. Indeed we have a science a priori which only says to us how experience has to be until experience is there. We can catch as it were experience like in a web, but we cannot find out how the law of experience has to be. About the “thing-in-itself” we know nothing, and because God, freedom and immortality must have their origin in the “thing-in-itself”, we can find out nothing about them. We see the things not as they are, but in such a way as we must see them according to our organisation.

With it Kant founded the critical idealism and overcame the naive realism. What submits to causality is not the “thing-in-itself”. What submits to my eye or my ear has to make an impression on my eye, on my ear at first. This is the perception, the sensations. These are the effects of any “thing-in-itself”, of things which are absolutely unknown to me. These produce a lot of effects, and I order them in a lawful world. I form an organism of sensations. But I cannot know what is behind them. It is nothing else than the lawfulness which my mind has put into the

sensations. What is behind the sensation, I can know nothing about it. Hence, the world which surrounds me is only subjective. It is only that which I myself build up.

The development of physiology in the 19-th century agreed apparently completely with Kant. Take the important knowledge of the great physiologist [Johannes Müller](#). He has put up the law of the specific nerve energy. It consists in the fact that any organ answers in its way. If you let light into the eye, you have a beam of light; if you bump against the eye, you will likewise have a light sensation. Müller concludes that it does not depend on the things outside, but on my eye what I perceive. The eye answers to a process unknown to me with the colour quality, we say: blue. Blue is nowhere outdoors in space. A process has an effect on us, and it produces the sensation “blue”. What you believe that it stands before you, is nothing else than the effect of some unknown processes on a sense. The whole physiology of the 19-th century confirmed this law of the specific nerve energy apparently. Kant’s idea seems to be thereby supported.

One can call this world view illusionism in the full sense of the word. Nobody knows anything about what has an effect outside, what produces his sensations. From himself he spins his whole world of experience and builds up it according to the laws of his mind. Nothing else can approach him, as long as his organisation is made in such a way as it is. This is Kant’s doctrine motivated by physiology. Kant calls it critical idealism. This is also that which [Schopenhauer](#) develops in his philosophy: people believe that the whole starry heaven and the sun surround them. However, this is only your own mental picture. You create the whole world. — And [Eduard von Hartmann](#) says: This is the most certain truth which there can be. No power would be able one day to shake this sentence. — Thus the western philosophy says. It has never pondered how experience basically comes about.

Somebody is only able to stick to realism who knows how experiences come about and then he comes to the true critical idealism. The view of Kant is the transcendental idealism, that is he knows nothing about a true reality, nothing of a “thing-in-itself”, but only of an image world. He says basically: I must refer my image world to something unknown. — This view should be regarded as something steadfast.

Is this transcendental idealism really steadfast? Is the “thing-in-itself” unrecognisable? — If this held true, then could not be spoken of a higher experience at all. If the “thing-in-itself” were only an illusion, we could not speak of any higher beings. Hence, this is also an objection which is raised against theosophy: you have higher beings of which you speak.

We see next time how these views must be deepened.

## *Notes*

Charles Webster **Leadbeater** (1854 – 1934), clergyman and theosophical author  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Webster\\_Leadbeater](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Webster_Leadbeater)

Christian **Wolff** (1679 – 1754), German philosopher and mathematician [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_Wolff\\_\(philosopher\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Wolff_(philosopher))

David **Hume** (1711 – 1776), Scottish philosopher, historian, economist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Hume](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Hume)

**Even if all our knowledge starts ...** Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction, p. 1

**“Observations without concepts are blind ...** Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction to *Idea of a Transcendental Logic*, Part I *On Logic in General*

Johannes **Müller** (1801 – 1858), German physiologist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Peter\\_Müller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Peter_Müller)

Arthur **Schopenhauer** (1788 – 1860), German philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur\\_Schopenhauer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer)

Eduard von **Hartmann** (1842 – 1906), German philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard\\_von\\_Hartmann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_von_Hartmann)

## The Epistemological Bases of Theosophy. Part II

*Berlin, 4th December 1903*

With the remark that the present, in particular the German philosophy and its epistemology makes it difficult to its supporters to find access to the theosophical world view I have started these talks before eight days, and I added that I try to outline this theory of knowledge, this present philosophical world view and to show how somebody with an absolutely serious conscience in this direction finds it hard to be a theosophist.

On the whole, the theories of knowledge which developed from Kantianism are excellent and absolutely correct. However, one cannot understand from their point of view how the human being can find out anything about beings, generally about real beings which are different from him. The consideration of Kantianism has shown us that this view comes to the result in the end that everything that we have round ourselves is appearance, is only our mental picture. What we have round ourselves is no reality, but it is controlled by the laws which we ourselves prescribe to our surroundings. I said: as we must see with coloured glasses the whole world in this colour nuance, in the same way the human being must see the world — after Kant's view — coloured as he sees them according to his organisation no matter how it may be in the external reality. That is why we are not allowed to speak of a “thing-in-itself”, but only of the quite subjective world of appearance. If this is the case, everything that surrounds me — the table, the chairs et cetera, is an image of my mind; because they all are there for me only, in so far as I perceive them, in so far as I give form to these perceptions according to the law of my own mind, prescribe the laws to them.

I cannot state whether still anything exists except for my perception of the table and the chairs. This is basically the result of Kant's philosophy in the end. This is not compatible, of course, with the fact that we can penetrate into the true nature of the things. Theosophy is inseparable from the view that we can penetrate not only into the physical existence of the things, but also into the spiritual of the things; that we have knowledge not only of that which surrounds us physically, but that we can also have experiences of that which is purely spiritual.

I want to show you how [a vigorous book of the world view](#) which is called “theosophy” today represents that which became Kantianism later. I read up a passage of the book that was written a short time before Kantianism was founded. It appeared in 1766. It is a book which — we can say it absolutely that way — could be written by a theosophist. The view is represented in it that the human

being has not only a relationship to the physical world surrounding him, but that it would be proved scientifically one day that the human being belongs also to a spiritual world, and that also the way of being together with it could be scientifically proved.

Something is well demonstrated that one could assume that it is proved more or less or that it is proved in future: “I do not know where or when that the human soul is in relation to others that they have effect on each other and receive impressions from each other. The human being is not aware of that, however, as long as everything is good.” Then another passage: “Indeed, it does not matter whichever ideas of the other world we have, and, hence, any thinking about spirit does not penetrate to a state of spirit at all ...” and so on.

The human being with his average mental capacity cannot realise the spirit; but it is said that one can assume such a common life with a spiritual world. With such a view Kant’s epistemology is not compatible. He who wrote the foundation of this view is Immanuel Kant himself. That means that we have to register a reversal in Kant himself. Because he writes this in 1766, and fourteen years later he founds that theory of knowledge which makes it impossible to find the way to theosophy. Our modern philosophy is based on Kantianism. It has taken on different forms, those from [Herbart](#) and Schopenhauer to Otto [Liebmann](#) and Johannes [Volkelt](#) and Friedrich Albert [Lange](#). We find more or less Kantian coloured epistemology everywhere according to which we deal only with phenomena, with our subjective world of perception, so that we cannot penetrate to the being, to the root of the “thing-in-itself.”

At first I would like to bring forward to you everything that developed in the course of the 19-th century, and what we can call the modified epistemology of Kant. I would like to demonstrate how the current epistemology developed which looks with a certain arrogance at somebody who believes that one can know something. I want to show how somebody forms a basic epistemological view whose kind of view is based on Kant. Everything that science has brought seems to verify the Kantian epistemology. It seems to be so firm that one cannot escape from it. Today we want to roll up it and next time we want to see how one can find the way with it.

First of all physics seems to teach us everywhere that that is no reality the naive human being believes that it is reality. Let us take the tone. You know that the oscillation of the air is there outside our organ, outside our ear which hears the tone. What takes place outside us is an oscillation of the air particles. Only because this oscillation comes to our ear and sets the eardrum swinging the movement continues to the brain. There we perceive what we call tone and sound. The whole world would be silent and toneless; only because the external movement of our ear

is taken up by the ear, and that which is only an oscillation is transformed; we experience what we feel as a sound world. Thus the epistemologist can easily say: tone is only what exists in you, and if you imagine it without this, nothing but moved air is there.

The same applies to the colours and the light of the external world. The physicist has the view that colour is an oscillation of the ether which fulfils the whole universe. Just as the air is set swinging by the sound and nothing else than the movement of the air exists if we hear a sound, light is only an oscillatory movement of the ether. The ether oscillations are a little bit different from those of the air. The ether oscillates vertically to the direction of the propagation of the waves. This is made clear by experimenting physics. If we have the colour sensation “red”, we have to do it with a sensation. Then we must ask ourselves: what is there if no feeling eye exists? — It should be nothing else of the colours in space than oscillatory ether. The colour quality is removed from the world if the feeling eye is removed from the world.

What you see as red is 392 to 454 trillion oscillations, with violet 751 to 757 trillion oscillations. This is inconceivably fast. Physics of the 19-th century transformed any light sensation and colour sensation into oscillations of the ether. If no eye were there, the whole colour world would not exist. Everything would be pitch-dark. One could not talk about colour quality in the outer space. This goes so far that [Helmholtz](#) said: we have the sensations of colour and light, of sound and tone in ourselves. This is not even like that which takes place without us. We are even not allowed to use an image of that which takes place without us. — What we know as a colour quality of red is not similar to about 420 trillion oscillations per second. Therefore, Helmholtz means: what really exists in our consciousness is not an image but a mere sign.

Physics has maintained that space and time exist as I perceive them. The physicist imagines that a movement in space takes place if I have a colour sensation. It is the same with the time image if I have the sensation red and the sensation violet. Both are subjective processes in me. They follow each other in time. The oscillations follow each other outside. Physics does not go so far as Kant. Whether the “things-in-themselves” are space-filled whether they are in space or follow each other in time, we cannot know — in terms of Kant; but we know only: we are organised this and that way, and, therefore, something — may it be spatial or not — has to take on spatial form. We spread out this form over that. For physics the oscillatory movement has to take place in space, it has to take a certain time... The ether oscillates, we say, 480 trillion times per second. This includes the images of space and time already. The physicist assumes space and time being without us. However, the rest is only a mental picture, is subjective. You can read in physical

works that for somebody who has realised what happens in the outside world nothing exists than oscillatory air, than oscillatory ether. Physics seems to have contributed that everything that we have exists only within our consciousness and except this nothing exists.

The second that the science of the 19-th century can present to us is the reasons which physiology delivers. The great physiologist [Johannes Müller](#) found the law of the specific nerve energy. According to this law any organ reacts with a particular sensation. If you push the eye, you can perceive a gleam of light; if electricity penetrates it, also. The eye answers to any influence from without in such a way as it just corresponds to it. It has the strength from within to answer with light and colour. If light and ether penetrate, the eye answers with light and colour sensations.

Physiology still delivers additional building stones to prove what the subjective view has put up. Imagine that we have a sensation of touch. The naive human being imagines that he perceives the object. But what does he perceive really? The epistemologist asks. What is before me is nothing else than a combination of the smallest particles, of molecules. They are in movement. Every particle is in such movement which cannot be perceived by the senses because the oscillations are too small. Basically it is nothing else than the movement only which I can perceive, because the particle is not able to creep into me. What is it if you put the hand on the body? The hand carries out a movement. This continues down to the nerve and the nerve transforms it into a sensation: in heat and cold, in softy and hard. Also in the outside world movements are included, and if my sense of touch is concerned, the organ transforms it into heat or cold, into softness or hardness.

We cannot even perceive what happens between the body and us, because the outer skin layer is insensible. If the epidermis is without a nerve, it can never feel anything. The epidermis is always between the thing and the body. The stimulus has an effect from a relatively far distance through the epidermis. Only what is excited in your nerve can be perceived. The outer body remains completely without the movement process. You are separated from the thing, and what you really feel is produced within the epidermis. Everything that can really penetrate into your consciousness happens in the area of the body, so that it is still separated from the epidermis. We would have to say after this physiological consideration that we get in nothing of that which takes place in the outside world, but that it is merely processes within our nerves which continue in the brain which excite us by quite unknown external processes. We can never reach beyond our epidermis. You are in your skin and perceive nothing else than what happens within it.

Let us go over to another sense, to the eye, from the physical to the physiological. You see that the oscillations propagate; they have to penetrate our body first. The

eye consists of a skin, the cornea, first of all. Behind this is the lens and behind the lens the vitreous body. There the light has to go through. Then it arrives at the rear of the eye which is lined with the retina. If you removed the retina, the eye would never transform anything into light. If you see forms of objects, the rays have to penetrate into your eye first, and within the eye a small retina picture is outlined. This is the last that the sensation can cause. What is before the retina is insensible; we have no real perception of it. We can only perceive the picture on the retina. One imagines that there chemical changes of the visual purple take place. The effect of the outer object has to pass the lens and the vitreous body, then it causes a chemical change in the retina, and this becomes a sensation. Then the eye puts the picture again outwardly, surrounds itself with the stimuli which it has received, and puts them again around in the world without us. What takes place in our eye is not that which forms the stimulus, but a chemical process. The physiologists always deliver new reasons for the epistemologists. Apparently we have to agree with Schopenhauer completely if he says: the starry heaven is created by us. It is a reinterpretation of the stimuli. We can know nothing about the "thing-in-itself." You see that this epistemology limits the human being merely to the things, we say to the mental pictures which his consciousness creates. He is enclosed in his consciousness. He can suppose — if he wants — that anything exists in the world which makes impression on him. In any case nothing can penetrate into him. Everything that he feels is made by him. We cannot even know from anything that takes place in the periphery. Take the stimulus in the visual purple. It has to be directed to the nerve, and this has to be transformed anyhow into the real sensation, so that the whole world which surrounds us would be nothing else than what we would have created from our inside.

These are the physiological proofs which induce us to say that this is that way. However, there are also people who ask now why we can assume other human beings besides us whom we, nevertheless, recognise only from the impressions which we receive from them. If a human being stands before me, I have only oscillations as stimuli and then an image of my own consciousness. It is only a presupposition that except for the consciousness picture something similar to the human being exists. Thus the modern epistemology supports its view that the outer content of experience is merely of subjective nature. It says: what is perceived is exclusively the content of the own consciousness, is a change of this content of consciousness. Whether there are things-in-themselves, is beyond our experience. The world is a subjective appearance to me which is built up from my sensations consciously or unconsciously. Whether there are also other worlds, is beyond the field of my experience.



When I said: it is beyond the field of experience whether there is another world, it also beyond the field of experience whether there are still other human beings with other consciousnesses, because nothing of a consciousness of the other human beings can get into the human being. Nothing of the world of images of another human being and nothing of the consciousness of another human being can come into my consciousness. Those who have joined Kant's epistemology have this view.

Johann Gottlieb **Fichte** also joined this view in his youth. He thought Kant's theory thoroughly. There may be no nicer description of that than those which Fichte gave in his writing *On the Determination of the Human Being*. He says in it: "nowhere anything permanent exists, not without me not within me, but there is only a continuous transformation. I nowhere know any being, and also not my own. There is no being. — I myself do not know at all, and I am not. Images are there: they are the only things that exist, and they know about themselves in the way of images — images which pass without anything existing that they pass; which are connected with images to images. Images which do not contain anything, without any significance and purpose. I myself am one of these images; yes, I myself am not this, but only a confused image of the images."

Indeed — if you stick to the view that you deal in your subjective opinion only with the things of your own consciousness, then you must get inevitably to the view that you do not know more about yourselves than about the outside world. If you go over to the image of the own ego, then you do not have more of it than of the outside world. Keep this thought in mind in its full significance, then it becomes clear to you that the outside world dissolves in a sum of hallucinations, and that also the inside world is nothing else than a creation of subjective dreams fitted together. You can imagine already from the outside, I would like to say, from the corporeality that also you yourselves like the outside world are nothing else than dream images or illusions if you interpret the view correctly.

Look at your hand which transforms your movements to sensations of touch. This hand is nothing else than a creation of my subjective consciousness, and my whole body and what is in me is also a creation of my subjective consciousness. Or I take my brain: if I could investigate under the microscope how the sensation came into being in the brain, I would have nothing before myself than an object which I have to transform again to an image in my consciousness.

The idea of the ego is also an image; it is generated like any other. Dreams pass me, illusions pass me — this is the world view of illusionism which appears inevitably as the last consequence of Kantianism. Kant wanted to overcome the old dogmatic philosophy; he wanted to overcome what has been brought forward by Wolff and his school. He considered this as a sum of figments.

These were the proofs of freedom, of the will, of the immortality of the soul and of God's existence which Kant exposed concerning their probative value as figments. What does he give as proofs? He proved that we can know nothing about a "thing-in-itself" that that which we have is only contents of consciousness that, however, God must be "something-in-itself". Thus we cannot necessarily prove the existence of God according to Kant. Our reason, our mind is only applicable to that which is given in the perception. They are only there to prescribe laws of perception and, hence, the matters: God — soul — will — are completely outside our rational knowledge. Reason has a limit, and it is not able to overcome it.

In the preface of the second edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* he says at a passage: "I had to cancel knowledge to make room for faith." He wanted this basically. He wanted to limit knowledge to sense-perception, and he wanted to achieve everything that goes beyond reason in other way. He wanted to achieve it on the way of moral faith. Hence, he said: in no way science can arrive at the objective existence of the things one day. But we find one thing in ourselves: the categorical imperative which appears with an unconditional obligation in us. — Kant calls it a divine voice. It is beyond the things, it is accompanied by unconditional moral necessity. From here Kant ascends to regain that for faith which he annihilates for knowledge. Because the categorical imperative deals with nothing that is caused by any sensory effect, but appears in us, something must exist that causes the senses as well as the categorical imperative, and appears if all duties of the categorical imperative are fulfilled. This would be blessedness. But no one can find the bridge between both. Because he cannot find it, a divine being has to build it. In doing so, we come to a concept of God which we can never find with the senses.

A harmony between the sensory world and the world of moral reason must be produced. Even if one did enough in a life as it were, nevertheless, we must not believe that the earthly life generally suffices. The human life goes beyond the earthly life because the categorical imperative demands it. That is why we have to assume a divine world order. How could the human being follow a divine world order, the categorical imperative, if he did not have freedom? — Kant annihilated knowledge that way to get to the higher things of the spirit by means of faith. We must believe! He tries to bring in on the way of the practical reason again what he has thrown out of the theoretical reason.

Those views which have no connection apparently to Kant's philosophy are also completely based on this philosophy. Also a philosopher who had great influence — also in pedagogy: Herbart. He had developed an own view from Kant's critique of reason: if we look at the world, we find contradictions there. Let us have a look at the own ego. Today it has these mental pictures, yesterday it had others,

tomorrow it will have others again. What is this ego? It meets us and is fulfilled with a particular image world. At another moment it meets us with another image world. We have there a development, many qualities, and, nevertheless, it should be a thing. It is one and many. Anything is a contradiction. Herbart says that only contradictions exist everywhere in the world. Above all we must reproach ourselves with the sentence that the contradiction cannot be the true being. Now from it Herbart deduces the task of his philosophy. He says: we have to remove the contradictions; we have to construct a world without contradiction to us. The world of experiences is an unreal one, a contradictory one. He sees the true sense, the true being in transforming the contradictory world to a world without contradictions. Herbart says: we find the way to the “thing-in-itself”, while we see the contradictions, and if we get them out of us, we penetrate to the true being, to true reality. — However, he also has this in common with Kant that that which surrounds us in the outside world is mere illusion. Also he tried in other way to support what should be valuable for the human being.

We come now, so to speak, to the heart of the matter. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that any moral action makes only sense if there is reality in the world. What is any moral action if we live in a world of appearance? You can never be convinced that that which you do constitutes something real. Then any striving for morality and all your goals are floating in the air. There Fichte was admirably consistent. Later he changed his view and got to pure theosophy. With perception we can never know about the world — he says — anything else than dreams of these dreams. But something drives us to want the good. This lets us look into this big world of dreams like in a flash. He sees the realisation of the moral law in the world of dreams. The demands of the moral law should justify what reason cannot teach. — And Herbart says: because any perception is full of contradictions, we can never come to norms of our moral actions. Hence, there must be norms of our moral actions which are relieved of any judgment by mind and reason. Moral perfection, goodwill, inner freedom, they are independent of the activity of reason. Because everything is appearance in our world, we must have something in which we are relieved of reflection.

This is the first phase of the development of the 19-th century: the transformation of truth to a world of dreams. The idealism of dreams was the only possible result of thinking about being and wanted to make the foundation of a moral world view independent of all knowledge and cognition. It wanted to limit knowledge to get room for faith. Therefore, the German philosophy has broken with the ancient traditions of those world views which we call theosophy. Anybody who calls himself theosophist could have never accepted this dualism, this separation of moral and the world of dreams. It was for him always a unity, from the lowest

quantum of energy up to the highest spiritual reality. Because as well as that which the animal accomplishes in desire and listlessness is only relatively different from that which arises from the highest point of the cultural life out of the purest motives, that is only relatively different everywhere which happens below from that which happens on top. Kant left this uniform way to complete knowledge and world view while he split the world in a recognisable but apparent world and in a second world which has a quite different origin, in the world of morality. In doing so, he clouded the look of many people. Anybody who cannot find access to theosophy suffers from the aftermath of Kant's philosophy.

In the end, you will see how theosophy emerges from a true theory of knowledge; however, it was necessary before that I have demonstrated the apparently firm construction of science. Science seems to have proved irrefutably that there are only the oscillations of the ether if we feel green or blue that we sense tone by the aerial oscillations. The contents of the next lecture will show how it is in reality.

## Notes

**a vigorous book of the world view ...:** In a satirical writing by I. Kant *Dreams of a Spirit Seer Explained by Dreams of Metaphysics* (On Emanuel Swedenborg) (1766)

Johann Friedrich **Herbart** (1776 – 1841), German philosopher, psychologist, founder of academic pedagogy

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Friedrich\\_Herbart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Friedrich_Herbart)

Otto **Liebmann** (1840 – 1912), German philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto\\_Liebmann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_Liebmann)

Johannes **Volkelt** (1848 – 1930), German philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Volkelt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Volkelt)

Friedrich Albert **Lange** (1828 – 1875), German philosopher and sociologist

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich\\_Albert\\_Lange](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Albert_Lange)

Hermann von **Helmholtz** (1821 – 1894), German physician and physicist

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann\\_von\\_Helmholtz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_von_Helmholtz)

Johannes **Müller** (1801 – 1858), German physiologist

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Peter\\_Müller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Peter_Müller)

Johann Gottlieb **Fichte** (1762 – 1814), German philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Gottlieb\\_Fichte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Gottlieb_Fichte)

*On the Determination of the Human Being* (1800)

## The Epistemological Bases of Theosophy. Part III

*Berlin, 17th December 1903*

In the preceding talks I have tried to outline the basic thoughts of the present theory of knowledge, as it is done at our universities, and as it is also done by those philosophers and thinking researchers who lean upon Schopenhauer, Kant and similar great German thinkers. I tried to show at the same time how the whole scientific development of the 19-th century, whether the physical one, the physiological one and also the psychological one, accepted Kant's epistemology or those forms of it which Schopenhauer or Eduard von Hartmann created. I have shown with it that basically that kind of epistemology which we can call illusionism which turns us completely to our own consciousness and makes the whole world a world of ideas seems to be the only right one. This seems to be so natural that one is regarded as philosophically under-age today, if one doubts the sentence: the world is my idea.

You may allow me now to speak about the spiritual, because I have brought forward almost all reasons to you which led to this illusionistic epistemology. I have shown the reasons which lead to the conclusion: the world is our idea; I have shown how everything that surrounds us is destroyed by the sensory-physiological approach, whether the world of temperature sensations, the sensations of touch et cetera. This percepts, ideas and concepts appear finally as being born by the human soul, as a self-product of the human being. The knowledge which tries to give reasons for this in all directions corresponds to Schopenhauer's doctrine: the world is our idea — according to which there is no sky, but only an eye which sees it, no tones, but only an ear which hears them. Perhaps, you could believe that I wanted to disprove these different epistemological points of view. I have shown what they lead to, but do not understand this as a disproof of the different points of view. The theosophist knows no disproof. He does not position himself only on one point of view in philosophy. Those who have dedicated themselves to a philosophical system believe that this is the absolutely right one. Thus we can see fighting Schopenhauer, Hartmann, the Hegelians and the Kantians from this point of view. However, this can never be the point of view of the theosophist. The theosophist sees it differently. On the whole, there is for him also no quarrel of the different religious systems, because he realises that a core of truth forms the basis of each of them and that the quarrel of the Buddhists, the Muslims and the Christians is not justified. The theosophist also knows that in every philosophical system a core of knowledge is that in every system, so to speak, a level of human knowledge is hidden.

It cannot be a matter of disproving Kant or Schopenhauer. Who strives fairly can be mistaken, but the next best cannot simply come to disprove them. It must be clear to us that all these spirits strove for truth from their point of view, and that we find just the core of truth in the different philosophical systems. That is why it cannot be a matter for us who is right or who is wrong. Who positions himself firmly on his own point of view and then compares the points of view with each other and says that he can accept only this or that, is in terms of philosophical knowledge on the same point of view as a stamp collector. The loftiest recogniser has not even ascended the highest summit of insight. Each of us is on the ladder of development. Even the loftiest human being cannot recognise anything absolute of truth, of the world spirit. If we have climbed up a higher level of knowledge, we also have a relative judgment only which always increases, if we have climbed up an even higher summit.

If we have understood the foundations of the theosophical system, it appears to us as arrogance to speak about a philosopher if we cannot position ourselves for a test on his point of view, so that we can also prove the truth of his thoughts like he may do this himself. One can always be mistaken, but one may not position himself sophistically on the point of view that it is impossible to have an overview of another standpoint. I want to deliver an argument to you from the German spiritual development that it is possible to have an overview in such a way as I have characterised it.

In the sixties, Darwinism dawned, and it was immediately interpreted materialistically. The materialistic interpretation is an one-sidedness. But those who interpreted in such a way regarded themselves as infallible; the materialists of the sixties regarded themselves as infallible in their conclusions. Then *The Philosophy of the Unconscious* by Eduard von Hartmann appeared; I do not want to defend it. May it have its one-sidedness; nevertheless, I acknowledge that this point of view is far higher than that of Vogt, Haeckel and Büchner. Hence, the materialists regarded it as warmed up Schopenhauerianism. Then a new book appeared that disproved the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* with striking reasons. One believed that it could only be a scientist. "He should unveil his name", Haeckel wrote, "and we call him one of ours." Then the second edition appeared, and the author was called: Eduard von Hartmann himself. He showed that he could completely position himself on the standpoint of the naturalists. If he had set his name on the first edition, the writing would have fallen short of its goal. You see that the advanced human being can also position himself on the subordinated point of view and can present everything that is to be presented against the higher point of view. Nobody is allowed to dare, especially not from the theosophical point of view, to speak about a philosophical system if he is not aware to have understood this philosophical system from within.

That is why it does not concern the disproof of Kantianism and Schopenhauerianism. We must overcome these childhood illnesses of

disproving. We have to show how they themselves lead beyond themselves if we look for their true core.

That is why we position ourselves again for a test on the standpoint of the subjectivist epistemology which leads to the principle: the world is my idea. — It wants to overcome the naive realism according to which that which stands before me is the true, while the epistemologists have found that everything that surrounds me is nothing but my ideas.

If one had to stop at this standpoint of epistemology, any basis for a theosophical construction of a view of life would be in vain. We know that our knowledge of the world is not only our ideas. If they were only subjective creations of our egos, we could not come beyond them. We could not recognise the true value of anything. We would never be able to consider the things as essential in the theosophical world view, but only as subjective creations of our egos. Thereby we would always be rejected to our egos. We could say that tidings of any higher world came to us if we get that which we only have from the depth of our conceptual life for ourselves, however, only if we have the manifestations of a truthful and real world in our subjective world. On that is based what we have to imagine as theosophy. Hence, theosophy can never be content with the sentence: the world is my idea.

We can see that Schopenhauer goes beyond the sentence: the world is my idea. There is still the other sentence of Schopenhauer which should complete the first one: The world is will. — Schopenhauer gets to it in no other way as the theosophist. He says: everything that is in the starry heaven is only my idea, but I do not recognise my own existence as an idea. I act, I will; this is a strength in the world in which I am and in myself, so that I know from myself what forms the basis of my idea. May be everything else that surrounds me an idea, I myself is my will. — Schopenhauer tried that way to gain the firm point which he could reach never actually. For this sentence is a self-annihilating sentence which has only to be thought logically through to the end to find out that it is a *reductio ad absurdum* as the mathematician calls it.

No little stone can be taken out of the construction which Schopenhauer put up. If we have sensations of touch, of temperature, we know that we have only ideas of our ego. Let us be consistent. How do we recognise ourselves? We see no real colour, but we know only that an eye is there which sees colour. Why do we know, however, that an eye sees that a hand is there which feels? Only because we perceive them as we perceive any other thing, a sensory impression if we want to recognise the outside world. Our self-knowledge is also tied to the same laws and rules to which the law of the outside world is tied.

As true as my world is my idea, it must be true that I myself am my idea with everything that is in me. Thus we are able to consider the entire philosophy of Schopenhauer, everything that is thought about the whole subjective and objective world as nothing but ideas. Be clear to yourselves about the fact that



this can only be the true and real consequence of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Then, however, he has also to admit that everything that he has ascertained about himself is only his idea. So we have mattered what the mathematician calls a *reductio ad absurdum*, like Baron Munchausen pulled himself out of the swamp by his own mop of hair. We completely float in the air. We do not have any firm point. We have destroyed the naive realism; however, have shown at the same time that this leads us to nihilism. One has to find another point if this conclusion leads *ad absurdum*.

Schopenhauer did this himself. He said: if I want to come to the real, I am not allowed to stop at the idea, but I must progress to the will. Schopenhauer became a realist that way, admittedly, unlike Herbart. Herbart says: we have to look for the real in the unopposed. — That is why he put up many realities. Schopenhauer also puts up such realities.

Now it is true, really true that the world which surrounds me is appearance. But like the smoke points to fire, the appearance points to its being. Herbart tries to solve the problem monadologically, as well as Leibniz did; however, with Herbart it is coloured by Kantianism. Leibniz lived before Kant; he was still free of Kantian influence. Schopenhauer positions himself on the standpoint: I myself know myself as a willing one. This will of existence guarantees my being to me. I am will, and I manifest myself in the world as an idea. As well as I am will and manifest myself, also the remaining things are of the same kind, and they manifest themselves in the outside. As the ego is in me, the will also is in me, and in the outer things is the will of these things. — Thus Schopenhauer showed the way to self-knowledge, and he admitted implicitly that one can only recognise the things really if one is in their inside.

Indeed, if the naive realism is right that the things are outside us, have nothing to do with our egos and we are informed only by our ideas about the things outside us, if their being is outside us, then one cannot escape Schopenhauerianism at all. Then least of all the second part can be justified: the world is my will.

You will immediately understand this. Forming an idea can be compared with a seal and its impression. The "thing-in-itself" is like the seal, the idea is like the impression of the seal. Everything of the seal remains outside the substance which takes up the seal impression. The impression, the idea is quite subjective. I have nothing of the "thing-in-itself" in myself, as well as the seal itself never becomes part of the substance of the seal impression. That is the basic concept of the subjectivist view. Schopenhauer, however, says: I can only recognise a thing while I am inside it.

Julius Baumann says this also who hints at the teaching of reincarnation even if he is not a theosophist. But his way of thinking has led Julius Baumann to apply to epistemology. Even if this form of thinking got stuck in the elementary, he is on the way.

There is no other possibility to recognise a thing than to creep into it. This is not possible as long as we say that the thing is outside us and we know of it; then nothing can come into us. If we were able to enter the thing itself, we could recognise the being of the thing. This appears to a modern epistemologist to be the most absurd thought. But it seems only in such a way. Indeed, under the preconditions of the western epistemology it appears in such a way. But it did not always appear in such a way, above all not to those whose mind was not clouded by the principles of this epistemology.

However, one thing could be possible: perhaps, we have never come out of the things actually. Perhaps, we have never built up that strict dividing wall; we have burst that chasm which should separate us strictly from the things, according to Kant. Then the thought gets closer to us that we can be in the things. And this is the basic idea of theosophy. It is in such a way that our ego does not belong to us, is not enclosed in the narrow building as our organisation appears to us, but the single human being is only an appearance of the divine being of the world. It is as it were only a reflection, an outflow, a spark of the all-embracing ego. This is a viewpoint which had the mastery over the minds for centuries, before there was Kant's philosophy. As far as that is concerned, the greatest spirits have never thought differently.

Johannes Kepler disclosed the construction of the planetary system to us and formed the idea that the planets circle in elliptical orbits round the sun. This is a thought which gives us insight in the being of the universe. Now I would like to read up his words to you, so that you see how he felt: "Several years ago the first aurora appeared to me, several weeks ago it became light to me and since some hours the sun shines. I wrote a book. Those who read the book and understand it are welcome to me, the others — I am not interested in them.." A thought which waited for a long time, until it could light up in the head of a human being again. This is spoken out of the knowledge that that which is in our mind and which we recognise of the world is the same that produced the world; that the planets describe elliptical orbits not by chance but that they must be brought in by the creative spirit; that we are not loafers who only think about the universe, but that the contents of our mind is creative outdoors. That is why Kepler was convinced that he was only the human scene for that basic idea of the cosmic universe on which this thought, living in the cosmos and flowing through it, came to the fore to be recognised again.

Kepler would never have thought to say that that his knowledge of the universe was only his idea, but he would say: what I had recognised gives me information about that which is real outdoors in space. — If one had said to Kepler that this was only an idea but not objective outside, he would have said: do you think really that that which gives me information about other things exists only if I accept the information? — Then somebody who stands on the ground of subjectivist epistemology would have to say to himself if he stands before a telephone: the gentleman in Hamburg who calls me now is only my idea; I perceive him only as my idea.

This train of thought induces us to ask: how is it possible to really acknowledge the principle that we recognise the being only if we ourselves enter the being of the things if we can identify ourselves with the being? This is the epistemology of those who want to have a deeper and clearer standpoint compared with the modern view.

[Hamerling](#) wrote a good book: *The Atomism of the Will*. He is a serious thinker and has serious thoughts. They are written in Schopenhauer's sense, but they are thoughts which try to come to the being of the things. Hamerling says: one thing is absolutely certain: nobody wants to deny his own existence, nobody will admit that he himself has only an imagined being that his being stops if he does no longer think. Also Schiller says once: yes, Descartes states: I think, therefore I am. But I have often not thought and, nevertheless, I have been there. Hamerling tries to recover a similar attitude as Schopenhauer: I have also to award a feeling of existence to all other beings. The ego and the atoms are for him the antipodes. — Everything is always a little bit scanty, also Hamerling's book. To escape from illusionism, he tries to explain this to himself in such a way that he says: we can only realise that being within which we are. — With all astuteness Hamerling tries to explain this. [Fechner](#) tries to replace the feeling of existence generally with feeling. Herbart — he said — would have done the mistake that he wants to come to reality by mere thinking. However, in doing so we do not come to the ego. Rather the ego rises out of the subsoil of feeling. He could have written like Schopenhauer: the world as feeling and idea. — Hamerling could have written: the world as atom, will and idea. — And [Frohschammer](#) wrote about imagination as the factor of world creation, guaranteeing the real being, like Schopenhauer about the will. He tried to show the whole nature outdoors as a product of imagination. — They all try to come out of the absurdity of Kant's philosophy.

A subtle train of thought is now necessary, but everybody must have done it who wants to join in the discussion: what induces us generally to put up any sentence about our knowledge? Why do we feel called to say that the world is our idea or imagination or anything like that? Something must give us the possibility and ability to correlate us, our cognitive faculties and our powers of imagination with the world.

Imagine the contrast of the ego and the remaining world, that is, you should say how you recognise your ego and the remaining world. Take two contrasts: an accuser and a defender of a criminal. The one judges from the one, the other from the other point of view. It is not their task to be fully objective. Only the judge objectively standing above them can deliver a judgment. Imagine which arguments they put forward and also the judge who weighs both views objectively. Never can a single man solely decide, and just as little the ego only can decide which relation it has to the world. The single ego is subjective, it could never decide alone on its relation to the world. A theory of knowledge would never be possible if only the ego were on one side and the world on the

other side. I have to gain an objective point of view in my thinking and exceed myself and the world that way. If I am completely within my thinking, then it is impossible as it is impossible for the thinking of the adherents of Kant and Schopenhauer. Imagine Kant sitting at his desk and judging only from himself. It is not possible to get an objective judgment this way. Only under one precondition it is possible that I can appoint my thinking as judge of myself and the world as it were: if it is anything that exceeds me.

Now the faintest self-contemplation already shows you that your thinking is something that exceeds you. It is not true that it is only an appearance, that two times two are four, and that any truth which appears with an absolute validity has validity only in your consciousness. You recognise that their objectiveness towers above their subjective validity, you acknowledge its validity. It has nothing to do with your ego that two times two are four. Nothing in the field of wisdom deals with your egos. Because you can rise up to an objective self-contained thinking, you can also judge objectively about the world. All thinkers already presuppose this sentence; otherwise they could not sit down at all and ponder over the world. If there were only two thoughts, namely: I am in the world, and: the world is in me, one could justify neither Kant's nor Schopenhauer's views. You have to admit that you are authorised to judge about truth. For within our thinking is something that is above our ego. Any philosopher admitted this who is not inhibited by Kantianism who impartially thinks monadologically. All philosophers who thought the true realities of the world in this sense thought them as spiritual. They thought them as something spiritual. If we go back to Giordano Bruno, to Leibniz, to those who have taken care to add qualities to the realities, you find out that they have thought monadologically that they have considered the thinking as coming from the primary source, from the spirit. If, however, spirit is that which constitutes the being of the things, then compared with this view Kant's and Schopenhauer's epistemologies are on the standpoint of naive realism.

I refer to my metaphor. Assume that nothing of the substance of the seal is transferred to the impression, but it would depend on the writing, on your name which is on the seal, on the spirit. Then you can say that nothing of the substance is transferred, but your name which is on the seal would be transferred; it is transferred from the world of the spirit. It is transferred in spite of all dividing walls which we have built up. Then one does not need to deny that Schopenhauer's epistemology is partly correct, but we go beyond the dividing walls. Keep all those materialistic considerations! Admit that nothing of the substance of the seal is transferred to the seal impression, but that the spirit is transferred, for it penetrates us in its true figure because we have our origin in it in truth. Because we are sparks of this world spirit, we live in it and recognise it again. We know precisely if the world spirit knocks at our eye, at our ear that it is not only our subjective feeling, but we look for something that is there outdoors. Thus we realise that the spirit looks for the mediators outside whom

we have declared as the mediators of spirit. If it is certain that the world is spirit in its being, we can fully position ourselves on the standpoint which Kant and Schopenhauer take. All that is correct, but it does not go far enough. It is easy to adapt to Kant and Schopenhauer. But one has to get beyond them, because it is correct that the spirit lives in all things and that it turns to us giving its being. It really proves true in the theosophical sense what Baumann demands for a real knowledge of the things, namely we have to be in the being of the things. We are also inside the world spirit and are only its beings.

Today I have dressed the basic idea of this philosophy in images. You find a philosophical treatise on that in my *Philosophy of Freedom*, and you find the opposing points of view there, too. I have reported that Schopenhauer, Kant, the Neo-Kantians stand on the point of view that we do not get beyond the idea, and then that they stopped halfway overcoming the naive realism. But, because they start from the “thing-in-itself” and show that one cannot get out, they still get stuck in the naive realism, because they look for truth in the material. As well as all the modern epistemologists, even if they still believe to have got beyond the naive realism, stand with one leg on the naive realism because they do not give up founding everything on the material.

Theosophy only can lead us to the gate of knowledge. If we want to find the object of knowledge, it enables us to say that the true being of the world is spirit. From the moment when we come to this gate the further way is the spirit. The spirit forms the basis of the whole world.

I wanted to explain this once. I could do it only briefly and sketchy. The human being is indeed a seal impression of the world. However, his being is not in the material. We can recognise this being at any moment, because it is in the spirit. The spirit flows into the material, into us, like the name which is on the seal is transferred to the impression.

I believe to have shown that somebody can also position himself on the standpoint of the academic philosophy but have to understand it better than the academic philosophers themselves. Then everybody will also find the way to theosophy, even if he stands on an opposing point of view. You can stand on any point of view if you do not have a closed mind. From any philosophy you are able to find the way to theosophy.

You learn to overcome Schopenhauer best of all if you get to know him thoroughly. Most people know him only a little. But you have also to go into the being of the things, position yourself on his point of view. There are twelve volumes of Schopenhauer’s works which I published text-critically. So I have concerned myself with Schopenhauer for several years. That is why I believe to know something about him. But if you recognise and understand him really, you reach the theosophical point of view. Not through half knowledge, because this leads away from theosophy. A half of Western knowledge leads away from theosophy at first, leads to subjectivism, to idealism et cetera. However, let this

become the whole knowledge, and then the West will also find the way to theosophy.

I have already named Julius Baumann. He knows what real knowledge is even if he has not still come to the great thing of theosophy. I think to have faintly shown it in outlines. For the real knowledge is contradictory to theosophy by no means. It is just that view which brings peace and tolerance everywhere. All these truths which I have given are steps to the real truth. Kant has moved some way, also Schopenhauer. The one more, the other less. They are on the way. However, it always concerns how far they have gone this way. Theosophy does also not dare to say that it is on the summit. The right way is the way itself, above all that which was inscribed on the Greek temples: recognise yourself (*gnothi s' auton*). We are one being with the world spirit. As well as we recognise our own being, we recognise the being of the universal spirit. "Rise of our spirit to the all-embracing spirit", that is theosophy.

### *Notes*

Johann Friedrich **Herbart** (1776 – 1841), German philosopher, psychologist, founder of academic pedagogy

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Friedrich\\_Herbart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Friedrich_Herbart)

Gottfried Wilhelm **Leibniz** (1646 – 1716), German mathematician and philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried\\_Wilhelm\\_Leibniz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried_Wilhelm_Leibniz)

Julius **Baumann** (1837 – 1916), German philosopher, professor in Göttingen

Robert **Hamerling** (1830 – 1889), Austrian poet

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Hamerling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Hamerling)

Gustav Theodor **Fechner** (1801 – 1887), naturalist and philosopher, founder of psychophysics

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav\\_Theodor\\_Fechner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Theodor_Fechner)

Jakob **Frohschammer** (1821 – 1893), German theologian and philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jakob\\_Frohschammer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jakob_Frohschammer)



## Theosophical Teachings of the Soul. Part I: Body and Soul

*Berlin, 16th March 1904*

Self-knowledge is necessary to be able to tell the human beings the heavenly wisdom. Plato revered his great teacher Socrates particularly because Socrates could get the loftiest knowledge, the knowledge of God through self-knowledge because he appreciated the knowledge of the own soul more than that of the external nature or of that which refers to anything beyond our world. Socrates just became one of the martyrs of knowledge and truth because he was misunderstood in his knowledge of the soul. One has accused him that he denied the gods, while he searched for them, nevertheless, only on another way than others, on the way through the own soul. He was accused of this soul knowledge which does not only aim at the knowledge of the own soul, but also at the jewel which holds this human soul as knowledge, namely the knowledge of the divine very basis.

These three talks should deal with this knowledge of the soul. The number of the talks was not arbitrarily determined and also not by chance, but well considered out of the developmental course of the soul. For in the times in which the knowledge and the wisdom of soul was in the centre of the whole human thinking and striving, one divided the nature of the human being into three parts, in body, soul and mind. You can find this view in the ancient Indian wisdom of the Vedanta, in the heydays of Buddhism and of the Greek philosophy and in the first centuries of Christianity. If you want to consider the soul correctly, you have to connect it with the other members of the human being, with the body on one side and with the mind on the other side. Hence, this first lecture has to deal with the relations of the soul with the body. The second lecture deals with the real internal being of the human soul, and the third lecture with the sight of the soul up to the divine-spiritual very basis of the world existence.

By a strange chance of history this threefold division of the human being has got lost to the western research, because wherever you look for psychology today, you find that one confronts psychology simply to the natural sciences or the science of the body, and everywhere you can hear that one assumes that the human being is to be considered according to two points of view: the first informs about the corporeality, the other point of view informs about the soul. This means, popularly expressed, that the human being consists of body and soul. This sentence on which basically our whole psychology well-known to you is based and to which many mistakes are to be attributed in psychology this sentence has a strange history. Until the first times of Christianity everybody who thought and tried to explain the human being considered him as consisting of body, soul and mind. Go to the first Christian church teachers, go to the



Gnostics, then everywhere you find this division. Up to the second, third centuries you find the trichotomy of the human being acknowledged by the Christian science and dogmatism. Later one regarded this teaching as dangerous within Christianity. One thought that the human being would become too arrogant if he ascended beyond his soul to the spirit that he would presume too much to inform about the basis of the things about which only the revelation should inform.

That is why one consulted and decided on different councils that as a dogma is to be taught for the future: the human being consists of body and soul. Respected theologians maintained the trichotomy in certain respects, like John Scotus Eriugena and Thomas Aquinas. But the consciousness of the trichotomy got lost more and more to the Christian science which cared for psychology above all in the Middle Ages. At the appearance of science in the 15-th and 16th centuries one no longer had a consciousness of the old division. Even Descartes made a distinction only between soul, which he calls mind, and body. This remained that way. Those who speak of psychology today do not know that they speak under the influence of a Christian dogma. One believes — you can read it in the manuals — that the human being consists only of body and soul. One has only reproduced an ancient prejudice, and one is based on it still today. This will appear to us in the course of these talks.

We have to show above all which relation between soul and body the unbiased psychologist has to assume; for it seems to be a result of modern natural sciences that one should no longer speak of the soul as one did it for thousands of years before our time. The physical research which pressed its stamp onto the 19-th century and its mental development explained again and again that a science of the soul in the old sense of the word — as for example that of Goethe and partially of Aristotle — is not compatible with its views and is not tenable, therefore. You can take manuals about psychology or *The Riddles of the World* by Haeckel. You will find everywhere that the dogmatic prejudices exist and that one has the opinion that the old points of view under which one tried to approach the soul are overcome. Nobody can revere Haeckel — I say this for the scientists and the admirers of Ernst Haeckel — as a great man of science more than I myself. But great human beings also have big shortcomings, and thus it may be my task to test a prejudice of our time quite impartially.

What is said to us from this side? One says to us: what you called soul disappeared under our hands. We naturalists have shown that any sensation, everything that develops as conceptual life, any thinking, any willing, any feeling that everything is tied to particular organs of our brain and our nervous system. Natural sciences of the 19-th century showed, one says, that certain parts of our cerebral cortex unless they are completely intact make it impossible to us to accomplish certain mental manifestations. From that one concludes that in these parts of our brain the mental manifestations are located that they are dependent, as one says, on these parts of our brain. One has expressed this

drastically saying: a certain point of the brain is the centre of speech, another part of this soul activity, another part of another activity, so that one can tear down the soul bit by bit.

One has shown that the illness of particular cerebral parts is connected with the loss of particular soul abilities at the same time. What one imagined as soul since millennia, no naturalist can find this; this is a concept with which the naturalist cannot do anything. We find the body and its functions, but nowhere a soul. The great moralist of Darwinism, Bartholomäus Carneri who has written an ethics of Darwinism expressed his conviction clearly as it can never be given more clearly by these circles of the naturalists. He says: we take a clock. The pointers advance, the clockwork is in movement. All that happens because of the mechanism which is before us. As we have in that which the clock accomplishes a manifestation of the clock mechanism, in the same way we have in that which the human being feels, thinks and wills a manifestation of the whole nervous mechanism before us.

Just as little one can assume that a small soul-being is in the clock which moves the cog wheels, the pointers, just as little we can suppose that a soul exists outside the organism which causes thinking, feeling and willing. — This is the confession of a naturalist in mental respect; it is that which the naturalists have made the basis of a new faith, such a pure naturalistic religion. The naturalist believes that he is forced to this confession by the results of science and he believes that he is allowed to regard everybody as a childish mind who does not conclude this way under the influence of science. Bartholomäus Carneri showed it without any whitewash. As long as the human beings were children, they have spoken like Aristotle; because they have grown up now and understand science, they must leave the childish views. The view of the naturalists, which regards the human being as nothing else than a mechanism, corresponds to the metaphor of the clock. Drastically expressed, this view is considered as the only one which is worthy of the present. It is shown in such a way that the scientific discoveries of the age force us to these confessions.

However, we have to ask ourselves: did the natural sciences, the precise investigation of our nervous system, the precise investigation of our organs and their functions really force us to this view? No, because in the 18-th century everything that one gives as something scientific and authoritative today was still in the germ. There was nothing of modern psychology, nothing of the discoveries of the great Johannes Müller and his school, nothing of the discoveries which the naturalists made in the 19-th century.

At that time, in the 18-th century, these views were expressed in the most radical way in the French Enlightenment which could not rely on natural sciences, the words sounded for the first time: the human being is a machine. — A book by Holbach comes from this time, entitled: *Systeme de la nature*, about which Goethe said that he felt rejected by its superficiality and triviality. This as proof of the fact that this view existed before the modern natural sciences. One is allowed to say that on the contrary the materialism of the 18-th century hovered

over the minds of the 19-th century and that the materialistic creed was setting the tone for the way of thinking which one then brought into the natural sciences. That with regard to the historical truth. If it were not in such a way, one would have to call the view a childish one which the modern natural sciences has, namely that one cannot speak of the soul in the old sense because one can tear down the soul in the same way as one can tear down the brain. What did one gain especially with this view? No soul-researcher who tries to recognise the soul according to Aristotle, according to the old Greeks, or — we say in spite of all contradiction which approach from some sides — according to the Christian Middle Ages can take offence of the truths of modern natural sciences. Every reasonable soul-researcher agrees to that which the natural sciences say about the nervous system and the brain as the mediators of our soul functions. He is not surprised that one can no longer speak if a certain part of the brain falls ill. The old researcher is no longer surprised with that like with the fact that he can no longer think after he has been killed.

Modern science does nothing else than to determine in detail what the human beings have already understood on the whole. Just as the human being knows that he cannot speak without certain cerebral parts, cannot form ideas, it would be a proof that he has no soul if he could be killed. Also the Vedantists, also Plato and others are clear to themselves about the fact that the soul activity of the human being stops if a big fieldstone falls on his head and smashes him. The old psychology did not teach anything different. We can be aware of that. We can accept the whole natural sciences and form psychology differently. During former centuries one realised that the way which the natural sciences took does not lead to the knowledge of the soul and can also not be taken, hence, to its disproof.

If those who try to disprove the old psychology from the standpoint of science were well-versed in former lines of thought, if people were not yet so prejudiced in the external life, then they could realise that they tilt at windmills like once Don Quixote to combat psychology in this scientific sense.

This whole fight is already shown in a conversation which you find in the Buddhist literature, in a conversation which does not belong to the sermons of Buddha himself which was written down only some years before Christ. Somebody who investigates the conversation sees that it concerns the oldest real views of Buddhism which find expression in the discussion of the King Milinda equipped with Greek wisdom and dialectic with the Buddhist sage Nagasena. This king steps to the Indian sage and asks: who are you? — The sage Nagasena answers: one calls me Nagasena. But this is only a name. No subject, no personality is contained in it. — How? King Milinda said who held the Greek dialectic and the whole ability and power of Greek thinking in himself — listen to me who you have come along, the sage states that nothing is behind the name Nagasena. What is then that which stands there before me? Are your hands, your legs Nagasena? No. Is your sensations, feelings and ideas Nagasena? No, all this is not Nagasena. Then the connection of that is Nagasena. But, because he states

now that everything is not Nagasena that only a name is there which holds together everything, who and what is Nagasena, actually? Is that nothing which is behind the brain, behind the organs, behind the body, behind the feelings and ideas? Is that nothing who does others a few favours? Is somebody nothing who does the good and the bad? Is somebody nothing who strives for holiness? Is nothing behind that all but the sheer name? — There Nagasena answered using another metaphor: how have you come, great king, on foot or carriage? — The king answered: on carriage. — Now, explain the carriage to me. Is the shaft your carriage? Are the wheels your carriage? Is the carriage box your carriage? — No, answers the king. — What is then your carriage? It is a name which refers only to the connection of the different parts.

What did the sage Nagasena want to say who grew up in Buddhism? — O king, you who have gained an immense ability in Greece, in the Greek philosophy you must understand that you come to anything else than to a name if you consider the parts of the carriage in their connection as little as if you hold together the parts of the human being.

Take this ancient teaching which can be traced back to the oldest times of the Buddhist world view and ask yourselves what is said in it? Nothing else than that the way of recognising the soul by looking at the external organs or at the interplay of ideas is a wrong track. By the way, the great anatomist Metchnikoff reckoned that the ideas are a milliard. In terms of this correct saying of the sage Nagasena we cannot find the soul that way. This is a wrong way. One never tried to approach the soul that way in the times in which one knew on which way one has to find the soul and to study it. It was a historical necessity that the fine, intimate ways on which still the sages of the Christian Middle Ages looked for the soul receded a little bit into the background when our natural sciences started to take up the external world. Which methods and viewpoints did the natural sciences develop in particular?

You can find in the posthumous works of one of the most ingenious naturalists of our immediate present who has done great discoveries in the field of the theory of electricity that the modern natural sciences have taken up the cause of simplicity and usefulness. You can find that a psychologist who also works for the purposes of natural sciences still added descriptiveness to these two demands of simplicity and usefulness. One can say that natural sciences really worked miracles by this three — simplicity, usefulness and descriptiveness. But this is not applicable to the soul being. Using descriptiveness with regard to the examination of the external members, using usefulness with regard to the outer appearance the natural sciences were induced to look for the connection of the parts, to calculate, to investigate them. However, it was just that which can never lead to the soul according to the sage Nagasena. Because the natural sciences have taken this way, it is only too comprehensible that they have left the ways of the soul. Today one does not even have a consciousness of that which soul researchers have for centuries striven for.

Which fairy tales are told in this regard and which sum of ignorance comes to light, if today one speaks in apparently authoritative circles about the teaching of Aristotle or about that of the first Christian researchers, about that of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless if anybody wants to understand the being of the soul academically, there is no other access than that of the careful inner work to learn the ideas of Aristotle, the ideas which have led the first Christians and the great Christian Church Fathers to the knowledge of the soul. There is no other method. It is as important for this field as the method of the natural sciences for the external science. But these methods of psychology have got lost to us to a large extent. Really inner observations are not regarded as an academic field.

The theosophical movement has made it its job to investigate the ways of the soul again. In the most different kind the access to the soul can be found. In other talks I tried, on purely spiritual-scientific way, to give the knowledge of the soul by means of purely theosophical method. Here, however, should be spoken at first how Aristotle founded his psychology at the end of the great Greek philosophical epoch. For in former times the wisdom of the soul was cultivated unlike by Aristotle. We understand how the wisdom of the soul was cultivated in the ancient Egyptian wisdom, was cultivated in the ancient Veda wisdom. This, however, for later. Today you allow me to speak of the psychology of Aristotle who completed as a scholar centuries before Christ what has been found on quite different ways. We may say that we have something in the of Aristotle's doctrine of the soul that the best in the fields of psychology were able to give. Because Aristotle gives the best, one has to speak about Aristotle above all. Nevertheless, this gigantic mind of his time — his writings is a treasury with regard to the knowledge of the ancient time, and somebody who becomes engrossed in Aristotle knows what was performed before his time — this gigantic mind was not clairvoyant like Plato, he was a scientist. Somebody who wants to get closer to the soul academically has to do it on the way of Aristotle. Aristotle is a personality who gives satisfaction to the demands of scientific thinking in every respect — if one takes the epoch into consideration. As we will see, in one single point he does not. This only point in which we find Aristotle's doctrine of the soul dissatisfactory became the big disaster of all scientific psychology of the West.

Aristotle was a scientific teacher of development. He stood completely on the standpoint of the theory of evolution. He supposed that all beings have developed in strictly scientific necessity. He let the most imperfect beings still arise from abiogenesis, by mere meeting of lifeless physical substances, in purely natural way. This is a hypothesis which is an important scientific bone of contention, but a hypothesis which Haeckel has in common with Aristotle. Haeckel also shares the conviction of Aristotle that a direct ladder leads up to the human being. Aristotle also encloses any soul development in this development and is convinced that there is not a radical, but only a gradual difference between soul and body. That means that Aristotle is convinced that during the

development of the imperfect to the perfect the moment happens when the level is reached that everything lifeless has found its creation, and then the possibility is there that the soul element comes into being from the lifeless by itself. He gradually distinguishes a so-called plant soul which lives in the whole plant world, an animal soul which lives in the animal realm, and, finally, a higher level of this animal soul which lives in the human being. You see that the really understood Aristotle agrees completely with everything that modern natural sciences teach. Now, take *The Riddles of the World* by Haeckel, the first pages where he stands on the ground of the right physical laws, and compare that with the natural sciences and the psychology of Aristotle, you will find that a real difference does not exist if you subtract the difference given by the time. But now this comes where Aristotle goes beyond the psychology to which the modern natural sciences believe to have come. There Aristotle shows that he is able to observe real inner life. If anybody follows with deep understanding what Aristotle now builds up on this physical-lawful theory of knowledge sees that all people have simply not understood this view in the true sense of the word who argue anything against this view of Aristotle. It is infinitely easy to realise that we have to do an immense step from the animal soul to the human soul. It is infinitely easy to understand that. Nothing else prevents one from doing this step together with Aristotle than the ways of thinking which formed in the course of modern mental development. For Aristotle is clear to himself about the fact that something appears within the human soul that differs substantially from everything that is found as a soul element outside. Already the old Pythagoreans said, by the way, that somebody who realises the truth that the human being is the only being which can learn to count knows in which respect the human being differs from the animal. But it is not so easy to see what it means, actually, that only the human being can learn to count.

The Greek sage Plato did not admit anybody to his philosophers' school who had not learnt mathematics first, at least the elements, the ABC. That means: Plato wanted nothing else than that those whom he introduced in the science of the soul know something about the nature of the mathematical, know something about the nature of this peculiar mental activity which the human being exercises if he does mathematics. However, this is clear also to Aristotle that it does not depend on doing mathematics rather than on understanding: the human being is able to do mathematics.

That is nothing else than that the human being is able to discover strictly self-contained laws which no external world can give him. Only those who are not trained in thinking, only those who do not know to achieve introspection only do not realise that even the simplest mathematical theorem could never be gained by mere observation. In nature nowhere is a real circle, in nature nowhere is a real straight line, nowhere an ellipse, but in mathematics we investigate these, and we apply the world which we have gained from our inside to the outside.

Unless we think this fact through, we can never come to a true view of the being of the soul.

That is why theosophy requires a strict training of thinking from its students who want to get involved deeper; not the will-o'-the-wisp thinking of the everyday life, not the will-o'-the-wisp thinking of the western philosophy, but the thinking which practices introspection in inner thoroughness. This thinking reveals the far-reaching scope of this sentence. Those who had the biggest conquests in astronomy by their mathematical training realise the far-reaching scope and express it. Read the writings by Kepler, this great astronomer, read through what he says about this basic phenomenon of human introspection, then you see what this personality expresses about that. He knew which far-reaching scope mathematical thinking has up to the most distant galaxies. He says: the correspondence is miraculous which we find only from our thinking when we sat in our lonesome study room and pondered over circles and ellipses, and then look up at the sky and find their correspondence with the heavenly spheres. — Such teaching is not a matter of external research, but it concerns a deepening of such knowledge. Already in the vestibule it should appear with those who wanted to be accepted in the philosophers' school who of them could be admitted. For one knew then that — like those who have their five senses can investigate the outer world — they can investigate also the being of the soul by thinking. This was not sooner possible.

But one demanded something else. The mathematical thinking does not suffice. It is the first step where we completely live in ourselves where the spirit of the world develops from our inside. It is the most trivial, the most subordinate step which we must climb up first above which we have to go, however. Just the soul researcher of olden times demanded to get the highest levels of human knowledge out of the depths of the soul in the same way as mathematics gets out the truth of the starry heaven out of the depths of the soul. This was the demand which Plato hid in the sentence: everybody who wants to enter into my school must have gone through a mathematical course first. — Not mathematics is necessary, but a knowledge which has the independence of the mathematical thinking. If one sees that the human being has a life in himself which is independent of the external physical life that he must get the highest truth out of himself, then one also sees that the best effectiveness of the human being reaches to something that is beyond any physical activity.

Have a look at the animal. Its activity runs purely according to its type. Any animal does what countless of its ancestors have also done. The type controls the animal completely. Tomorrow it does the same what it did yesterday. The ant builds its miracle construction, the beaver its lodge, in ten, hundred, thousand years as well as today. Development is also in it, but not history. Who realises that the human development is not only a development, but history, is able to become clear to himself about the method of soul observation in similar way as somebody who has realised what mathematical truth is. There are still savage

people. Indeed, they become extinct, but there are still those who can recognise no connection between today and tomorrow. There are those who cover themselves with leaves of trees if it gets cold in the evening. In the morning they throw them away and in the evening they have to look for them again. They are not able to transfer the experience of yesterday to today and tomorrow. What is necessary if we want to transfer the experience of yesterday to today and tomorrow? We cannot say if today we know what we have done yesterday, then tomorrow we will also do what we have done yesterday. This is a characteristic of the animal soul. It can progress, it can become something else in the course of times, but then this transformation is not something historical. History consists in the fact that the individual human being uses that which he has experienced in such a way that he can conclude on something non-experienced, on a tomorrow. I learn the sense, the spirit of yesterday and rely on the fact that the laws which my soul gains from observation are also valid in that which I have not yet observed, in future. Travellers tell us that it happened that any travellers made fires for themselves in regions where monkeys lived. They went away, let the fire burn and left the wood. The monkeys approached and warmed themselves up at the fire. But they could not poke the fire. They cannot make themselves independent of the observations and experiences, they cannot conclude. The human being infers from his observations and experiences and becomes the authoritarian determiner of his future. He sends his experiences to tomorrow, he transforms development into history. As well as he transforms experience into theory, as well as he gets the truth of the spirit out of nature, he gets the rules of the future out of the past and becomes the creator of the future that way. Somebody who thinks through these two things thoroughly — that the human being can make himself independent in double way that he can not only observe, but also put up theories that he does not have development like the animal soul but also history — gets these two things clear in his mind and understands what I meant when I said that in the human being lives not only the animal soul, but the animal soul develops so far that it can take up the so-called nous (*Greek*), the universal spirit.

Aristotle regards that as necessary, so that the human being can form history, that the universal spirit sinks into the animal soul. The soul of the human being differs in the sense of Aristotle from the animal soul because it was raised from that for what it rose within the animal development up to the functions and activities by which it has acquired the spirit. The saying of the great Kepler that the laws won in a lonesome study room are applicable to the external natural phenomena can be explained through the fact that the universal spirit, the nous, the Mahat, sinks into the human soul and raises it up to a higher level. The human soul is lifted out of the animal being as it were. It is the spirit which lifts it out. The spirit lives in the soul. It develops from the soul. It develops in such a way as the soul lifts itself out of the body gradually.



However, Aristotle did not or not clearly say this. Indeed, he says repeatedly: the soul develops gradually up to the human soul in a quite natural way — but now the spirit comes from without into this naturally developed human soul. Nous is something in the sense of Aristotle that is put into the human soul from without by creative activity. This became the disaster of the western science of the soul. It is a disaster of Aristotle that he is not able to make his right view that the human soul is lifted up while the nous sinks into it a theory of the historical course. He cannot understand this development as natural as the development of the soul is to be understood. Already Greek and Indian sages did this. They understood body, soul and mind developing naturally to the human mind. There is a break with Aristotle. He adds the idea of creation to the view. We will see how the theosophical psychology overcomes this idea of creation how it draws the last consequences of the scientific world view, indeed, from the spiritual standpoint in the true sense.

But only while we get clear in our mind that we must return to the old division in body, soul and mind we really understand this natural development of the human being. However, we must not believe that we can find access to the soul one day on the apparently irrefutable ways cultivated by modern natural sciences, by observing the single parts of the brain. We have to realise that the objections of the Indian sage Nagasena also apply to the modern naturalistic psychology. We have to realise above all that a deeper, internal introspection, a deeper spiritual research is necessary to find access to soul and mind. One would form a wrong idea of those who believe that the different religions and the different sages who came from the different religions have said what the modern natural sciences try to disprove. They have never said this, have never tried this. Who follows the development of psychology can see clearly that those who have known something of the methods of psychology have never applied the methods of natural sciences, so that they had to disprove them. These cannot find to the soul. O no, on this way the soul researchers who have still known what a soul is have never sought for the soul.

I want to mention somebody, the most scorned of enlighteners whom one also knows least. I want to speak with a few words about the psychology of the 13-th century, about the psychology of Thomas Aquinas. It belongs to the typical qualities of this doctrine of the soul that the author says: what the human mind takes when it leaves this body, what the human mind takes into the purely spiritual world this can no longer be compared with everything that the human being experiences within his body. Yes, Thomas Aquinas says that the task of the religion in its most ideal sense consists in educating the human being, so that he can take something from this body that is not sensory that is not tied to investigation, to consideration and experience of the outer nature. As long as we live in this body, we see through our eyes and hear through our ears something sensory. We perceive everything sensory by means of our senses. But the spirit processes this sensory. The spirit is the actually active. The spirit is the eternal.

Now take into consideration the deep view which was won there on account of the thousands of years old teaching of the soul which expresses itself in the words: that spirit which has collected a little during this life which is independent of external sensory observation, independent of external sensory life is not happy when it is disembodied. Thomas Aquinas says: what we see in our sensory surroundings is filled perpetually with sensory phantasms.

However, the spirit — I have described it as the spirit of mathematics as nous which results easily like tomorrow results from yesterday and today — this spirit freeing itself collects fruits for eternity. The spirit feels endlessly isolated and void — this is the teaching of Thomas Aquinas — if it enters the spiritland without having advanced so far that it is free of any phantasm of the sensory world. The deep sense of the Greek myth of drinking from the Lethe River reveals itself to us as a thought: the spirit in its purely spiritual existence progresses higher and higher, the more it frees itself of any sensory phantasm. Who searches the spirit as something sense-perceptible cannot find it; for the spirit if it has become free of sensuality has no longer anything to do with sensuality. Thomas Aquinas considered the methods as totally unacceptable with which it is searched for sensually. This church teacher is an adversary of any experiment and attempt to get contact with the dead sensually. The spirit must be purest if it is free of sensual phantasms and sticking to sensuality. Otherwise, it feels in the spiritual world endlessly isolated. The spirit which depends on the sensory observation, which is wrapped up in sensory observations, lives in the spiritual world like in an unknown world. This isolation is its destiny because it has not learnt to be free of sensual phantasms. We completely penetrate that when we come to the second talk.

You see that one searched for the soul just in the opposite way in the times in which the inner observation, the observation of that which lives inside the human being was the decisive factor for the soul science. This fundamental error lives in the modern psychology and has led to broadcast the catchword of the psychology without soul as a naturalistic creed of the 19-th century. This science which strives only for the external views believes to be able to disprove the old views. But this science knows nothing about the ways on which the soul was searched for. Nothing, not the slightest objection should be said against modern science. On the contrary, we want to explore the realm of the soul even as theosophists in terms of this modern science in such a way as this explores the realm of the purely spatial nature. However, we want to search for the soul not in the outer nature but in our inside. We want to search for the spirit where it reveals itself, while we walk on the ways of the soul and get spirit knowledge from soul knowledge. This is the way prescribed by teachings thousands of years old which one only has to understand in its truth and validity.

However, this also becomes clear to us and becomes clearer and clearer what the deeper human being if he wants to recognise the soul also misses just in the modern cold science like Goethe missed it when he met this cold science in the

*Système de la nature* by Holbach. Indeed, we can observe in the outer nature how the human being has developed concerning his external appearance how he has become how the monad works in the finer structures how the middle organ system can be regarded as an expression of the soul, but all that leads us only to the knowledge of the external appearance. The big question of the human destiny still remains. No matter how well we have understood a human being with regard to his external appearance, we have not understood him in so far as he has this or that destiny in this or that way, we have not understood which role the good and the bad, the perfect and imperfect play. What the human being experiences inside, about that the external science can give us no explanation; about that only the soul science which is based on introspection can give us a reasonable answer. Then the big questions arise: where do we come from, where do we go, what is our goal? — These biggest questions of all religions. These questions, which can raise the human being to sublime mood, will transport us from the soul-world to the spirit, to the divine spirit flowing through the world. The contents of the next lecture must be: through the soul to the spirit. This will show us that it is absolutely true — not only a pictorial expression — that also the perfect animal soul, which originated through solely external development, became only the human soul because it constitutes something even higher, more perfect, and that it is entitled to bear the germ of something still higher, of something unlimitedly perfect in itself. This human soul has to be regarded as something that does not produce the spirit and the phenomena of the soul from the animal realm, but that the animal in the human being must develop to higher levels to receive its vocation, its task and also its destiny.

The medieval teaching of the soul expresses that with the words that only he recognises the truth in the real sense who considers it not as it appears to him if he hears with external ears, looks with external eyes, but in such a way as it appears if we see it in the reflection of the highest spirit. That is why I may close the first lecture with the words which Thomas Aquinas used in his lecture: the human soul is just like the moon which shines, but receives its light from the sun. — The human soul is just like the water which is not cold and not warm in itself, but receives its heat from the fire. — The human soul is just like a higher animal soul only, but it is a human soul because it receives its light from the human mind.

In accordance with this medieval conviction Goethe says: The

human soul  
Resembles the water:  
It comes from the heaven,  
It rises to the heaven,  
And again down  
To the earth it has to go,  
Forever changing.

Then one understands the human soul if one conceives it in this sense that it is understood as a reflection of the highest being which we can find everywhere in the cosmos, as a reflection of the world spirit flowing through the universe.

### *Notes*

Élie **Metchnikoff** (1845 – 1916), Russian biologist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Élie\\_Metchnikoff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Élie_Metchnikoff)

## Theosophical Teachings of the Soul. Part II: Soul and Human Destiny

*Berlin, 23rd March 1904*

The materialistic world view has led the modern thinking to the absurd assertion that the marvellous tragedy *Hamlet* is nothing else than the transformed foodstuffs which the great poet Shakespeare had eaten.

Now, such an assertion could be understood at first as an ironic, as a humorous one. Nevertheless: somebody who thinks the view of the soul which has developed within the so-called materialistic world view through to the end must finally come to this assertion. However, this view makes nonsense of the materialistic view of the soul. But if it is true that we have to understand the soul phenomena also as outflows of the mechanical activity of our brain like we have to understand the processes of a clockwork, then nothing else is left over to us than to see the causes of the soul phenomena, the causes of the highest manifestations of the human mind finally in the mechanical processes in the brain.

The German philosopher Leibniz found the right answer to this assertion. He said: imagine once that this whole human brain would be understood, one would know in details how these cells and the cell surroundings function, one would know all single movements and could register what takes place in the brain if a thought, a sensation, a feeling takes place in the human being. Let us assume that this final goal of natural sciences would be achieved. — Then Leibniz goes on: now imagine this human brain endlessly extended, so that one can go for a walk calmly in it, can observe calmly which movements take place. You have a complete machine before yourselves. What do you see? You see movements, you see spatial processes. But you will not see: feelings of sympathy or antipathy, feelings of joy and pain, these or those ideas. No observer of this big cerebral machinery will see what the human being has to consider as his

innermost processes and experiences. A totally different kind of experience is necessary to observe the experiences of feelings, sensations and ideas. Human inner experience is necessary to refrain from any spatial consideration and to immerse ourselves in our soul to get the explanatory reasons from the soul of that which takes place in it.

I may light up this question still in another way. I was present once, as two young students discussed this question. One was right in the middle of the materialistic thinking. He was clear to himself about the fact that the human being is nothing else than a mechanism that we have understood the human being if we know how his cerebral functions and his remaining physical functions work. The other replied: but there is a simple fact which only needs to be expressed that you realise that here is something else than a mechanical process. Why does the human being not say: my brain feels, my brain senses, my brain imagines?

The human being would have to accept this fact as a distortion of his innermost soul experience. We can never explain the soul processes like external phenomena using spatial observation. This is just the typical difference between physical processes and soul processes that if we see anything taking place in a machine we can say to ourselves that these or those parts of the machine are in movement, are effective, and because these are effective, the machine carries out this or that. One cannot argue that we do not yet know all movements, all performances of our cerebral mechanism. For this is just the sense of Leibniz's answer that even if we had understood this whole mechanism the real soul-life would have been absolutely disregarded. There is only one thing: to look into our inside, to ask us what do we discover there if we let our own ego speak? What do we discover if we do not see with eyes and hear with ears, but if we observe the own soul?

If we have got this standpoint clear in our mind, we have also to realise that all questions which refer to the soul and its processes must be treated as academically and impartially as the questions of natural sciences. No naturalist admits that one can find out anything about the life of this brain, anything about the form of this brain directly by mere chemical analysis of a cerebral part. Other methods are necessary for that. It is necessary to study the shape of any organic member to consider its connection with the remaining organic world. In a word, we are not able if we keep to mere chemistry, to mere physics to describe the life processes. Just as little we are able to recognise the facts of the soul-life if we observe the external phenomena.

Which are now these facts of soul-life? The basic fact of soul-life is desire and pain. For what we feel as a desire and pain, as a joy and listlessness this is our very own soul experience. We pass objects round ourselves. The objects make their impressions on us. They say something about their colours and shapes to us, also about their movements; they say to us what they are in space. But we

can take nothing from the objects themselves if we want to know anything about the processes which take place in the human being passing these objects. The colour of an object has an effect on the eye of the one and has an effect on the eye of the other. The desire or maybe also the pain which one can feel with this colour can be different, completely different from the desire and pain of the other. What one feels as a desire may be due to the fact that this colour reminds him of an especially dear experience that he often felt joy when he saw this colour. Another thinks of a sad experience if he sees this colour, therefore, he maybe feels pain. These colour experiences are the very own experiences of the human being.

These belong only to him. In joy and in pain, which take place in the inner life, a particular entity of the human being expresses itself, that entity by which the one differs from the other, that being in which nobody is the same as the other. Already this should make it clear to us that it cannot depend on that which goes forward in the sensory world how desire and pain turn out. But it shows us that in our inside something answers to impressions of the outside world that is different in every human being. That means that as many people stand before us as many inside worlds are before us which we can only understand from their deepest inner nature which are something particular, something that really exists for itself, compared with everything that expresses itself in space and time before our eyes and ears.

Desire and pain take place in the human inner life. Something is connected with them that penetrated the human breast through all times, since human beings have thought, like a big question, like a tremendous riddle. The human destiny is connected with this, this human destiny which the sensitive Greek spirit felt as something super-personal, like something that floats above the human being that befalls the human beings like something that has nothing to do with the individual human being what the individual human being has deserved, what he has worked and has striven for. With feeble words, we can outline the view of the Greek people. That is soul which endures the huge destiny, while it only quashes the human being too often. As different desire and grief of the human beings are as different are the human destinies, and these human destinies have nothing to do with that which the human being as a person works and acquires for himself — as a simple trivial observation can show it.

What one calls destiny in the proper sense is something that is beyond the personal merit, beyond the personal guilt. If we speak of guilt and merit, we select what befalls the human being and what is independent of his own work. There is the one who is determined by his birth to live in poverty and misery, maybe not only by the surroundings in which he was born, but simply by the gift, by the dowry of nature which he received at his birth. There is the other who appears as a child of luck whom desire and grief can lead to the highest summit, simply because he is equipped at his birth with bigger, more excellent talents than another. How destiny and the individual human life are connected,

this is the big anxious question of the thinking human being through all times. The interrelation of human destiny and human soul has occupied the poets and the researchers. How does the human destiny look compared with the individual human soul experience?

We find a complete metaphor of the interrelation of soul and destiny in nature. We find a metaphor in that which faces us in nature as a type, as a type of the living beings. A living being is not formed arbitrarily. Any living being is formed according to its embryo. According to its embryo the lion is a lion, the frog a frog because the strength of the special figure is in the embryo, and because the embryo inherits this strength from its ancestors. That is why the animal is formed as a particular type or genus. These laws of heredity prevail in the botanical and animal species; they prevail in accordance with the members they have passed on to them, so that they can be active. A life is determined by the formation of the organs which have been left to the being. This law of heredity is the big law which determines the species and genera in the animal and plant realms and also in the physical human world. This law of species and genus, this law of heredity and development is the law of fate for the species and genera. Only as well as the law of heredity works, the single being can be active. Concerning desire and grief towards his destiny it is quite similar for the single human being. As well as the animal has inherited the figure of its species from its ancestors, we find the human being particularly equipped with dispositions, with characteristics which determine the measure of his desire and his pain, which measure out his life to him.

As well as the law of species and genera prevails in the animal realm, destiny controls the individual human being. If the naturalist asks himself honestly researching according to the law of development why this animal has a longer or a shorter grasping organ, a more or less sharp eye, he is not content to consider these phenomena as miracles but compares this animal with other animals and observes how these organs came into being by the big iron law of heredity. Also the researcher of the human being, the soul researcher, has to ask himself if he wants to understand the individual human life: How is the big law of destiny connected with these individual human lives, how is it possible that destiny rules the individual life, so that it has determined this or that measure of desire and grief? — This question is quite analogous to the question of the naturalist. A quite analogous consideration clarifies us about the questions which occupy the human beings in this direction.

There is a fact which speaks so clearly concerning this question that we have to think through it only in all directions that we have only to become engrossed completely in it to get an answer. This fact is not observed in the same style and in the same sense as the naturalist observes if he studies the relationship of the species and genera. But not because this fact does not speak clearly, but it is simply because modern humankind got used to neglecting this fact; it got used to not accepting the clear evidence of this fact. However, it is not as raw and coarse

as the facts are which speak to our outer senses. But can we hope that the subtle soul-life clarifies the intimate processes in our own inside as well as the coarse and remarkable facts of the sensory world? Have we not rather to assume that the questions which arise in our soul-life are finer, more subtle? It is in such a way as once Galilei discovered the great pendulum law when the sense dawned on him watching a swinging lamp in the church, so that this natural law revealed to him at this moment? He got this success only because he could hold together the facts correctly. However, the facts also have to inform us about destiny and soul-life if we correctly get them clear in our mind.

Examine the whole range of the animals. You find a variety of different species and genera. As a modern naturalist you explain these species and genera by means of their relationship among each other and origin from each other. You are satisfied if you have understood that a higher, more perfect animal has received its character of species because it is descended from its ancestors whose organs were transformed gradually to the organs of the animal which stands before us.

What interests you in the animal? It can never be the question that we are interested in the animal more than in its character of species. We are completely satisfied if we have described a lion or another animal species according to the character of its species. We are completely informed about a lion if we have understood how the lion species lives and is active generally; then we know that the same applies to the father, to the son and to the grandson within the lion species. We realise that the single differences which exist also in the animal realm do not interest to such an extent that we would have to study any single lion for itself. We realise that it is decisive for the animal what father, son and grandson have in common with each other. The researcher is content when he has understood any specimen of the lion species. This fact must be thought through to the end and be understood absolutely clearly in its significance. If one compares it with the other fact that this is completely different with the human beings, then the difference between the human character and the animal character can be given in few words; a difference which by no naturalistic researcher can be denied if it is understood once; a difference, so big and immense, that it spreads light on the real being of the human soul. This basic fact can be expressed with the words: the human being has a biography, the animal has no biography.

Indeed, everything exists in nature only by degrees, and nothing should be argued against this sentence, because it is clear to us that one can register single characteristics of an animal and achieve something similar as a life-history. But, nevertheless, the fact remains that we have a real biography only in the human realm. That means that we show the same interest which we show for the animal species for the human individual. While we are not indifferent whether we describe the father, the son or the grandson of a human being, we call a related group of animals a species because they have the same characteristics and we



have understood them scientifically if we have understood their creation as a species. We have to express the important fact: any human being is a species for himself. This is a sentence which does not make sense to anybody immediately which maybe appears to anybody as something sophistic.

But even if this sentence cannot be understood in its whole range immediately, it will appear to anybody who thinks it through to the end only in that light which I have meant. We have also overcome the assertion that for the soul researcher only the excellent individual is a proof that something particular appears in the human being, while most people would be similar and would basically have the same characteristics as the animals — only higher developed. O no, you can distinguish the simple human being, the savage from the animal realising that he has a life-history that with his character as a human being his being is not exhausted, that it concerns that we grasp his single individuality; that it is not indifferent whether the father, the son or the grandson stands before us. If we want to proceed scientifically, we have to apply the same rules, the same principles to the human beings which we apply to the animal with regard to its species. We would have to look at the single animal, which stands in perfect creation, in particular form before us, as a miracle if we did not understand it in its relationship and origin of other beings.

However, we would have to look at the single human being as a miracle who is a whole, a species for himself, with his particular experiences of grief and desire if we put him simply in such a way as he appears before us. Somebody who leaves the single human being, that what expresses itself in the biography, without wanting to explain him without distinguishing him from the other beings who leaves this being unexplained is just like a believer in miracles. If we stick to evolution, we must say: as well as in the animal realm the single animal form is related to the species, we have also to lead back the individual human soul in its particular manifestation to something differently psychic. As clear as the natural sciences has become, since they have recognised that life cannot develop from the lifeless but that every living being comes from germ cells, as it is true that it would be today a scientific superstition if anybody believed what was believed in the 16-th century that fish, frogs and the like could develop from mud.

It would be that way if anybody wanted to state that anything psychic does not originate from anything psychic but from anything soulless. As something living can only originate from something living, in the sense as the natural sciences accepts it, one has to recognise that something psychic can originate only from something psychic. As well as natural sciences regard it as a childish belief that life does not arise from germ cells but from something lifeless, a true science of the soul has to regard as an absurdity that something psychic could arise from something mechanical. This would be the same, as if anybody stated that something psychic can arise from any agglomeration of mud.

If we base on this, we have to say to ourselves: somebody who does not want to believe in a miracle in the fields of soul-life has to put the question to himself concerning every single soul: where does it come from, where are the causes that it is like it is? We have to ascend from the soul of a human being to its psychic ancestors as we ascend from the body of an animal to its bodily ancestors to understand the origin of its species.

In the last lecture I have called the summit of Aristotle's psychology the disaster of the western psychology. I have shown that Aristotle stood with regard to our physical world completely on the standpoints of the modern theory of evolution that he lets develop the beings up to the highest ones in natural way. However, where Aristotle speaks of the highest soul, he rightly says completely the same as we have explained now. The soul is inexplicable from mere physical processes. One can never understand the soul as a mere physical process. Therefore, Aristotle as an honest researcher and thinker resorts to an explanation which openly admits the miracle of the single origin of any soul. That is why he appears as an honest thinker, but as somebody who denies a scientific principle towards the soul. If a human being has developed so far that its body has taken on a human form, then the creator works the soul into this human form; this is the only consistent point of view which one must take if one does not resolve to explain the soul in the same sense as the modern natural sciences do with the species of the animal realm. If anybody does not want to search for the psychic ancestor like anybody searches for the animal ancestor explaining the animal, then one must say that a soul is created into any single human being. There is only one other way, and this other way out is only an apparent one. It is the way which Herbert Spencer, the recently deceased great English philosopher, has shown. He realised — what we have also said — that it is impossible to leave the single soul-being for itself, to accept it as a miracle. Hence, he says, we must go back with regard to this soul-life to the physical ancestors of the concerning human being. Because he has inherited his psychic qualities from the ancestors as well as he has inherited the shape of his face, his hands and feet from his physical ancestors. Thus Herbert Spencer equates the soul development completely with the bodily development. However, this is only an apparent way out which can never be harmonised with the facts. What should be explicable from another area must be derived from the qualities of the other area.

Indeed, Goethe says:

From my father I got the stature  
And the serious conduct of life,  
From mummy I got cheerfulness  
And the desire of telling stories.

But nobody wants to state if he checks the facts impartially that the very own being of the human being, that the result of his destiny is determined in the same way by his physical ancestors as his external form and figure is determined by his ancestors, because, otherwise, the development of the spirit must follow the same laws which the development of the physical follows. But where could we derive the spiritual qualities of Newton, Galilei, Kepler, and Goethe from their ancestors? Where from could we derive the qualities of Schiller? From his father? Indeed, Schiller received the external figure, belonging to the species, from his father; for the physical heredity determines the general figure like it determines the physical figure of the animal. But if we want to explain the real internal qualities of the single individuality — and it does not need to be Schiller, it can be any Mr. Miller from this or that place — if we want to explain what takes place in his deepest soul why he is this particular human being where his biography results from, then we can never understand this human being studying his origin from his physical ancestors.

Study a lion and describe the father or grandfather of this lion instead of this: you will be completely satisfied scientifically. If you describe, however, a human being, you must describe his very own life. The biographies of the grandfather or father are completely different from his own. As different as the species of the animal realm are as different are the biographies of the single human beings.

Somebody who thinks through these thoughts completely can never regard the spiritual development as analogous to the physical one. We have rather to accept if we want to explain the spiritual development that we must ascend in the same way to the spiritual ancestors as we ascend to the explanation of the physical nature of the physical ancestors. The physical forefather cannot be the spiritual forefather at the same time. The development of the soul is totally different from the developmental course of the physical. If I want to explain a soul, I have to search for its origin somewhere else than in the physical organism. It must have been there already once; it must have a soul forefather like the animal species has a physical forefather. Thus we get the ideas which the deeper soul researchers of all times have accepted as theirs and which look at the being of the soul scientifically, in the true sense of the word. Who penetrates with any urge of research into this being of the soul — you can see it, for example, in the transparent discussion of Lessing's *The Education of the Human Race* — comes to the assumption that any soul must be traced back to another soul. Thus we come to the developmental law of the soul; we come to the law of reincarnation. As well as in the animal realm species after species incarnates itself and a transformation of the species takes place, a transformation of the soul takes place in the human being. Nothing else than this thought must be connected with the spiritual-scientific teaching of reincarnation. It is no fantastic thought, it is a thought which is crystal clear and arises inevitably from the preconditions of nature. As inevitable as the thought of the reincarnation of the

species is, the transformation of the species in the animal realm, the thought of the reincarnation of the individuality is. We have the reincarnation of the animal; we have the reincarnation of the individuality on the level of humankind. If, however, this is the case, then our view of the single personal human soul — which stands with its private life of desire and pain usually inexplicably before us — extends beyond its soul predecessor and from that to previous predecessors. As well as we understand a species if we trace it back to its ancestors, we understand the soul if we trace back it as a reincarnating individuality. What prevails apparently as an inexplicable destiny in me what is apparently unprepared in my birth, this is not to be considered as a miracle as something that arose from nothing; this is an effect as everything is an effect in the world, but an effect of the soul processes in my psychic ancestors.

We cannot occupy ourselves in detail here how the incarnations take place. Here should be shown simply in scientifically analogous way how the thought of the theosophical science of the soul is absolutely compatible, yes, in spiritual area exactly the same is as the modern theory of evolution in the animal realm. Just the naturalist should ascend from his teaching of physical reincarnation to this teaching of the reincarnation of the soul. The Buddhist to whom this teaching of soul reincarnation is as important as to us the scientific theory of evolution does not know the mysterious development, the mysterious course of destiny in the individual life in the sense as the West knows it. He says to himself: what I experience is an effect of the soul-life from which my soul-life has developed; I have to accept it as an effect. What I myself carry out today is a cause and does not remain without effect. My soul embodies itself again and again, and that will determine the destiny of this soul, it forms a whole with this soul. Thus destiny and soul-being are connected with each other like in a string of pearls. As on the string of pearls of destiny the single levels of the development of the human soul-life, of the whole human life are lined up. What is inexplicable in a human life becomes explicable if we accept it not as a miracle in itself, but if we look at it in its reappearing phenomena.

However, considering the soul development this way, we get beyond the disaster of Aristotle's soul doctrine. Who does not profess himself to the theory of evolution must profess himself to the creation which takes place at every single birth of a human being. He must assume a particular miracle of creation at any birth. The scientific doctrine of creation is a belief in miracles, is superstition. Still in the 18-th century, one said that there are as many species side by side as have been created originally. There are also in the field of psychology only these two ways: the miraculous act of creation at the origin of a human being, or development of the soul. The first one is impossible. But, nevertheless, there are honest researchers who cannot decide to join the standpoint of soul development. If an honest researcher cannot decide to do that, he will also profess himself to the creation of any single human being even today. This is thought not scientifically but honestly. Those who want to think

scientifically and are able to look at the soul-life scientifically come by themselves from the standpoint of modern research to this teaching of soul reincarnation like the modern philosopher Baumann in Gottingen. These will be the two ways which we must pursue in clear thinking: either soul creation as a miracle in any case, or soul development according to scientific thinking and return of the soul.

From this science of soul development a bright light is thrown on the big question which has occupied modern philosophy and the modern way of thinking in particular, the question of the value of life. This question was negatively answered, as you know, by the newer philosophers, by Schopenhauer, Eduard von Hartmann and similar philosophers. A value has been denied life simply because life offers more listlessness than desire. If really life within the single personality was exhausted between birth and death, the question of the value of life would be justified, in so far as one would have to estimate this value of life according to desire and listlessness. These philosophers simply say that experience teaches us in every single case that listlessness outbalances desire by far that life is painful and grievous. Already for this reason, Schopenhauer assumes, we have to profess ourselves to this pessimistic view. We take desire for granted, as something which is due to us. Who does not consider — and Schopenhauer is right — desire as a matter of course for us? Where is no slight cause which the human being feels as pain, while he takes any desire for granted more or less?

Hence, it is natural, the pessimists say, that the human beings do not feel the desire as intensely as they feel the reduction of desire as pain and listlessness. The pessimists take stock of the desire of life that way and state that this shows that listlessness controls life far stronger than desire. Without question, if one wants to solve this riddle within the single human life, one gets to no other solution. For somebody who has an overview of a human life in its personal details says to himself: if the amount of listlessness by which this life has been concerned is ever so insignificant, it exists as something that has been held in front of this human being as it were. Try once to draw up this balance sheet of desire when a person has died. If one draws up it, one assesses the desire value of life as negative according to Hartmann. If life ends, it ends with a negative value. However, then this single life seems to be absolutely inexplicable.

Something different results if we look at the result of the single life as a cause for the following life if we consider it as that which can be reproduced onto another level of existence. Then that which appears as pain, listlessness in one life looks like something favourable in the next life. Why? Simply because the sensation of listlessness, which we experienced in this single life, is not the only decisive factor but also the effect of this listlessness. If I feel listlessness today, then this listlessness gives my life a negative sign.

This listlessness can be most valuable for me tomorrow. Because I have felt listlessness or pains with any experience today, I learn for tomorrow. I can learn to avoid this listlessness or pain at a similar occasion. I can learn to regard this listlessness, this pain as a lesson to make the performances more perfect tomorrow which prepared listlessness to me. Hardships appear to us from this point of view in a certain connection that has a far-reaching significance. Assume that a child learns walking. It falls perpetually and hurts itself, it causes pain to itself. Nevertheless, it would be wrong if a mother surrounded her child with nothing but India rubber bales, so that it would have no pain if it fell. Then the child would never learn walking. Pain is the lesson. It prepares us to a higher level of development. We learn only because the life of the single human being is not merged in nothing but desire but prepares pain and listlessness out of imperfect performances. If life ends with a surplus of listlessness, it ends at the same time with a cause which has an effect for the next life. We get to a higher level of the next life because of the listlessness of this life.

Our view is widened that way if we look at the life of the human being beyond birth and death. The balance of desire and listlessness is necessary to learn something from the single life and carry it to another life. If we did not experience pain, we would get on like a child that cannot learn walking if one spares it pain. Hence, we regard the listlessness balance of the pessimist as a developmental factor. Like an engine it drives the development forward. Then the sentence comes back into favour, gets a higher sense: pain is a developmental factor.

We understand the single life as an effect, as a result of the preceding causes that way. If we understand it as an effect, we understand the levels of perfection existing side by side among the human beings as we understand the levels of perfection existing side by side among the animal species. It does not seem miraculous to us according to the theory of evolution that the perfect lion lives beside the imperfect amoeba, and we understand this imperfect formation on account of the theory of evolution. We also understand the developmental level of the soul from the highest genius to the undeveloped level of the savage on account of the law of soul development.

What is a genius to us? It is a higher developmental level, a higher level of perfection of the soul-being which lives in the savage on a lower level. As well as the higher animal species differ from the lower animals in the physical realm, the soul of the genius differs from the soul of the savage in the psychic realm. This explains to us that basically the ingenious talent is nothing radically different from the usual human talent, but it is only a later level of development. Let us compare the psychology of [Franz Brentano](#). It emphasises that the genius does not differ basically from the developmental level of the imperfect soul, but only by degrees. Have a look at a genius like Mozart. He showed already as a boy a talent which seems quite strange. He wrote down a complete mass — which he heard once and which he could never have heard before because one

was not allowed to write down it — immediately after he had heard it. What an achievement of memory that this soul of Mozart encompasses a big range of ideas with one look which the imperfect soul cannot encompass, but it can only get them bit by bit. It is only the particular development of that soul capacity which connects and links the ideas. This soul capacity can be so small that it is not possible to have an overview of five to six ideas for some time. But the human being can improve his power of imagination, extend his overlooking. If now we see the genius appearing with outstanding dispositions which can be attained, however, gradually by exercise, we should not consider the genius as a miracle. We have to look at it as an effect. Because the genius is already born with these qualities, we have to search for the cause in a preceding developmental level of his soul, in a preceding life.

You get an explanation of brilliant dispositions only that way. You can understand any degree of soul development. You can pursue the human being from the highest ingenious talents down to the saddest phenomena of human life which we call madness. One has to ignore the scientific point of view here; one has to point to these people only from the standpoint of the soul researcher. We know that there are deformed, crippled people. If we expand these concepts from the scientific field to the field of psychology, we come to the abnormal phenomena of the soul-life. You can recognise clearly that the soul-life has temporal connections like the physical life outside has spatial ones. Those who state that such thoughts are contradictory to the scientific facts have not completely worked through the whole range neither of the scientific thoughts nor of this psychology. They have not developed their capacity of observation so far that they have learnt to use the methods of psychology as the scientists use the methods of the external natural sciences. If anybody states that the teachings we have reported here appear fantastically, then we are allowed to put the question: what do those say who laid the bases of these natural sciences? They must have recognised the range of the scientific thoughts, just as those who investigate a country directly know it more exactly than those who have got a report or a description only. The naturalist who finds out the scientific bases from the depths of his research is more justified than anybody who comes afterwards and wants to persuade us that the soul researchers speak about soul-beings and spirit-beings existing apart.

I give still some examples how the basic naturalists thought about the researchers of soul and mind. One states again and again that such a psychology as it was shown now is contradictory to the principle of energy conservation. This is the great principle which controls all physical phenomena. This means that in nature no energy originates, but any energy is transformed to energy, and that we can measure the amount of energy by the energy which is its cause. If we convert heat into vapour in the steam boiler, we have the cause and effect before ourselves, and we measure the effect in the measure of the cause. Now the adversaries of our psychology say: this principle is contradictory to the

presupposition that particular soul processes happen inside. Measure the external impressions which a human being receives, measure what takes place in him, measure what takes place in the brain, and one is not able to state: there is a soul-force. However, then this force would be born out of nothing and this is contradictory to the basic principle of energy transformation. Julius Robert [Mayer](#) is the discoverer of this basic law of energy conservation about which one says that it is contradictory to our psychology. Listen to the discoverer of this principle, one of the greatest naturalists and thinkers of all times.

In 1842, in the age of natural science, he discovered the most important physical law of the 19-th century. Those who are materialistic naturalists — you can see that in their books, say and want to lead us to believe that all investigation of soul and spirit would be removed by this law. We hear these naturalists speaking in such a way that somebody who still adheres to internal psychology, which does not understand natural sciences, which express themselves in the principle of energy conservation. Julius Robert Mayer, however, says: if superficial heads which regard themselves as geniuses want to accept nothing higher, then one cannot accuse such arrogance to science nor it is to its benefit.

The discoverer of this principle says this. Ask yourselves whether the second-rate scientists have a right to call up his principle against that which he himself recognised.

Another basic researcher of our modern natural sciences who laid the basis of the world of living beings on account of his geologic investigations of the transformations of the earth layers and prepared Darwin is [Lyell](#), the great English geologist. With regard to geology he expressed as the first the sentence that we do not operate scientifically if we assume miraculous disasters in nature if we assume that revolutions have taken place in former periods which should not be explicable still today by external strength. This researcher Lyell whom the materialistic natural science refers to says the following: wherever we research, we find a creative intelligence, providence, power and wisdom everywhere.

Materialistic researchers say to us that since the law of the so-called vital force is overcome, since one is able to produce substances in the laboratory from which one believed that they can originate only in the living human being, since then one has the right to say that in the chemical laboratory the same happens what happens in nature. Jons Jacob [Berzelius](#) friendly with Friederich [Wöhler](#) says: the knowledge of nature is the basis of research. Those who do not keep to it expose themselves to delusive influence. — Wilhelm Preyer wrote about the phenomenon of death. He refused flatly that death cannot be understood as an end of the individuality incarnated in the body that the death of the human being cannot be understood in such a way even in the lower world. Preyer says that only the body dies, however, matter, energy, movement and life do not die.



These are sayings of real, basic naturalists, not of philosophical dilettantes who believe to be able to deny the soul phenomena on account of natural sciences — I do not want to say that — but to be allowed to explain them as nothing but functions of purely inorganic processes. If we see that just those who rendered outstanding services originally to the research of the physical development do not see any contradiction of this physical development to a soul development inside, then we must be in harmony with them. A saying of Hamerling applies to everybody who denies the internal soul development: somebody who searches for the soul appears to him like a dog which snaps at his own tail and cannot reach it. — This is a science of the soul in the spiritual-scientific sense, in the modern scientific sense, indeed, not applying the scientific method in a stereotyped way but spiritually. Then the law of destiny appears to us as a big law of development. As well as the genus is active in the animal development and appears like a wave, which is churned up by the passing development, the single human life appears like a wave in the churning sea and the subsequent lives appear like single waves of the human destiny.

In the next talk we consider the reasons of these waves understanding the nature of human destiny out of its eternal being. Today, I have shown that those who consider destiny as the great law of development, consider it as active, as churning up waves, and that every single wave is an image of the human being. Everybody who became engrossed in this matter considered the developing soul-life that way. Therefore, Goethe compares the single soul with a wave which is churned up again and again, and that the wind is the propelling destiny which churns up these waves from the water. That is why he compares the soul with the play of waves and the destiny with the wind, out of theosophical knowledge, because Goethe agreed in the deepest sense with this science of the soul. He compared wind and waves, soul and destiny using the nice words:

Wind is the wave's  
Charming lover;  
Wind mixes from bottom  
Seething waves.  
Human soul,  
You are just like the water!  
Human destiny,  
You are just like the wind!

## *Notes*

Franz **Brentano** (1838 – 1917), German philosopher and psychologist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz\\_Brentano](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Brentano)

Julius Robert **Mayer** (1814 – 1878), German physician and physicist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius\\_von\\_Mayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_von_Mayer)

Charles **Lyell** (1797 – 1875), British geologist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Lyell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Lyell)

Jöns Jakob **Berzelius** (1779 – 1848), Swedish chemist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jöns\\_Jacob\\_Berzelius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jöns_Jacob_Berzelius)

Friedrich **Wöhler** (1800 – 1882), German chemist, he was the first to synthesise an organic chemical (urea) from an inorganic substance and disproved the view thereby that organic substances only originate in living beings with the help of a vital force.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich\\_Wöhler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Wöhler)

## Theosophical Psychology. Part III: Soul and Mind

*Berlin, 30th March 1904*

Let me begin this third lecture with an image Plato used to express what he had to say about the eternity of the human mind.

Socrates facing death stands before his pupils. During the next hours the end of the great teacher must happen. Facing his death, Socrates speaks about the eternity of the spiritual core in the human being. What he has to say about the indestructibility of that which lives in the human being makes a deep impression. In few hours, life will no longer be in the body which stands before his disciples. In few hours, Socrates whom one can see with eyes will no longer be. In this situation, Socrates makes it clear to his disciples that he who will no longer stand before them in few hours whom they will no longer have is not that who is so valuable for them; that this Socrates who yet stands before them cannot be that who transmitted the great teaching of the human soul and the human mind to them. He makes it clear to his disciples that the true sage has made himself independent of the whole sensuous world. Everything disappears that the sensory impressions, that the carnal desires and wishes can supply to him just by means of a really wise world view. That is only valuable to the sage which the senses can never give. If only that disappears which stands before the senses, then this remains unchanged to which no senses can get. Proofs — they may be the sharpest, the most brilliant ones — would hardly have a stronger effect than the conviction which expresses itself in the immediate sensation, which comes from the heart of the sage at the moment when the external sensuous situation seems to be completely contradictory to his words. This is a conviction which is expressed with the consecration of death, a conviction which simply testifies because it is expressed in this situation how powerful this view has become in the sage, so that he defeats the event which befalls him in few hours. Which effect has this conversation exerted on the disciples? Phaedo, the disciple, says that he was at this moment in a situation in which normally those not are who experience such an event. Neither pain nor joy penetrated his heart. He was above any grief and desire. With peaceful rest and equanimity Phaidon took up the teachings which were handed over to him in view of death.

If we put this picture before our souls, we think of two things. Plato, the great sage of Greece, tries to support his conviction of the eternity of the human mind not only using logical proofs or philosophical arguments, but while he let a high developed human being express it in view of death. This conviction expresses itself as something that lives immediately in the human soul. Plato wanted to suggest this way that the question of the eternity of the human soul cannot be answered in every situation. We can answer it only if we have developed to the

height of mind like Socrates who dedicated his whole life to the internal consideration of the soul; a wise man who possessed knowledge of that which reveals itself if the human being directs his look to his inside. He shows us the strength of the immediate conviction that something lives in him about which he knows that it is imperishable because he has recognised it. It depends on that. Every reasonable human being in this field will never say that a proof of the immortality of the human soul can be given in any situation, but the conviction of the eternity of the human mind must be acquired; the human being must have got to know the life of the soul. If he knows this life, if he has become engrossed in its qualities, he knows as exactly as one knows of another object if one knows its qualities, he knows about the human mind, and the strength of conviction speaks in his inside. Not only this, but in an important, essential moment Plato lets Socrates express this conviction: at a moment when any sensory impression seems to be contradictory to the expressed truth.

Why do the disciples understand this great teaching, why does it make sense to them? It makes sense to them because they are lifted over desire and harm by the power of Socrates' speech; over that which ties the human being to the immediately transient, to the sensuous, to the everyday life. Thus it should be expressed that the human being does not know about the qualities of the spirit in any situation, but only if he rises above that which ties him to the everyday life if he removed desire and harm coming from the impressions of the everyday life, if he can look up to a solemn moment when the everyday life does no longer speak when the events which cause harm or joy otherwise do no longer cause harm or joy. The human being is more receptive for the topmost truth at such moments.

This gives us the sense to understand how theosophy thinks about the eternity of the soul. It does not speak in this sense of immortality that it tries to prove this immortality like another matter. No, it gives instructions how the human being can transport himself gradually into that position and condition of the spirit in which he experiences the mind in his own inside really, gets to know it according to its qualities, while he tries to transport himself into the life of the spirit. Then it realises that from the view of the spirit immediately the conviction of the eternity of this spirit comes to the fore. As well as we do not recognise an object which is before our sensory eye by a proof, but because it shows its qualities simply through perception, the theosophist puts the question of the immortality of the human soul in another form than one normally hears it. He puts the question: how can we perceive internal, spiritual life? How become we engrossed in our inside, so that we hear the spirit speaking in our inside?

At all times and places where one tried to bring up disciples for understanding of these questions, one demanded from these disciples first of all that they go through a preparation time. Plato demanded — as you probably know — from his disciples that they had penetrated into the spirit of mathematics before they tried to take up his teachings about the spiritual life. Which sense did this

Platonic preparation have? The disciple should have understood the spirit of mathematics. We heard in the first lecture what this spirit of mathematics offers. It offers truths in the most elementary way which is elated above all sensory truths; truths which we cannot see with the eyes and cannot seize with the hands.

Even if we illustrate the teaching of the circle, the teaching of the numerical ratios to ourselves sensually, we know that we make an illustration with it only. We know that the teaching of the circle, of the triangle is independent of this sensuous view. We draw a triangle on the board or on paper to us, and by means of this sensuous triangle we try to get to the sentence that the sum of the three angles of a triangle is 180 degrees. However, we know that this sentence is true for any triangle whichever shape we may give it. We know that this sentence makes sense to us if we are used to find such sentences disregarding the sensuous impressions disregarding any sensuous view. We acquire the simplest, most trivial truths this way. Mathematics only gives the most trivial supersensible truth, but it gives supersensible truth. Because it gives the simplest, the most trivial and supersensible truth which is got the easiest, Plato demanded from his disciples that they learn in mathematics how one gets to the supersensible truth. What does one learn by the fact that one gets to supersensible truth? One learns to conceive a truth without desire and harm, without immediate, everyday interest, without personal prejudices, without that which meets us in life wherever we go.

Why does the mathematical truth appear with such clearness and invincibility? Because no interest, no personal sympathy and antipathy play a role in its knowledge. That means that no prejudices are contributory factors. We do not care completely that two times two are four; we do not care how big the angles of a triangle may be et cetera. It is this freedom of any sensuous interest, of any personal desire and listlessness, which Plato had in mind when he demanded from his disciples that they become engrossed in the spirit of mathematics. After they had got used to looking up to truth without interest, without interference of passion and desire, without interference of everyday prejudices, then Plato considered his pupils worthy to behold the truth of those questions against which people normally have the biggest prejudices.

Which human being could treat other questions at first also uninterested, without desire and harm, as the mathematical truth two times two four, or, the sum of angles of a triangle is 180 degrees? But not before the human being was able to see the highest truth of soul and spirit in a similar, uninterested light free of grief and desire, he was mature to approach these questions. Without desire and grief the human being must treat these questions. He must be beyond that which appears in his soul every day, at every opportunity, wherever he goes. Where desire and grief and personal interest interfere in our answer, there we cannot answer the questions objectively, in the true light. Plato also wanted to say this when he let the dying Socrates speak about the immortality of the human mind. It cannot be a matter of proving immortality in any situation, but it

only concerns the question: how does one get the perception of the qualities of the human soul, so that — if one gets it — the strength of conviction flows from our soul by itself?

This also formed the basis of all those teaching sites in which one tried to lead the students to the highest truth in an appropriate way. It is only a matter of course that the questions: does the human mind live before birth and after death? And: which is the destination of the human being in time and in eternity? that these questions cannot be treated by most human beings without interest. It is a matter of course that any personal interest, any hope and fear accompanying the human being constantly are connected with the question of the eternity of the spirit. One called mystery schools in ancient times those sites where the highest questions of the spiritual life were taught and answered to the students.

In such mystery sites the pupils were not taught about such questions in the abstract. Truths were handed down to them only if they were able according to their state of soul, of mind, and of the whole personality to see these questions in the right light. They were in this state beyond desire and harm, beyond fear and hope which tie the human being to themselves day by day, hour for hour. These passions, these contents of feeling had to be removed from the personality at first. Without fear and hope, purified of them, the pupil had to approach the mystery site.

Purification was the preparation which the pupil had to go through. Without this, the questions were not answered to him. The purification of passions, of desire and harm, of fear and hope was the precondition to climb up to the summit on which the question of immortality can be treated. Because one was clear to himself about the fact that then the pupil can look in the eye of spirit as well as somebody who delves in a mathematical field sees in the eye of pure objective mathematics: without passion, without being tormented by fear and hope.

We have seen in the last lecture that desire and harm are the expressions of the human soul above all. The inner experience, the very own experience of the person is desire and harm. Desire and harm must go through purification first, before the soul can get to the spirit. Desire and harm are bound to the everyday impressions of the senses, to the immediate experiences of the person, to the interests concerning his person. What does desire normally do to us, what does harm do to us? That which interests us as a personality. That causes desire and harm which disappears with our death more or less. We must leave this narrow circle of that which causes desire and harm in order to get higher knowledge. Our desire and harm must be separated, must be drawn off from these everyday interests and be taken up to quite different worlds. The human being has to lift desire and harm, the wishes of his soul over the everyday, the sensuous things; he must bind them to the highest experiences of the spirit.

He must look up with these wishes and desires to that to which one attributes a shadowy or abstract existence usually. What could be more abstract for the human being of the everyday life than the pure, unsensuous thought? The human beings of everyday life who stick to their personalities with desire and harm already flee from the simplest, most trivial supersensible truth. Mathematics is widely avoided just because it is not accompanied by any interest, desire, and harm in the everyday sense of the word. The pupil had to be purified in the mystery schools from this everyday desire and harm.

What lived only as an image of thought in his inside and flitted away like a shadowy formation, he had to be attached to it, and he had to love this like the human being is attached to the everyday with his whole soul. One called the change of the passions and desires metamorphosis. There is a new reality for him afterwards; a new world makes impressions on him. That which leaves the usual person cold which touches him as something sober and cold is the world of ideas. It is this to which his desire and harm are bound now, at which one looks like something real, and which becomes a reality now like table and chairs.

Only if the human being has progressed so far that the world of ideas, usually called abstract, moves, enchants, soaks up his soul, if this shadowy reality of thoughts surrounds him in such a way that he lives and works within this world as well as the everyday person moves in the everyday, sensuous reality which he can see and feel — if this metamorphosis of the whole human being has happened, he is in the state in which the spirit in the environment speaks to him; then he experiences this spirit like a living language, then he perceives the Word that has become flesh and expresses itself in all things.

If the everyday person looks out and sees the lifeless minerals around him, he sees them controlled by physical laws, controlled by the laws of gravitation, magnetism, heat, light et cetera. The human being realises the laws to which these beings are subject using his thoughts. But just these thoughts do not speak to him with the same concrete reality, do not mean that which his hands touch what his eyes see. After this metamorphosis of the human being has taken place, he thinks not only of shadow-images like of the physical laws, then these shadow-images start speaking the living language of the spirit to him. The spirit speaks to him from the surroundings. From the plants, from the minerals, from the different genera of the animals the spirit of the surroundings speaks to the human being who lives without desire and harm.

Theosophy points to a development, not to an abstract truth, to a concrete truth, not to logical proofs, if it speaks about the world of ideas, of the spiritual world. It talks about that which the human beings should become; it does not speak about proofs. Nature speaks to a human being differently who has purified his soul, so that it does no longer stick to the everyday; does not have the everyday pains and joys, but higher pains and higher joy and higher bliss at the same time which flow from the pure spirit of the things. The theosophical ethics expresses

that pictorially. It expresses in two marvellous pictures that the human being can recognise the highest truth only at the moment when he has lifted his senses over the everyday pain and the everyday joy of the things. As long as the eye sticks to the things with joy and pain, in the everyday sense of the word, as long it cannot perceive the spirit round itself. As long as the ear still has the immediate sensitiveness of the everyday life, as long it cannot hear the living word through which the spiritual things round us speak to us. That is why the theosophical teaching of development sees the demand in two pictures which the human being has to put to himself if he wants to attain the knowledge of the spirit.

Before the eyes can see,  
They must be incapable of tears.  
Before the ear can hear,  
It must have lost its sensitiveness...

(Mabel Collins *Light on the Path*)

The eye which cherishes the spirit can no longer have tears of joy and tears of pain in the everyday sense. Because if the human being has advanced to this level of development, his self-consciousness speaks in a different, in a new way to him. Then we look into the covered sanctuary of our inside in a quite new way. Then the human being perceives himself as a member of the spiritual world. Then he perceives himself as something that is pure and beyond any sensuous because he has taken off desire and harm in the sensuous sense. Then he hears self-consciousness in his inside speaking to him as the mathematical truth speaks indifferently to him, but in such a way as mathematical truth also speaks in another sense. Mathematical truth namely is true and eternal in certain way. What appears to us in the language of mathematics, which is free of sensuality, is true regardless of time and space. Regardless of time and space that speaks in our inside to us which appears before our soul when it has purified itself up to desire and harm of spiritual matters. Then the eternal speaks to us in its significance. The eternal with its significance spoke to the dying Socrates that way, and the current of the immediate spirituality went over to the disciples. From that which he received as an experience from the dying Socrates the disciple Phaedo expresses that desire and harm in the usual sense must do damage if the spirit wants to speak directly to us.

We can observe this in the so-called abnormal phenomena of the human life. These phenomena are apparently far from our considerations of the first part of my lecture. However, considered in the true sense of the word, they are very close to these considerations. These are the phenomena which are called abnormal conditions of the soul, like hypnotism, somnambulism and clairvoyance.

What does hypnosis mean in the human life? Today it cannot be my task to explain the various performances which have to be carried out if we want to



transport a human being into the condition similar to sleep which we call hypnosis. Either this happens — I want to mention this only by the way — by looking at a shining object whereby the attention is concentrated in particular, or also by simply speaking to the person concerned in suitable way, while we say: you fall asleep now. — Thereby we can produce this condition of hypnosis, a kind of sleep, in which the everyday waking consciousness is extinguished. The human being who has been transported into hypnotic sleep that way stands or sits before the hypnotist, motionless, without impression in the usual sense of the word. Such a hypnotised person can be stung with needles, can be hit, his limbs can be moved to other positions — he perceives nothing, he feels nothing of that which would have caused pain or maybe a pleasant sensation, a tickle, we want to say, to him under other circumstances, with waking consciousness. In the usual sense desire and harm are eliminated from the being of such a hypnotised person. However, desire and harm are the basic qualities of the soul, the middle part of the human being, as I have explained in the last talk. What does hypnotism eliminate? It basically eliminates the soul of the three parts, body, soul and mind. We have eliminated the middle part of the human being. He is not active, he does not feel desire and harm in the usual sense; it does not hurt him what would hurt him if his soul functioned normally.

How is the being active now in such a person if you speak to such a hypnotised person, if you give him some orders? If you say to him: get up, do three steps, he carries out these orders. You can still give him more intricate, more manifold orders — he carries out them. You can put down sensuous objects to him, for example, a pear, and say to him, this is a glass ball. He will believe it. What lies sensually before him has no significance for him. It is decisive for him that you say to him, it is a glass ball. If you ask him: what do you have before yourself? He will answer to you: a glass ball. — Your mind, what is in you if you are the hypnotist and what you think, what comes as a thought from you has a direct effect on the actions of this person.

He follows the orders of your mind with his body automatically. Why does he follow these orders? Because his soul is eliminated, because his soul does not intervene between his body and your mind. At the moment when his soul is active with its desire and harm again, when it is able to feel pain, to perceive again, at this moment only the soul decides whether these orders are to be carried out; whether it has to accept the thoughts of the other. If you face another person in normal condition, his mind works on you. But his mind, his thoughts work on your soul first of all. It works on you like desire and harm, and you decide how to react to the thoughts, to the will actions of the other. If the soul is silent, if the soul is eliminated, then it does not position itself between your body and the mind of the other, then the body follows the impressions of the hypnotist, the impressions of his mind will-lessly as the mineral follows the physical laws. Elimination of the soul is the essential part of hypnosis. Then the foreign thought, the thought located beyond the person, works with the strength

of a physical law on this person who is in a condition similar to sleep. That works like a physical law which inserts itself between this spiritual natural force and the body, and this is the soul. Between your own mind and your own body the soul inserts itself. We carry out what we grasp as a thought what we grasp thinking in the everyday life only because it transforms itself into our personal wishes that it is accepted, is found right from our desire and our harm that, in other words, our mind speaks to our soul at first and our soul carries out the orders of our own mind.

Now one may ask: why does not the highest member of the human being, the mind, face the hypnotist if the soul is eliminated, if the hypnotist faces the hypnotised? Why does the mind of the person slumber, why is it inactive? — We get this clear in our mind if we know that for the human being during his earthly incarnation the interaction of mind, soul and body is essential that the mind of the human being understands the environment, the sensory reality only because the soul provides this understanding. If our eye receives an impression from without, the soul has to be the mediator, so that this impression can penetrate up to our mind. I perceive a colour. The eye provides the external impression for me because of its organisation. The mind thinks about the colour. It forms a thought. But between the thought and the external impression the reagent of the soul inserts itself, and that is why the impression becomes only its own inner life becomes an experience of the soul. The mind can speak only to the own soul, to the personal soul in the earthly human being. If you eliminate the soul by means of hypnosis, then the mind is no longer able to express itself in the hypnotised person.

You have taken away the organ of the mind by which it can express itself by which it can be active. You have not taken away the mind from the person. You have eliminated his soul and made it inactive. But because the mind can be active in the human being only in the soul, it cannot be active in the body. Hence, we say, he is in an unconscious state. That means nothing else than: his mind sleeps. Now we understand why the hypnotised person becomes so receptive to the mental impressions which go out from the hypnotist. He becomes receptive because nothing psychic inserts itself between him and the hypnotist. There the thought of the other becomes an immediate natural force, there the thought becomes creative. The thought is creative, and the spirit is creative in the whole nature. It only does not appear directly.

Eliminating the soul at the same time we have made the consciousness of the hypnotised person inactive like in other similar abnormal states. We have transported the person into an unconscious state. We can get an image of this process, if we imagine that we bring a sleeping person from one room into another and let him sleep there some time. Impressions are round him, but he does not perceive them. He knows nothing about his surroundings. If we bring him, without he has awoken, back into the room in which he has slept before then he has been in another room without knowing it, then he has not perceived

anything of the other room. It depends on the fact that we perceive our surroundings if we want to call these surroundings “real”. A lot may be round us, may be real, and may be essential — we know nothing of it because we do not perceive it. We do not comply with it, our activity is not relating to it because we perceive nothing.

In such a state the hypnotised person faces the hypnotist. Forces go out from the hypnotist; forces are effective which are mind-impregnated with the thoughts of the hypnotist. They go out from him and have an effect on the hypnotised. But the hypnotised knows nothing about it. He speaks, but he speaks only according to the mind of the hypnotist. He is active, so to speak, without being his own spectator — like people in the everyday life — without observing the object of his activity at the same time. He is, so to speak, in the same situation concerning the mind of the hypnotist as the sleeping person who was transported into another room and knows nothing of that which takes place round him. The human being can be transported into surroundings time and again where the spirit speaks to him. He can be in surroundings where the spirit speaks to him. Now and at every moment you are also in surroundings in which the spirit speaks to you, because everything round us is done by the spirit. The physical laws are spirit, only that the human being perceives this spirit in the shadowy reflection of the thoughts in the usual view. This spirit is spirit just as the spirit which is active in the hypnotist if he works on the hypnotised person.

Compared with his spiritual surroundings the human being is also in the normal, in the everyday waking state in a state in which his senses and his perception are not open for the spirit, even if he is not in such a mental condition like the hypnotised. If this perception is open for the spirit which is in the environment if the things of the spiritual world which are round us speak a loud, clear language to us, then this can only happen if we are in the normal life in a similar situation like the hypnotised toward the hypnotist. The hypnotised person experiences no pain, he does not perceive needle stings, and he does not perceive a blow. Desire and harm in the usual sense of the word are extinguished.

If we get in our everyday life, in the waking consciousness to that state which I have described in the first part of my lecture — because the theosophical world view should consider a higher developmental state of the human being like Plato, like the mystery priest demanded it from his disciples —

If we remove that which touches us as an everyday desire or harm which moves our eyes directly to tears or makes our ears sensitive, which fulfils us with fear and hope —

If we remove what constitutes our everyday life, if we make ourselves free from this world and experience the described metamorphosis of the mind — then we can get to a similar state toward the spiritual world – but consciously — like the hypnotised toward the hypnotist in the abnormal sense. Then our eyes and ears

are active in the same way as before; we have our waking consciousness, but we do not allow to be touched by the everyday objects within this waking consciousness. This metamorphosis must take place with the human being. He has to perceive the spiritual environment, the language of the spirit in this environment without desire and grief like the hypnotised hears the thoughts and words of the hypnotist in his unusual state.

Only experience of this field can be the determining factor. If the great basic principles of the theosophical ethics are fulfilled to a certain degree, if the human being has got to the state where he faces spiritual truth really as the human being faces the mathematical truth in his everyday life, objectively, without desire and grief, then the spirit of the environment speaks to the human being, then the spirit is not engaged to the impressions of his senses, as little as the hypnotised is tied to that which works on his senses. The hypnotist works only on the hypnotised person who does not have desire and grief, and the spirit has the same effect only on the clairvoyant human being who does not have desire and grief. In order to have such sensitivity of the environment with waking consciousness it is necessary to have gone through a development, so that we are able with correctly functioning mind, with correctly active reason to pass between the things and still to let speak the spirit to ourselves. Clairvoyance is called that level the pupil has attained on which he is able to perceive the world round himself free of desire and grief. If the human being has developed so far that his passions and desires are silent in him and loves this state without passion and desire as the everyday human being loves the things round himself, then he has become mature to perceive the spirit round himself. Then he does no longer wish what he wished in the everyday life, and then he wishes in the spiritual world.

Then, however, his thoughts, saturated with his higher wishes, also become effective forces with his purified soul. The thoughts of the human being are only abstract thoughts, because the everyday human being inserts the soul with its personal wishes between himself, between his spiritual inside and everything else.

Only this is the reason why our thoughts must be taken up by the soul, why our thoughts must be transformed into the personality to become effective. Personal wishes approach the thoughts of the individual human being. If I have an ideal, I want to convert this ideal into reality according to my personal wishes. As a personality I must have an interest — it is in the everyday life in such a way — in that which a thought illuminates to me if I should carry out it. As a person I have to consider a thought, a will as desirable. My personal wish binds itself to the thought which would be, otherwise, independent of time and space because what is true in the thought is true at all times. If we go far beyond these personal wishes, we develop in the sense as the mystery priests demanded it from their disciples, then our wishes are transformed in such a way that we bind the whole strength of our soul not to our personal interest, but we follow up that which lives in the spiritual realm more affectionately and more devotedly. Then this

thought, the mind which lives in us does not become dull and abstract like in the everyday person, it does not have to penetrate the outside world by means of the soul experiences, then it flows into the outside world, so to speak, from the innermost mind of the human being without being touched by the immediate self, without having to go through the personal self. It does not become dull by the outside world, it moves up to us like a natural force; it moves up to us like the force of crystallisation, like the magnetic force which goes out from the magnet and arranges the pattern of the iron filings. Like these forces which surround us in nature as reality the thought free of wishes works on our surroundings, on the reality around us. Knowledge of our environment, knowledge of our fellow men becomes fertile in quite different sense if we have advanced to such thoughts disregarding our personal wishes. Then that appears which merges as a strength of thought of this developed human being into his fellow men.

Then the thought appears as an organising natural force with really unselfish human beings. About the great, true sages — not only with the scholars, but with those who brought wisdom to humankind -, it is told to us that they were healers at the same time that a strength went out from them which provided help, release of physical and mental sufferings to their fellow men. This was the case because they had advanced to such a development through which the thought becomes a strength through which the mind can stream directly into the world. The knowledge which is free of wishes this way which is unselfish knowledge which streams into the human being as the strength which, otherwise, only serves the self, such strength enables the human being to heal spiritually.

Only in principle I can indicate the preconditions of such a spiritual healing. A precondition of the so-called spiritual healing in the theosophical sense can be that the human being goes beyond his limited, everyday self. In a certain sense the human being has to eliminate his own soul-life if he wants to become clairvoyant, a healer, extinguishing what belongs preferably to him as a personality. Such a human being does not become completely insensible and dull that way. O no, on the contrary, such a human being becomes sensitive in a higher sense and more sensitive than he was before. Such a human being develops a susceptibility which is not, however, that which the senses supply in the everyday life, but he develops a susceptibility of a much higher type. Is the susceptibility of the human being lower than that of the lower animal which has a pigmentation mark only instead of an eye by which it can have a light impression at most? Is it different with the human being because he transforms the impression which he receives in the visual purple into the perception of the colour in the environment? As the eye of the human being relates to the pigmentation mark of the lower animal, the spiritual organism of the clairvoyant relates to the organism of the undeveloped human being. The elimination of the personality is the sacrifice. The effacement of the personality releases the voice of spirit in our environment. The effacement of the personality solves the riddles of nature for us. We have to efface our soul-world. We have to overcome desire

and grief in the everyday sense of the word. This is necessary to get to a certain knowledge and higher development.

Now, however, an effacement of the own personality in certain sense is also necessary with a single task which has an infinite importance for the everyday human life, with the human educational system. In every adolescent human being, from the birth of the child, through the development years, it is the spirit in the innermost core of the human being which should develop; the spirit is hidden within the body at first, it remains a secret within the movements of the soul of the adolescent human being. If we face this spirit, we make the adolescent human being dependent of our interests — I do not even want to say of our desires and passions, then we let our mind flow into the human being and we basically develop what is in us in the growing human being. But I do not even want to speak of the fact that we let our wishes and desires be active with the education of an adolescent human being, but only that the educator lets speak his mind only too often, yes that it is almost a rule that the educator asks his reason above all what has to happen concerning this or that education measure. But he does not take into consideration that he has a growing mind before himself which can form only according to its nature if it can develop according to this nature universally freely and without restrictions, and if the educator gives it the opportunity of this development. We face a strange human mind. We must allow a strange human mind to work on ourselves if we are educators. As we have seen that in hypnosis, in the unusual state the spirit has a direct effect on the human person, the developing mind of the child works and must work in another form directly on us if we have the child before ourselves. However, we can develop this mind only if we are able to extinguish ourselves, just as with other higher performances, if we are able — without interference of our self — to be a servant of the human mind entrusted to our education if this human mind is given the opportunity to develop freely. As long as we allow our selfish concepts and demands to flow against the mind, as long as we set our self with its peculiarities against this mind, as long we see this mind just as little, as the eye which is still involved in desire and grief sees the spirit of the environment clairvoyantly.

On an everyday level the educator has to fulfil a higher ideal. He fulfils this ideal if he understands the mysterious, but obvious principle of the complete selflessness and understands the effacement of the own self. This effacement of the own self is the sacrifice by means of which we perceive the spirit in our environment. We perceive the spirit in unusual states if we become free of desire and grief in unusual way. We perceive the spirit clairvoyantly if we are without desire and grief in the normal state, with full waking consciousness. We lead the spirit in the right thinking if we lead it unselfishly within education. This unselfish ideal as an attitude which the educator has daily to strive for has to illuminate his work. But just because an immediate necessity of our cultural development is in this field because in this field a true, unselfish attitude must be produced for the purposes of our culture, therefore, it is the field of the

educational ideals above all where theosophy can appear as something creative where it can render humankind a most valuable service. Somebody who is devoted to the theosophical life who learns bit by bit to open the senses to the spirit by the development of selflessness has the best basis for a pedagogic activity, and he will work on the educational task of humankind in the theosophical sense. The educator needs to follow only this, above all. Apart from that, he does not need to show theosophical dogmas or principles at every opportunity. It does not depend on dogmas, principles and teachings; it depends on the life and on the transformation of the forces which flow from selflessness and thereby from the perception of the spirit. It depends on it and not on the fact that the educator has taken up the teachings of theosophy. He is theosophist because he sees something like riddles in every developing human life which appears like a being before the soul whom he has to develop as a mind, while he has to train the mind. A riddle of nature which he has to solve should be any growing human being to the educator. If he is an educator with such an attitude, then the educator is a theosophist in the best sense of the word. He is it because he approaches any human being, any adolescent human being with a true, holy shyness and understands the words of Jesus: “**anything you failed** to do for one of these, however insignificant, you failed to do for me.” You did it to me, to God who has become a human being because you recognised and cultivated the divine spirit in the least of my brothers.

Somebody who penetrates himself with such an attitude faces as a human being other human beings quite differently. He sees the divine spirit, the developing spirit in the least of his brothers. His relation to his fellow men fulfils him in another sense with seriousness and dignity, with shyness and respect if he considers any human being as a riddle of nature, as a holy riddle of nature on which he must not intrude this way and to which he has to establish a relationship, so that from this seriousness the respect of the divine spiritual core may arise in every human being. If the human being has such a relationship to his brothers, he is on the way, even if he is still so far away from the goal. The goal which we set in such a way stands before us in infinite distance. He is on the way which the theosophical ethics indicate with the nice, great words:

Before the eyes can see,  
They must be incapable of tears.  
Before the ear can hear,  
It must have lost its sensitiveness...

### *Note*

**Anything you failed** ... *Matthew 25:40 (Revised English Bible). Literal translation of the Greek text: what you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me.*





## Theosophy and Spiritism

*Berlin, 1st February 1904*

The questions of the origin and goal of the human soul have existed always and at all times. One counts these questions among the religious, theological or theosophical ones. But in ancient times the science of the everyday life went hand in hand with the investigation of the spiritual world. There were sages at that time who knew not only the facts and laws of the external nature and the science of the material life, but also the science of the spiritual life. One could also rely on those who knew the natural phenomena and physical laws if one wanted to get information about the laws of the spiritual life. At that time no one-sidedness existed with the spiritual leaders. Almost everybody of them had an overview of the whole area of knowledge, and probably nobody dared to deliver an authoritative judgment in any scientific question, we say, for example, in the field of zoology, if he did not know the higher questions of the spiritual life at the same time.

Since the 16-th century this has changed. There the religious problems and the generally accepted science opposed each other. This contrast between faith and knowledge, between religion and knowledge appeared the sharpest in the 19-th century. At that time the spiritual life had received another physiognomy. Great naturalists postpone the dawning of the scientific age to the thirties years of the 19-th century. One has pointed rightly to this age as one of the most epoch-making of humankind. One has pointed with pride to performances of the natural sciences with regard to the control of the physical laws and the knowledge of the physical processes in the 19-th century. And one has said rightly that all the preceding millennia together have not performed so much in this field as the 19-th century.

However, a concomitant of this big, immense upturn is the lack of spiritual life. The harmony which existed in former times between both sides of knowledge got lost. Today the harmony between the science which limits itself to external facts in the material world and the science which deals with the facts of the soul does no longer exist. It is something peculiar that just the science of the 19-th century became absolutely powerless concerning the big questions of existence, concerning the questions of the soul-life and spiritual life. It is strange that just in our time the big mass can no longer be led by the leaders of science to the higher humanities. You get no explanation from those who investigate nature if you ask them: what about the problems of the soul? What about the determination of the human being? — One has called our age in which the things are in such a way the materialistic age. Our otherwise so perfect science limits itself to natural science, as far as it is to be carried out with the external

senses, as far as it is to be calculated or to be explored by combination of external sense-perception. The knowledge of nature and the knowledge of the soul-life do no longer go hand in hand.

Consider psychology, the science of the soul of our time. It is, as if it is attacked by a big incapacity. Go from university to university, from chair to chair: what you hear with regard of the life of soul and mind is absolutely powerless in the face of the most urgent questions of our existence. It is typical that the so-called soul researchers have a catchword which is as characteristic as only a catchword can be. Since Friedrich Albert Lange, the historian of materialism, the catchword of “the science of the soul without soul” has become setting the tone. This catchword characterises the standpoint of psychology in the second half of the 19-th century more or less, and expresses that the human soul and its qualities are nothing else than the external expression of the mechanical functioning of the sensuous natural forces in our organism. As well as the clock consists of gear wheels and moves the hands with the help of the gear wheels, the movement of the hands is nothing else than the result of purely mechanical processes, our soul-life with its wishes, desires, ideas, concepts should also be nothing else than the result of physical processes, comparable to the forward movement of the hands in the clock; it should have its cause in nothing else than in the gears which move in our brain and which were made clear to us by science in such an epoch-making way. Nothing of the brain physiology should be criticised; everything remains completely and can be acknowledged by nobody more than by me. But even if we can say that the clock is a mechanical engine and that which it performs is a result of the mechanical gears, we must not forget that in the production of the clock a watchmaker was active. “Watch without watchmaker” is an impossible catchword just as “science of the soul without soul.” This is not a catchword, but it is something that marks the whole way of research, of the thinking and the attitude of the 19-th century which observes the soul eliminating the mind and explains it only as a mechanism. Explanation and attitude correspond to this catchword. Hence, it is also no miracle, if those who thirst from the deepest need of heart and soul for the answer of the questions: where does the human being originate from? Where does he go? Which is the determination of our soul? — If those feel bored stiff of that which is presented as a scientific teaching of the soul by such people who should have a teaching of the soul. In the textbooks about the soul one finds something entirely different from a teaching of the soul. One is not surprised if these try to satisfy their need of spiritual knowledge non-scientifically just since the official science is so powerless in the face of these questions, and if this science of soul and mind positions itself apart from the modern science of materialism which makes science deaf and dumb; deaf toward the external teaching, dumb if it should speak about the soul. Our official science is powerless in the face of the soul questions, even if it has the good will. That is why, where in science the quarrel broke out between materialism and

spiritualism as for example between [Wagner](#) and [Vogt](#), it did not end at all to the disadvantage of materialism. Everything that the materialistic researcher replied to the spiritualist is completely maintained, while that which the spiritualist brought forward was quite untenable in the light of strict research.

We see that even if the scholars had the good will to deepen the question about the human soul in terms of [Weber's](#) real spiritual science it has turned out helpless. Hence, the words "psychology without soul" is also no mere catchword, because science really lost the concept of the soul. If you want to ask the most famous psychologists' advice, you find the same as with the physiologist Wagner. The psychologists have nothing to say because they do not have an idea of the soul. They have put about not only the catchword "science of the soul without soul," but they have completely lost sight of the being of the soul.

This fact must be appreciated completely if one wants to understand the development of the spiritistic currents. Since the origin and development of the materialistic epoch, which was enthusiastically welcomed by the ones which was combated by the others on the liveliest, a counter-current exists which one calls the spiritualistic or spiritistic movement. Both belong together, as well as South Pole and North Pole of a magnet belong together necessarily. Because the scientific researchers and leaders could not say anything about the soul, one turned to other researchers to hear something about the soul. Because the question of the soul was so unstoppable, all objections which were done against spiritism fell on deaf ears.

Today we want to examine how we have to behave from the theosophical standpoint to the enthusiastic welcomers and to the objections of the opponents of spiritism. I presuppose that spiritism is a necessary phenomenon. We have to realise first if we study such a question that it does not concern an accidental, but a necessary phenomenon; recognisable as necessary simply from its course. We completely ignore at first that dilettantes have mainly occupied themselves with spiritism and its phenomena. Let us look at something different, namely at the fact that among the scholars researchers of the best reputation and significance were who sympathised with spiritism. Because this is the case, allow me to refrain for the moment from the spiritualistic phenomena, and to make the development of spiritism to a question of persons which refers to those at first who have occupied themselves with spiritism and certainly possess a notable judgment in spiritistic questions; they have exerted a deep influence also in the fields of natural science at the same time. These are scholars who could not be content just as many other people with the concepts of a "psychology without soul" which their professional colleagues gave them; these are scholars who performed much more in our modern science than the really materialistic researchers.

There we may probably put the question: is it not of quite particular significance if a researcher of indubitable reputation, like the great English chemist [Crookes](#), did completely commit to spiritism? Crookes, who has the biggest merits investigating the chemical basic laws, the chemical constitution of our elements who did not only stand the test in scientific fields, but also performed the best in practical fields who takes a position in science like few other people — this man concerned himself with spiritistic experiments. One believed to argue against him that he did not exactly approach his observations. However, this objection is of secondary significance, it only shifts the point of question. Because it does not depend on that whether Crookes experimented exactly, but whether Crookes, the great chemist, knew to which extent nature follows the sensuous laws, to which extent these reach, and whether they obstruct a psychology based on spiritualistic experiments; whether the highest possible scientific efficiency is not an obstacle for a man achieving scientific knowledge in the fields of spiritism. It depends on that: can Crookes be on one side the exact scientific researcher for us if we believe on the other side that we have to doubt his researches in spiritual fields? This is almost in such a way, as if we constructed a double Crookes, a Morning- and an Afternoon-Crookes to us. In the morning, if he concerns himself with his chemistry, he has a healthy intellect; in the afternoon, if he devotes himself to the investigation of spiritistic experiments, he is crazy. The fact that this is absurd makes sense immediately, however, is not admitted by the accepted science.

Another naturalist is the English scholar [Wallace](#), the founder of the theory of evolution. Darwin and he found — independently of each other — the great thought of this theory, Darwinism. If one studies his works, one finds that he has dealt with the concerning question even more splendidly than Darwin himself. His merit in these fields is not denied. Because he stood up spoken and written for the reality of spiritistic phenomena later, one also split him, so to speak, in two parts. He fights on one side for his scientific view and on the other side for his psychology which is similar to that of Crookes. Everywhere you can find that he is shown as a poor lost because he occupied himself with spiritism and supported it. Dwarf-like intellects simply rebel against the way of thinking and the attitude of these great men.

The fact that also a researcher of spiritism can be on the high level of a naturalist, like the mentioned researchers, caused me to make the matter a question of persons at first.

Indeed, the 19-th century has the advantage over all former centuries that these exceptionally important questions are treated as scientific questions. These researchers do not at all regard it as impossible to expand the scientific research also to this area. Therefore, it may be also quite right to refer to them as authorities; because it does not depend on the question whether anybody observed exactly or inexactly, but merely whether they regard it as possible or impossible. The exactness or inaccuracy of an experiment can be ascertained

later. What was made wrong can be corrected later under other conditions. This with regard to this kind of psychology while it depends only on the question: can one disprove this kind of psychology scientifically?

We do not register a scientific psychology, and the weakest and most unimportant what has been written by the scholars in the course of the 19-th century is written against spiritism. Some opponents of my view may sit here; they must admit one matter with unbiased judgment: even if the writings should be right which are directed against spiritism, they all are trivial and unscientific; one may also be right if one states brainless stuff.

After we have recognised the spiritistic movement as a cultural-historical necessity this way, let us look a little at the differences which exist between the spiritistic movement and other attempts of investigating the soul facts.

You know that there is a theosophical current, a theosophical movement since 1875, which — just as spiritism since forty years — endeavours to confirm the truth that the material existence is not the only one, but that a higher existence is in the world that there are spiritual facts and beings which are not to be reached and investigated using the outer senses. Just as spiritism dealt with the question of the existence of a spiritual world according to its methods, theosophy also deals with these higher worlds. It is a simple historical fact that the founders of the theosophical movement stood in the spiritistic movement before they realised that they had to work in theosophical sense. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, the great emissaries of the Theosophical Society, went out from the spiritistic movement, and one even called the theosophical association, which they established at first, a society of dissatisfied spiritists. They sought for nothing but truth in the spiritual fields, after they had gained the knowledge that the theosophical movement is right. They only changed the method of investigation, and we want now to talk about the reason why they changed it. It is the task of all spiritists and of all religious movements to produce evidence that there is a higher spiritual life; that in the human being something spiritual lives that the human being has a spiritual nature in himself that his life between birth and death is only a part of the whole human life, and that the human being is something else beside his physical being. The spiritual researchers endeavour to produce evidence of that. It is that which they have in common. They strive collectively for that, and in this goal they will also meet to constitute a necessary contrast to the materialistic current. One can achieve truth not on separate ways, but only in full unity, in harmonious striving. Not only the common goal but also the knowledge of the common origin of these two movements may contribute to this unity. It was a common site of origin from which spiritistic movements as well as theosophy took their starting point. So not only the goal, but also the origin is the same. Those people know this who are able to look a little deeper into the internal driving forces of the spiritual movement. What we see externally, what of the spiritual movement is immediately open before our external eyes happens in the world of effects, not in the world of causes. The

spiritual researcher knows that the causes of something that happens before your senses are found in much higher spiritual worlds. We grope in the dark if we walk in the sensuous world up and down, and have no idea what takes place behind the scenery where higher spiritual powers pull the strings of that which takes place before our sensory eyes. Thus the spiritual researcher also recognises that spiritistic and theosophical movements have a common origin.

Somebody who pursues the development of humankind with open spiritual eye knows that there is a development also within the spiritual life of humankind like within the physical nature. As well as there are within the physical nature beings which grope in the dark, and others which grope in the dark and also hear et cetera, there are in the spiritual life all gradations between the undeveloped soul of a savage and the genius soul of Goethe or Newton. We see which immense differences exist in the gradation of the development of senses as well as in the scale of mental development. There are highly developed beings among humankind, and those who have found them are able to give evidence of them. These great beings are the leaders of the spiritual development. They are not only — as Schopenhauer said — an ideal brotherhood which joins the hands together through times, but a real community of beings which work together. The theosophist knows about its existence and calls it the great brotherhood of the so-called adepts. Who believes honestly in a development must believe in this possibility; who has, however, experience of it can give evidence that there are such beings.

When around the middle of the 19-th century the materialistic turning point took place when the higher beings saw that a materialistic high tide must come up, they caused the counter-pole. They did not criticise this materialistic movement at any moment. They knew that the modern technology would thereby take an immense upward trend, and this was a necessity. That is why the materialistic movement should not be combated. Only with regard to the soul question a counter-pole had to be created, a spiritual current, a spiritual wave against the material one in humankind. This spiritual wave expresses itself at first in the appearance of spiritistic phenomena. It should be shown to the human beings that there is something else than what natural science can seize with its means. Those brothers who knew how to interpret the signs of the time who were always the leaders of humankind sent the spiritistic tidal wave about humankind. They are working for centuries. Unknown, misjudged, they will come to the fore in single individualities working extensively for humankind. As long as the mass of humankind could turn to the scientific leaders, as long as it could receive information about the burning soul questions, however, those older brothers could lead the spiritual humankind in concealed mysteries. Then they sent their scouts into the world on ways which only the so-called occultist knows. Somebody who really studies history encounters such spiritual influence which he does not know how to explain if he is only a materialistic researcher

which become clear to him, however, if he turns to the right spiritual researchers.

The situation changed in the 19-th century. Just because the scientific leaders failed, it was necessary that obvious proofs of the existence of a spiritual world were delivered. Now, however, it became apparent that the three decades of the spiritistic movement from 1840 to 1870 caused quite different interests at first as one had intended. Do not argue that the wise leaders can also be mistaken, because they would have had to foresee this otherwise. This is a matter which must be discussed in other way. It turned out at first that the interests connected with the spiritistic phenomena were not intended. One wanted to obviously show the fact that there is still a purely spiritual life beside the physical one. However, only interests of overly human, personal nature were nourished at that time. It was the contact with the dead, which was sought above all. But this was not at all what the emissaries should bring to humankind. The purpose of these phenomena was not to satisfy human curiosity, even if of nice and noble kind. Humankind should get knowledge, insights which should lead it — using them correctly — to itself, to a higher, spiritual life. Unfortunately, one sought for too much curiosity, and investigated the spiritual world in a way which cannot lead to the real purification of humankind. This is the reason why the Theosophical Society was then founded.

Let me make a reference shortly what it concerns here. The human being is not created by purely natural forces. What constitutes the human nature what forms the cover of the soul-life and spiritual life is not created by means of physical strength. Wisdom created the world. Wisdom also created every human being. I presuppose this here; it could be the task of a particular lecture to prove it to you. That is why I only make an outline today.

You know that no clock comes into being by means of mere natural forces, but that human astuteness is necessary to produce the necessary combinations. Those are right who say: if we investigate the organism of the living body, we find no God, no divine creativity, but only natural forces. They do not find the spiritual, creative forces. Already if you think about that a little bit, you can get it clear to your mind. Even if you study a clock, you can explain it quite mechanically, and, in the end, you are forced to raise the question about the wisdom, about the human reason and about the watchmaker who made it, and you cannot find him in the clock, too. One sees from it: the question is put wrongly. The comparison of the human organism with a clock absolutely holds good, but it must be properly applied. It is correct if one says: as little as a clock and its clockwork can originate without the mental influence of a watchmaker as little as the human soul came into being without the spiritual influence of its creator — this human soul with the present consciousness, as we know it, which teaches us of the environment, which calculates, deduces, and informs us about our moral life. Imagine what was necessary — I have to talk figuratively — to create the basis for this peak of the organic life, for the human mind within this human organic development.

It is easy to imagine that these legitimate creators of the organism could have built only up to one of the lower steps that they would never have been able to create this intricate human organism which was to be used for the human soul as a useful tool. They had to reach a peak of their capacity. We go back to those times which preceded the development of the human soul in which the development did not yet get to a human peak. Then we find that these beings are built up wisdom-filled, and it becomes clear to us at the same time that the forces which created these beings can be seen by us human beings just as little as the watchmaker of the clock can be seen. The human being knows about the spiritual powers, forces and beings which carefully prepared this in which his soul lives as little as the mechanical clockwork in the clock knows about the mental activity of the watchmaker.

Spiritual forces worked on the construction of our organism and are still working in us. Those forces which formed our organism so that it is able to breathe, to send blood through the veins, to digest that it concentrates substances and forces in the brain and makes the brain the suitable tool of the soul, until the human soul could come into being — still today these soul forces are at work. But as little as gravitation, as magnetism can be seen, as little we see the forces which manifest themselves as our desires, passions, wishes and impulses, just as little we can recognise the creative forces which were effective with the construction of the organism. Imagine the human being would not yet be at the height where he has a clear consciousness. Imagine him being transported in that time when these forces of consciousness had not yet taken possession of his organism.

Before our highly developed brain could be built in the course of world evolution, other forms of the brain developed which are even today always in us, covered and controlled by the highly developed perfect brain of the human being of our time. In an certain way — unaware to the human being — the spiritual creators of the world built up the nature of desires and impulses of the human being; that nature which the human being has with the animals in common to produce the tool of the soul as their peak. Still today these spiritual beings which built up us are active; they are beside us, in us, and are as real as this lamp is real here in the physical world. We move in our physical world and know about the things of the world because we have attained a clear consciousness. Round us many beings live which fell behind on former levels of existence. Exactly the same way as the human beings advanced, certain beings fell behind and constitute a spiritual world for themselves. But also for them the development will not come to a standstill. Just as our consciousness developed to our height and clearness, their development also advances. One cannot deny further advancement to higher and higher levels to our consciousness. However, if the human being has developed not only up to this clear consciousness, but to an even higher view, then we recognise the spiritual worlds again which always surround us.



You can receive knowledge from the spiritual world surrounding us in double way. The first way is that we investigate the condition of the human being after his clear consciousness has been eliminated. This clear consciousness is like a light which outshines the spiritual influence which is round us. We do not see it because our consciousness outshines it. If we eliminate our consciousness, however, we approach the spiritual beings who were our creators before we had the clear consciousness. Then we attain the knowledge that the development does not advance straight ahead, but it ascends and descends in circles. While we eliminate our clear consciousness, we move as it were back to former stadia of our development where we were more spiritual, whereas we stand with our consciousness above that sphere today. We really come from a spiritual world, and this spiritual world has done in advance, so to speak, what can be the flat, the home of the soul in the physical world. We approach the divine being in certain respect if we lower the level a little which we have reached. This is the way spiritism has gone.

The other way is the way of the modern spiritual science, of theosophy. Theosophy tries to investigate the spiritual world not through elimination of the consciousness, but through higher development of the consciousness. The ideal of the theosophist is to attain knowledge about the spiritual world surrounding us with perfect continuity, with maintenance of his clear consciousness. This is the difference between the theosophical student and the spiritistic medium. The medium delivers information of the spiritual world, but it is only a tool. It is the organ through which the spiritual world speaks. The theosophical researcher tries to lift his clear consciousness to those heights where he perceives this spiritual world again. The theosophical researcher considers it as an restriction of the human independence, as an obstruction of the human right of self-determination if he should give up that level of clear consciousness which he has once reached in the course of development and should transport himself back to the state which he has already gone through in former phases of his development.

The truth which we receive in a state of the lowered consciousness may be quite untouchable, no one may doubt the correctness of the results of spiritistic experiments, however, the question whether the method of research is right or permissible is not thereby touched. It particularly depends on it whether it corresponds to the laws of development and the intentions of the cosmic powers if steps are done again backward which nature has already done forward. Not without reason steps are done in nature, and, hence, the human being should also not transport himself back to phases of development which nature has already overcome with him. We do not want to investigate truth because of curiosity, not on wrong, underhand ways, but merely on the way about which the lofty cosmic powers have instructed us, on the way which leads through our clear consciousness. Hence, it is the striving of the theosophical movement to hear not to those who reveal truth from the unconsciousness or sub-consciousness, but to those who tell truth from full waking consciousness. Somebody who stands in

the theosophical movement and has direct knowledge of truth has investigated truth in no other way as maintaining the full waking consciousness. He is not allowed to eliminate his consciousness for a moment. Higher development of the consciousness, full, clear beholding, as the adepts have it, must be his striving. If we have reached this goal, then we fulfil our human determination.

Why should we believe the medium being in trance more than somebody who speaks from his clear waking consciousness? Trust is necessary here and there. However, it is more comfortable to investigate truth eliminating the consciousness, but the research method maintaining the clear consciousness is more humane. Hence, the theosophists have preferred the latter way as the natural one, so that any work out of the unconsciousness or sub-consciousness is not what the theosophical movement would have wished. The theosophical movement tries to get to the spiritual world out of the full, clear consciousness, and it realises that the human being is a spiritual being which is more or less independent of his body, depending on his level of development. Hence, theosophy turns to the incarnated human beings above all, to such human beings who, living in the body, can attain forces of spiritual beholding and become independent of their physical bodies temporarily, with full, clear consciousness. The human being independent of the body has the possibility to obtain experiences in the spiritual world, not because he returns to the times in which the bright waking consciousness was not yet developed, but because he ascends to times and periods of evolution in which the consciousness will be higher than the average consciousness of the present human beings.

The medium is a reminiscent sign of past times of evolution. In former times all human beings were media and had an astral perception, once they all could perceive the spiritual world. However, from this astral consciousness our consciousness, our bright, clear waking consciousness has developed gradually. With the rise to the spiritual worlds which all human beings will have to carry out, they will go — if I may say so — through this astral world again, become clairvoyant again. However, this is only a transitory state like any development state can be considered as a transitory state. Our earthly career is a lesson which we must work through which we have to learn. Therefore, we should also not become unworldly, not hostile to the earthly matters, but completely live in the earthly and should recognise the same forces, the same beings in the earthly world which we perceive in the supersensible world, because these work on our earthly world and on the human souls, and gain influence on the organisation of the earthly life that way.

The bee allegory of the mystery priests of the ancient Greece wanted to express this. The bee allegory is therefore not without significance for us, because the human soul was compared with the bees. As well as the bees are sent out from the beehive to the flowers to collect honey, the human soul is sent out from higher regions to collect experiences in the earthly world. The realm of flowers is assigned to the bees, the earthly world to the human beings. It would not at all

correspond to their determinations if bees and human beings visited other fields of research, were active in regions which do not contain the material to be collected or to an unsuitable degree. Therefore, the theosophical movement has made this allegory the allegory of its work which consists, briefly expressed, in the striving for the higher development of knowledge and of the clear consciousness to an encompassing one, so that it can also take part in the life in spiritual worlds. So the Theosophical Society strives for a higher development of the human beings. If it succeeds in doing so, those interests become active in the human nature and develop the human being further. Curiosity should not drive us to get to know anything of the spiritual world. What we learn has to give us the strength, the capacity to arrive at the goal which is set to us by the cosmic powers.

The spiritistic movement causes the consciousness in its followers that there is a spiritual world. In this endeavour theosophy and spiritism agree. But the method to arrive at this goal, as already explained, is different. The reasons why the Theosophical Society does not favour the research method of spiritism can be given with a few words: it is a big danger in the present stage of our cosmic development to eliminate the human consciousness. According to the whole course of the cosmic development the human being must work with this consciousness on the earth. If he eliminates it, he is exposed will-lessly, unconsciously to the spiritual powers.

An example should make this clear to you. It is a great difference whether you go into a den of criminals with clear consciousness and bright mind and know a lot about it, or whether you go into it without this clear knowledge. It is not only in the extreme case of the dive, it is everywhere in the world that way. We must grasp the things which move up to us with clear consciousness and mind. We must not become will-less tools, also not of the spiritual powers, because these could do everything imaginable with us. It is just that which contributed to inhibit the culture, the development of media to such a high degree. The insight that the human being should contact the spiritual beings only maintaining his full, free self-determination is accepted more and more by the leading spiritists, and it may be only a question of time that the other method of spiritual research, cultivated by the theosophists, is also adopted by the spiritists.

The theosophist and the spiritist strive for clairvoyance. Both are also tools, the theosophical student and the spiritistic medium; but only the spiritistic medium is will-less. Somebody who knows the dangers can speak about the immense powers facing him in that world; powers which have a destroying, pressing down effect on us; powers which have a beneficial influence on one side, on the other side a damaging effect. That was profitable to the human being when he still lived in his sub-consciousness; today this is injurious to him. If we leave ourselves will-lessly to the powers which formed us once, then we are their tools for better or for worse. This is why we should never let cloud our consciousness. This has enabled us with our researches to recognise big truth, while the

spiritistic researcher must fish more or less in troubled waters. We have recognised what leads to the goals; it has revealed what hinders us. Above all we must learn to find the way in the spiritual world. We must possess that knowledge which makes this possible which is the precondition of knowledge in the spiritual world. Who wants to become a competent mechanic must study mathematics. Who wants to be at home in the spiritual world and not to move staggering and will-lessly in it must have penetrated the theosophical profundities. What the theosophists have recognised in 1875 will bring more and more spiritists gradually to their side. Both currents do not need to combat each other even if the research method is radically different as I have pointed out; they should balance out. What the followers of the one current have to offer, they may bring this; what the followers of the other current have to bring, they may lay down this on the altar of humankind for the welfare of the whole. Humankind is really supported by both movements this way, while fight between both directions could lead only to lose track of the great goal. Not fight, but unity between both movements is necessary which should lead to the common goal: to lift humankind out of the materialistic current of the present. Imparting of the knowledge of the spiritual world is necessary for that. Imparting of the knowledge of eternity and the true nature of the soul, as well as the possibility to look up again to the big spiritual powers of nature leading and showing us the paths. How few have so much self-knowledge that they understand the origin and the determination of the human being, the home of the soul, that they can find what gives sense and significance to life! To receive that, the human being must have got to the conviction which Johann Gottlieb [Fichte](#) expressed when he spoke of that spiritual world which opens our eyes for the eternal: “Not only, after I have been torn away from the connection of the earthly world, I will receive the entry into the supernatural world; I am and live now in it, truer than in the earthly one; it is my only steady point of view now, and the eternal life, which I obtained long ago, is the only reason, why I may still continue the earthly one. What they call heaven does not lie beyond the grave; it is spread already here around our nature, and its light rises in every pure heart.”

### *Notes*

The translator uses the terms spiritism, spiritist etc. instead of the terms spiritualism, spiritualist etc. which are more common in English-speaking countries. Steiner uses the latter terms for the opposite of materialism, materialist etc. as it became usual since Allan Kardec (1804 – 1861) had differentiated these terms.

Rudolf **Wagner** (1805 – 1864), German anatomist and physiologist, adversary of philosophical materialism  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf\\_Wagner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Wagner)

Carl **Vogt** (1817 – 1895), German naturalist (zoology, geology)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/Carl\\_Vogt](http://en.wikipedia.org/Carl_Vogt)

Presumably Joseph von **Weber** (1753 – 1831), German Catholic clergyman and naturalist, in his book *Metaphysics of the Sensuous and the Supersensible* (1802)

William **Crookes** (1832 – 1919), English chemist and physicist, investigator of spiritism, theosophist, member of the Order of the Golden Dawn  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Crookes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Crookes)

Alfred Russel **Wallace** (1823 – 1913), British naturalist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/Alfred\\_Russel\\_Wallace](http://en.wikipedia.org/Alfred_Russel_Wallace)  
*On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (1874)

Johann Gottlieb **Fichte**, quotation from his work *The Vocation of Man*, vol. 3: *Faith* (1800)

## Theosophy and Somnambulism

*Berlin, 7th March 1904*

The topic of this lecture should be a kind of supplement of that about which I spoke here four weeks ago, a supplement on the topic *Theosophy and Spiritism*. Today I want to explain something more exactly that I could note at that time only indicating. In particular I want to speak about the phenomena of somnambulism which lead into mysterious fields of the human nature and into fields which are interpreted most differently from different sides.

You probably know what somnambulism is. This word should point to certain conditions of the soul which appear in the human being when in his everyday states of consciousness a certain change has happened, above all when the usual everyday consciousness, that consciousness with which we perform our everyday actions with which we get used to nature is not in full activity if it is eliminated, as it were, and the human being still acts emotionally, is still within certain conditions of the soul. We understand as somnambulism any soul activity without full activity of the everyday waking consciousness, as it were from the depths of the soul which are not illuminated by the daytime ego-consciousness. The human soul acts then from this dark depth, and it brings up actions from these depths which differ very substantially from those which the human being accomplishes, otherwise, in the course of his life. We also know that not any person is suited to carry out soul actions with such effacement and elimination of the usual waking consciousness. We know that only those persons whom we call somnambulists who can be transported into a kind of trance or dream state are able to show such phenomena. These persons are in a kind of unconscious condition, while such phenomena arise from their nature, and one has interpreted these conditions in the most different way at different times.

If we transport ourselves once to the ancient Greece, we see which interpretation such actions of somnambulist persons found in the ancient Greece at that time about which normally the Greek history tells to us. There we meet the priestesses, the so-called oracle priestesses who wanted to make known — from the depth of their souls under effacement of their daytime condition of consciousness — all sorts of things which went beyond the usual human knowledge. Events of the future should get out from such deep souls; whether important state actions whether important legislations are justified or not, these oracle priests should decide about that; briefly, one ascribed that which they made known to a divine inspiration. One believed that the soul when the usual daytime consciousness is extinguished stands under divine influence and conveys the volition of the godhead itself. Not only those human beings enjoyed

divine devotion who could be transported into such somnambulistic condition, but above all the revelation the priests made known.

If we go from this time of ancient Greece towards the end of the Middle Ages, we find another view and interpretation of such somnambulistic persons. We see that such persons were understood as being in alliance with all sorts of bad, diabolical, demoniacal powers. We see that that which they made known was considered as something reprehensible, as something that can bring in only damaging, bad influence to the human life. We see that these persons were prosecuted as witches that they were prosecuted because of their devil alliances. Some of the dreadful cruelties towards the end of the Middle Ages are to be attributed to this interpretation of the somnambulistic condition.

In newer time on the other hand when in the outset of the 19-th century, in the last third of the 18-th century one began to study conditions of the human soul, there were some people who believed that one could gain higher explanations of the human soul studying these conditions; because our usual brain consciousness is eliminated and the senses are not receptive to the outside world, they assumed that the human being is able to find out something about spiritual processes and beings which one cannot perceive with the usual senses. Others looked at these conditions as only pathological ones and understood them merely in such a way that one must eliminate them from everything that can be considered as justified for the normal human being. In the beginning in particular it was science which rejected any interpretation, any explanation of these phenomena in its materialistic confidence and regarded them as symptoms, related to insanity in any way, not at all as anything else than quite abnormal matters. These are some interpretations which one has given of the phenomena.

For us the question must be at first: how can be such phenomena caused? — Because we know that some people get completely by themselves to such a condition where their usual waking consciousness is extinguished where they behave towards the outside world completely as sleeping where they understand nothing of that which takes place in their surroundings with their regular senses where they do not hear if in their nearness a bell sounds where they do not see if in their nearness a light shines where they are receptive, however, in strange way to a particular influence, we say, for example, to the words of a certain person. They see and hear nothing around themselves; they are only receptive to that which a single person says to them or to impressions of certain kind. Yes, they often are even more receptive to the thoughts of a particular person in the room in which they are. These are such phenomena which appear with certain people completely by themselves every now and then. Then we say: such persons are somnambulists; they think, act, feel, perceive in a kind of waking dream, in a kind of sleep which is, however, a particular sleeping state that cannot be compared with the usual sleep to which the human being abandons himself every now and then to get over the tiredness of the day.

We also know that with such somnambulists not only the perception, the sensitivity to certain states can appear, but that such somnambulists can move on particular actions that they carry out actions which they could never carry out in their usual daytime consciousness. We experience that they carry out rationally appearing actions to which, however, more belongs than the sense of direction of the usual daytime consciousness. We see them climbing on roofs, jumping over abysses without anticipating any danger in which they are, over abysses over which they would never jump, otherwise; we see them carrying out actions which they would not be able at all to carry out if they are in their usual waking state. These are only indications of such states at first. Such conditions can appear without any reason, but they can also appear because a person exerts a particular influence on another person; they can appear because the usual daytime consciousness is extinguished in a person with the help of particular manipulations of another person that the concerned person is then transported into an artificial somnambulistic condition. Then such artificial somnambulists show the same phenomena as the natural ones. One calls — we do not consider expressions as especially definite — that person who can transport another person into the somnambulistic condition a mesmerist if the somnambulistic condition is light, and one calls the person magnetised; one says that it is transported into a magnetic sleeping state.

Now the question is for us the following: what do such phenomena mean to the spiritual life, which role do they play in the whole interrelation of the spiritual life, and what can we experience by such phenomena and what do they explain to us about the being and the nature of the human soul and mind? We have to ask ourselves: are such phenomena actually such an abnormal matter that does not resemble to the other phenomena of the everyday life? Then, however, the view could take place which simply sees abnormalities in such phenomena; then the view of our doctors could take place, and we would not receive particular information from them.

Now the question arises: what do such phenomena mean to the spiritual life, which role do they play in the whole interrelation of the spiritual life, and what can we experience by such phenomena and what do they explain to us about the being and the nature of the human soul and mind? We must ask ourselves: are such phenomena actually such an abnormal matter which does not resemble to the other phenomena of the everyday life? Then, however, the view could take place which simply sees abnormalities in such phenomena; then the view of our doctors could take place, and we would not receive particular information from them.

The dream is often interpreted as something that flits only fantastically through the dream consciousness, as a kind of empty imagination and one is hardly inclined to scrutinise the strange phenomena of the dream world really. But, nevertheless, there were also finer spirits who were inclined to scrutinise these flitting pictures of the dream consciousness, and then one thing appears above



all: indeed, it is for the most dreams correct that in the dream an enormous irregularity and arbitrariness prevails that we deal mostly only with snatches of the waking consciousness, of the recollections and pictures which have passed our consciousness during the day, and perhaps of other things which are due to our physical condition during sleep, or also to certain symptoms and the like. This is the lowest kind of dreams, these flitting pictures, subject to complete arbitrariness, which pass through the dream consciousness irregularly.

But the attentive viewer cannot escape that already the most usual personal consciousness, if it is in the sleeping state, also has other dreams beside these irregular and arbitrary dreams, dreams which show a particular regularity. I want to draw your attention only to single examples, which intensely illuminate this regularity which we already find within the usual dream consciousness. You have a watch lying beside yourselves. You do not perceive the ticking of the watch during sleep; you dream of a regiment of soldiers passing outside your window and hear the clatter of the horses exactly. You wake and discover that you have heard the ticking of the watch at this moment; since this continues in your consciousness. You have heard it, however, not as a ticking as your usual ear hears it, but it has transformed itself, has symbolised itself to the scatter of the horses of a passing cavalry regiment. — Or a dream which has really taken place: a farmer's wife dreams that she would go with another woman to the city on Sunday morning. They go to the church and see the priest ascending the pulpit and starting to preach. They listen longer time. There something quite strange soon becomes apparent: the priest transforms himself, he gets wings, he changes into a cock, he crows! — This is a real dream which has happened. The farmer's wife who dreamt this wakes and really hears the cock crowing outside. You see again what has happened: the ear has heard the crowing cock, but it has not heard the real cockcrow at first, but the dream consciousness has made a symbol of that which it has heard; it has transformed the cockcrow symbolically into this whole story which I have told to you. The dream consciousness spins out such stories quite dramatically. You see that the sensory impressions are not perceived immediately by the dream consciousness, but they are transformed to symbols, and the especially typical is that this dream consciousness really dramatizes.

I would like to mention another example — a dream which has really taken place; today I want to mention the right examples only which have been experienced: a student dreams that he is at the door of the auditorium. He is bumped by another. There develops a verbal exchange which leads, in the end, to a duel. The student experiences any preparations of the duel — a long story! The duel really takes place at the arranged place, everything is there, the seconds are there, the first shot is fired, and the dreaming student awakes. He has upset a chair beside his bed; he has heard the chair toppling over, but not in such a way as it is, but this event has transformed itself like lightning into a quite dramatic

action. This sleeping dream consciousness is a symbolising one which could be lighted up in its peculiar symbolising activity by countless examples.

Now we ask ourselves: how does this everyday consciousness relate to that which takes action in the human soul, while it dreams? Our everyday consciousness does not immediately take part of these dream actions; for if the consciousness appears in the dream, a kind of another ego appears, a kind of dream-ego; because the dreaming person can see himself, so to speak, he can face himself in the dream. We retain at first that a kind of splitting can happen between the dream-ego and the real ego that really the dreaming person can observe himself quite objectively among the different percepts which he has in the dream. The situations in which this dream appears are determined by the dream consciousness and completely transported into the symbolic-dramatic action which takes place.

A higher level of this dream consciousness happens if we experience conditions of our own physical inner life symbolically in the dream. Again I mention particular examples. Somebody dreams that he is in a musty cellar. Webs are in the ceiling and eerie beasts crawl about. He awakes with headache. Headache has expressed itself symbolically in this cellar. Or another example: somebody is in the dream in an overheated room; he sees a red-hot stove, wakes and has violent palpitations. All these dreams which I tell you are really substantiated. Particular organs of our inside, particular feelings for our inside symbolise themselves in the dream as particular events. Yes, one can say: for the one and same person — who is able to observe on this field knows this — a particular organ takes on a stereotyped appearance which always remains the same. Somebody who suffers from palpitations, has always the same dream, namely the dream which he has had once, let us assume that he saw an overheated stove and the like more. So not only events and facts of the outside world, but also our own physical body express itself allegorically in the dream. This is only a step to that strange phenomenon where dreamers have illnesses before themselves symbolically by which they are infected or by which they are infected only in a few days. They perceive their own conditions during the dream consciousness. That happens, indeed, only with particular persons who already belong to the somnambulists in a certain respect. From there up to the other phenomenon it is again only a step that a peculiar kind of human instinct points out a remedy or a necessary performance to the full somnambulists. So the dream can really work as a doctor, it can point to the illness and to the remedy at the same time. However, this happens only with particular persons who already have somnambulist dispositions in a certain respect.

So you see that we deal with a sequence of conditions: from the arbitrary dream up to such quite regular dream perception controlled by particular laws. Everything that I have shown up to now is more or less dream perception; but from there a further step leads to the dream actions.

The most usual dream action is speaking in sleep. We know that it is a very frequent phenomenon that sleepers speak. Yes, we know that they sometimes give striking answers to particular questions, sometimes also answers from which we see that they have not exactly understood what we have spoken to them, or that that is more or less allegorically, symbolically transformed which one has spoken to them, and that is the reason why the dreamer answers that way. One will observe this behaviour if one knows to observe systematically. A further step leads us then from dream speaking to the dream actions as I already said in my introduction. The dreaming person, in particular if he has a somnambulistic disposition, moves on actions, he rises from his bed, sits down, we say, if he is a student, to his desk and opens his school books. But it also happens that stronger inclined persons sit down and really keep on writing what they have written in the evening or at least copy something and the like more. These matters show us that a transition has taken place from the mere perception to the real action, from the mere feeling to the willing. There are persons who — even though they can be transported into a very strong somnambulistic condition — get to percipience only, and there are those who progress relatively little with regard to perception, but can carry out fearless actions of that kind I have mentioned in the introduction.

Such sleeping actions of somnambulistic persons are carried out with a necessity which has an automatic character. We only need to remember that we often carry out such automatic actions in the everyday life. If any special light impression works on our eye, we automatically close our eye. Our everyday life delivers numerous other actions of this kind about which we do not think further. Everything that we accomplish within our so-called vegetative physical life, our digestion, our breathing, and our heartbeats are actions which we carry out without having a consciousness of them. In similar way we carry out reasonable actions during the somnambulistic state, and such actions result from particular external stimuli with absolute necessity.

Now we must ask ourselves: how have we to understand such phenomena? You know perhaps that there are many people who are really of the opinion that we can eavesdrop on the soul independently of the body in such actions that we have to regard such actions as proofs that the soul can perceive independently of its physical organs like eyes and ears, can act independently of conscious reflection. A lot of people believe that we have to regard such actions as a much more immediate expression of the soul which is detached there as it were from the physical and acts and perceives directly from the spiritual. We want to ask ourselves how we have to consider such phenomena in the light of our theosophical view.

Theosophy shows us that the human being is not this single, isolated being which usually appears to us, but that he is connected by means of countless threads with the universe. Theosophy shows us above all that the human being has various things in common with nature that he has various things in common

also with the other worlds which our everyday senses do not perceive, and we can understand the actions, about which we have spoken, best of all if we look at the entity of the human being in the theosophical light. Let me, therefore, briefly indicate what theosophy teaches about the entity of the human being.

Theosophy can consider the physical body with all its organs, including the nervous system, the brain and all senses, according to its observation only as one of the members of which the complete human being consists. This physical body contains substances and forces which the human being has in common with the whole remaining physical world. What takes place in us as chemical and physical processes is nothing else than what also happens outside our body in the physical world. But we have to ask ourselves: why do these physical and chemical processes take place within our body in such a way that they are combined to a physical organism? No physical science can give us information about that. Natural sciences can teach us only of that which takes place in physical and chemical processes in us, and, indeed, it would not be appropriate if the naturalist called the human being, therefore, a strolling corpse because he as an anatomist can discover nothing but physical in the human body. Something must be there that holds together the chemical and physical processes, and arranges them as it were in the form as they take place within the human body. We call this next member of the human being the **etheric double body** in theosophy. This etheric body is in any human being. Somebody who develops a certain clairvoyant capacity can behold this etheric body; the clairvoyant can behold it the easiest.

If a person stands before you and you are a clairvoyant, you are able to put the usual physical body out of your mind. Just as you can do it in the everyday life with things which are before you and to which you do not direct your attention, you are able as a clairvoyant to not direct your attention to the physical body. Then, however, there remains in the space, which the physical body has filled, still the whole physical appearance in the form of the double body which resembles the external physical body very much. It has a very luminous colour which resembles the colour of peach-blossoms. This etheric double body holds together the physical processes. At death the etheric body leaves the physical body with other higher members which we get to know. The physical body is handed over to the earth and carries out nothing but physical processes. The etheric double body causes that this does not happen during life.

Within this etheric double body, even towering above it at different sides, is the third member of the human being, the so-called astral body. This astral body is a kind of image of our impulses, our desires, our passions, our feelings. In this astral body the human being lives like in a cloud, and he is very well discernible for the clairvoyant, whose spiritual eye is opened for such appearance, as a luminous cloud within which the physical body and the etheric double body are. This astral body is different with a person who always follows his animal-like drives, his sensual propensities; there it shows other colours, other cloud-like

formations than with a person who has always lived spiritually; it is different with a person who indulges in egoism, from that of a person who devotes himself in unselfish love to his fellow men. Briefly, the life of the soul finds expression in this astral body. But it also passes on the real sensory perception. You can never look for the sensory perception in the senses themselves. What happens if the light of a flame meets my eye? The so-called etheric waves move from the source of light in my eye, they penetrate into my eye, they cause certain chemical processes in the background of my eyeball, they transform the so-called visual purple, and then these chemical processes spread in my brain. My brain perceives the flame, it gets the light impression. If another could see those processes which happen in my brain, what would he perceive? He would perceive nothing but physical processes; he would perceive something that happens in space and time; however, he could not perceive my light impression in my brain among the physical processes. This light impression is something else than a physical impression which forms the basis of these processes. The light impression, the picture which I only must create to myself to be able to perceive the flame is a process within my astral body. Somebody who has a visual organ to be able to perceive such an astral process sees exactly the physical phenomena within the brain transforming in the astral body into the picture of the flame which we experience.

Within these bodies, which I have mentioned to you, within the physical body, the etheric double body and the astral body, is our real ego; what we call our ego in which we become conscious saying: we are it. This ego has higher parts again about which I do not want to speak today. This ego uses the other members of the human being as its tools.

If we understand this composition of the human being, this can also give us a particular view of the phenomena which we find with somnambulists. What takes action then if we are in our usual waking consciousness? A light impression is caused because oscillations of the ether come to my eye and are transformed by the astral body into a picture of light, and one understands this picture as a mental picture; that is why I realise this picture. Now, however, we assume that my ego is eliminated; in the usual sleep such an elimination of the ego is to be noticed.

Today I do not want to tell where this ego is to be sought for; but if we have a sleeping person before ourselves: what do we have before ourselves? In the true sense of the word only somebody whose spiritual eye is opened can give information about that; he exactly beholds the ego together with the astral body being lifted out of the physical body and the etheric double body. But everybody has this as a phenomenon before himself; everybody knows that during sleep the everyday ego, the ego of reality is eliminated, and that the physical body and the etheric double body, which hold it together, are left to their own resources. During our usual day life our ego, our consciousness is always present when we receive the impressions of the outside world; the daytime ego always controls

these impressions of the outside world. If this ego is eliminated, we also receive these impressions of the outside world perpetually. Or do you believe if a bell sounds beside you, while you are sleeping, that then this bell causes no oscillations in the air which penetrate into your ear? Do you believe that your ear is differently constructed at night than during the day? This is not the case. Everything that takes place in the physical body during the day also takes place in the sleeping human being. But what is missing? The ego-consciousness does not penetrate the human being, this is missing.

We can show, so to speak, experimentally in natural way which conditions prevail between the single members of the human being, which I have stated. I would like to give you a simple example which one can make easily with every somnambulist. Imagine that a somnambulist gets up at night, sits down to his desk, kindles a candle and tries to write. Now you do the following: you illuminate the room quite brightly using ten lamps for instance — the experiment was done — and the person concerned keeps on writing calmly. Now you extinguish one flame, the small candle flame which he has put beside himself, and he does not keep on writing, he feels as dark; he takes a match, kindles the candle, then he feels it again as a light and can go on working. The other lighting around him does not exist for him, only the flame is there for him which he has taken up in his dream consciousness. The whole remaining sea of light does not exist for him. You see that it is necessary that the human being penetrates his organs of perception from within in a particular way, infiltrates them, so to speak, so that the external sense-perception can take place. It is not only necessary that we have eyes and ears, but it is necessary that we enliven that from within which eye and ear deliver to us that we oppose something from within that transforms it into pictures, into mental pictures and that is why it exists for us.

In the everyday life it is our ego, our bright, waking consciousness which offers resistance of own accord, as it were, from within to the outside world. We need that to lift out the impressions and to make them our impressions of consciousness. Imagine this consciousness being extinguished. What is then still in activity? Then the physical body, the etheric double body and the astral body are still in activity. Now, indeed, this astral body can transform what it receives from without into pictures but not into mental pictures, is not taken up into the waking consciousness. Thus the astral body of the human being transforms such impressions into pictures which surround him, either in irregular way or in regular way if the ego is present, so to speak, at this whole process.

In such a contact with the outside world is the astral body, the soul of the person who is in a somnambulistic state; yes, in a similar state is already the soul of a dreamer. We have only to make a distinction between both kinds of dreams which I have stated: the irregular dreams which mostly penetrate the dream consciousness of the human beings, and the nice, dramatic, symbolic dreams. With the irregular dreams it will be the etheric double body which is above all

active and conveys the contacts with the outside world; with the dreams, however, which run in symbolic, dramatic way, it is the astral body of the person which symbolises the outer impressions, expresses them allegorically and transforms them into a quite dramatic dream. Only because in the present level of development our daytime ego is minded more realistically because we rely in our daytime consciousness above all on our deducing, calculating reason, therefore, any single sensory sensation appears to us to be linked with the others as just this is the case in the waking consciousness. However, we can imagine other states of consciousness; we can imagine that the human being looks deeper into nature. Then this purely rational view also comes to an end. This is just again the case of the higher kinds of soul-life. These should concern us less today; but what must occupy us today above all is the question: how is it possible that the human being shows regular actions, certain psychic phenomena in the somnambulistic state, which is an increase of the usual dream state? One can understand that only if one does not consider the human being as an isolated being, but in connection with the whole remaining world according to the theosophical world view; that one realises above all that outside us in the remaining world not only dead matter exists, but that in the outside world higher forces are active.

The human being normally does not put the question to himself: why do we find the laws, the concepts and ideas in the outside world which we have excogitated in our mind in a lonesome twilight hour? The human being mostly does not get the most significant phenomena clear in his mind, phenomena which throw the brightest light on the nature of the human being. However, think only once about the fact that the mathematician sits in his room, mulls over the question what is a circle, an ellipse that he finds this law of the ellipse, of the circle without observation of anything outside him and illustrates them on paper, and then after he has produced these laws out of himself, he finds these laws in the orbits of the planets and in other phenomena of the outside world. It is that way wherever one goes in our spiritual life. The laws which our mind thinks up in the loneliness are the same laws which also control this outside world. If we call that which the human being thinks up wisdom, so we must say: wisdom becomes apparent in the human ego and outdoors in the world we find that the things are built in the same way in which the human being can recognise them using his thinking. But we find if we more exactly look at the world that this wisdom of the world excels even a lot of that which the human being can think up and concoct.

I give some extreme examples: take the performances of the beavers. The performances of the beavers are of really astonishing kind, not only that their dens are true creations of an instinctive architecture which could not be more perfect if one erected them according to all rules of mechanics and engineering. No, they deliver something else: they protect themselves in their hiding places by means of dams with which they keep the water away, accelerate or slow

down it in certain way. These dams are built in such a way against the power of the water that an engineer who has learnt long to get to know the mechanical principles according to which one must make such an arrangement best of all could not make them better. Yes, they are built in such a way that one can calculate from the inclination of these dams and from the angles which speed or power the flowing water has. They are constructed in such a way that the engineer could not calculate them better in his engineering firm using his science which a lot of human thoughts and endeavours has produced.

Now another example: consider a usual human femur. This femur is, if you look at it with the microscope, no compact structure like a piece of mortar, but the bone seems to be fragile, a composition of delicate formations which are built up like a quite delicate frame and scaffolding. A network of fine bone trabeculae is built up; these are interwoven and support each other; and if one study this whole network of bone trabeculae, one perceives a strange wisdom of nature with the construction of such an organism. If one wanted to build, for example, a scaffolding which should support the single parts of a frame in such a way that one achieves the greatest possible effect with the slightest expenditure of energy, one could not make better than nature in its wisdom has constructed such a femur from countless small bone trabeculae which hold and support each other. You find the wisdom that the human being can invent after many mental efforts in any single part of nature.

If we could study nature, we could pour out our mind over nature, so that we could perceive in nature outside, then we would perceive nature not as a product by chance, but as the result of infinite wisdom. Imagine instead that the calculating reason perceives the impressions of the outside world through the gates of the senses and can only think about that which it perceives from without, imagine instead that you would have no senses, but the reason would be poured out as it were over the whole nature. You would not perceive the effects of the things on our senses but the being of the things themselves, then you would stand in the wisdom of nature, then you would be a part of the wise nature. One can attain this really, if our waking consciousness is eliminated. One attains that with somnambulists as I have suggested now. I said that one may imagine that our reason, our consciousness forces its way from our brain and penetrates the wisdom of nature in any of its performances and facts.

Because we have such clear, waking consciousness, we are secluded from the remaining nature; that is why we must receive the impressions of nature through the gates of our senses. Here is the flame, it makes an impression on my eye; the eye is the gate through which the impression gets to my consciousness. My consciousness causes the mental pictures from within. I am secluded from the outside world because I have sensory gates, and this outside world must enter through the sensory gates into my consciousness first. I am in the situation in my consciousness compared with the remaining world like somebody who stands on a meadow and has a view in all directions and then enters a small house and



takes note of everything that is on the meadow only through the windows of the small house.

Thus is the wisdom of the whole nature which we perceive in every bone, in every plant which appears from the starry heaven down to the microscopic smallest particle of the body. This wise nature has entered as it were into our consciousness as in a single point and has erected the shell of our organs with their sensory gates round us. Our consciousness is secluded from this being outside and can take up the being outside only through the sensory gates.

However, if you eliminate the consciousness, then you get contact, then you live really again connected with the outside world; because the astral body is not separated from the remaining world like the ego, your immediate consciousness. No, everywhere astral threads run out in all directions, so that you witness the life of the whole outside world and not only that of the physical nature, but also the astral and spiritual processes which are perpetually around us. We perceive them if our consciousness is eliminated. What we remember, think up and deduce appears in the somnambulistic state immediately as a phenomenon which the outside nature leads in. As well as you see no star in the sky during the day with the bright sunshine, while, nevertheless, the whole sky is covered with stars because the bright sunshine outshines the light of the stars, it is the same with our bright waking consciousness. What exists in our physical or astral bodies is a weak light, are weak processes which the bright waking consciousness drowns out. If we extinguish this, it will become visible what takes action in the lower bodies like the stars become visible if the sun does no longer shine. In such circumstances are somnambulistic persons and, therefore, we have to realise that the person is in a closer, more immediate connection with the remaining nature if a somnambulistic state happens. It is in such a way to use a nice expression of the German thinker [Stilling](#) who characterised this circumstances wonderfully at the end of 18-th and outset of the 19-th century: “if the sun of the bright daytime consciousness sets, the stars shine in the somnambulistic consciousness.”

Nevertheless, we have to ask ourselves: can we rely on these phenomena which appear during the somnambulistic state? They are true phenomena, they concern a reality; but this reality approaches us with exclusion of the organ which the human being has developed gradually, so that he can orientate himself in the world, with exclusion of his bright daytime consciousness. A state is really caused in the human being which reveals something to him that remains, otherwise, concealed but which downgrades him from a level which he got once. Because we know as theosophists that the states which the human being reaches this way and which should allegedly be “higher”, are really states which he has gone through before he attained his present full human consciousness.

I cannot explain that to you today; but just as the scientific theory of evolution shows us the purely physical evolutionary processes, theosophy shows us that the human beings gradually got to the level which they have today. This

consciousness, through which we orient ourselves in our environment, only appeared after we had gone through other states of consciousness in millions of years of slow development. The human being had a kind of dream consciousness before he developed this bright daytime consciousness in himself. At that time he was really a being which did not perceive the processes round itself in the way as we perceive them with our bright daytime consciousness, but everything round us was symbolised, as well as the dream symbolises even today.

A big number of the legends which are still preserved come from such times in which the human beings were still near this dream consciousness and formed these symbolic legends. About that you can find more precise information in a very interesting book of my deceased friend Ludwig [Laistner](#) who collected the different forms of legends of the world and showed how these legends were worked out from a symbolising human consciousness not yet awoken to the daytime consciousness. There some legends are really attributed to such states of the somnambulistic consciousness.

If we go back even farther, we get to lower and lower states which were, however, closer to nature and to the starting point of the physical evolution at the same time. When the human being began as a wish of the divine being at first, he was generally in a kind of deep trance. At that time the whole humankind was in a kind of deep trance, in a similar trance in which today those somnambulists can be who can be transported into the deepest, so-called magnetic sleeping states. The human being has gone through all these states once, and now we are in the period of the bright waking consciousness. This is even a transitional state which leads us to that ability within the waking consciousness that the human being had in former times but without the waking consciousness, because it was not yet developed.

This is the future course of human development: again pouring out the spirit on nature directly to become clairvoyant with full waking consciousness. Some among us who have developed their inner organs using certain methods which theosophy gives are already ahead of the development and able to look really with full waking consciousness into this world of the beings and the spiritual life which surrounds us. Today certain individualities are already among us who are, so to speak, again free of the gates of the senses who are in immediate contact with the spiritual environment. On account of their clairvoyant ability they experience the higher facts with full waking consciousness which are closed to the usual consciousness as we go through between tables and chairs, where they perceive the spiritual world round themselves, which surrounds us at every moment. The theosophical teachings flowed from such views. The somnambulistic consciousness delivers similar teachings in certain respect, and what a somnambulistic person can see after elimination of the bright waking consciousness is often the same that the clairvoyant sees with his bright waking consciousness. But the somnambulist can never control what she/he sees; the somnambulist never is able to control what she/he tells you about spiritual

processes in the environment what she/he tells you about percepts which one cannot see by means of the senses. He/she cannot even control whether that which he/she perceives is really true, as she/he perceives it.

The strangest delusions may happen to the somnambulists. You can stand before this somnambulist and can say to her/him that you are a person living at another place. The somnambulist will believe this absolutely, will have the true impression that you are that man as whom you pose. The somnambulist believes it, and this becomes the danger. If the somnambulist informs us not only about such easily controllable matters, but if the somnambulist informs us about the higher world which we cannot perceive with the senses, about the so-called astral world or about the higher spiritual world, then it can happen that the somnambulist says to you that she/he perceives any deceased person. Indeed, the somnambulist perceives a spiritual fact, she/he perceives a being; but it does not need to be right that this being is the deceased person in question. This can be another being, a being which generally has nothing to do at all with a usual earthly being. It may be a being which lives in the astral world and has never entered into an earthly world. Briefly, the somnambulist can never convince her/himself because he/she does not have the controlling consciousness whether the impression which he/she had is the right one.

This is a danger for the somnambulist, above all a danger which the astral world immediately offers if one enters it. This astral world has — I can say this only by way of a hint — quite different concepts, for example, of good and bad. Our earthly world has concepts of good and bad which are adjusted to our sensuous states. The astral world has another good and bad. If now the somnambulist perceives in the astral world, his concepts of good and bad are shaken very easily, and this is the reason why somnambulist media that inform you in the beginning really only about true matters out of this somnambulist state of consciousness can be ruined thoroughly in time, so that they can impossibly distinguish deception from reality.

It is a matter of course for somebody who knows these higher realms that he does not presuppose that the medium has cheated, even if the facts are not correct. A mediumistic woman may go, for example, to the next best corner shop — this is a case of whose truth I have convinced myself, she is in such a somnambulist state, that her ego-consciousness, her waking consciousness is extinguished; she buys a small picture of a saint which she puts in her pocket. Then she gets out of this somnambulist state and has no notion where she got the small picture from. Later she gets — the somnambulist states are of very intricate kind — again in the trance state and produces the small picture as something that she has brought in from the supersensible world to this world. The somnambulist woman, the medium, never has a notion of the fact that she herself bought this small picture or in which way she got it. She is absolutely honest in the usual sense, although the fact is a feigning. Thus the case can happen because of the influence which is exerted on such a somnambulist after

the elimination of the waking consciousness that a deception takes place; however, the medium needs not to be a swindler, but she may be completely intact and honest.

This shows you that we can do nothing but to position ourselves on the theosophical point of view if we consider the question of somnambulism. Theosophy and the theosophical movement are of the determined view that one should enter the higher spiritual world, which can also be made accessible to us by somnambulists, only in the presence of a clairvoyant with a waking consciousness who knows how to get used to the spiritual world, who knows a lot about the spiritual world like about the physical one.

Therefore, theosophy demands that if experiments with media should be done — and, indeed, conditions may happen where this is recommended — that they take place only in the presence of a perfect expert, of a clairvoyant working with waking consciousness who can have an overview of everything that happens there really, while the medium and normally also those who experiment with the medium are not able to have an overview of this. Such mediumistic phenomena do not involve a danger at any rate; but we have seen that this danger may result because the sense of direction is missing. Every clairvoyant who works with waking consciousness knows at any single moment what takes action and what a somnambulist sees really, even though she/he pretends to see something else; he knows which influence really takes place, even though the somnambulist pretends that this or that influence takes place. This is just the difference between spiritual science and other similar attempts. I would not like to doubt the truth of the other attempts in any way, but its reality also applies, of course, as well as it applies to other attempts. Because such experiences cannot be achieved in one go, because it is impossible that a complete ideal is realised at every point in time, therefore, theosophy does not regard as its task to combat other spiritual attempts like the experiments with somnambulists, because one knows that these experiments produce the same result in the end: the conviction of a spiritual world round us.

But the theosophical movement itself tries only to perform under the ideal of the conscious clairvoyance what it has to do in accordance with other spiritual movements. In accordance with other spiritual movements it wants to work, it wants to look at the other spiritual movements as its brother movements. It is ready any time, if it is asked for advice whether this and that is real and true in this or that sense, to give this advice. However, it will let all spiritual attempts be carried out only under the aegis of the expert clairvoyance. This applies to the spiritistic like other spiritual attempts. Occult researches are to be carried out for the purposes of theosophy only under the influence of individualities who can have an exact overview, in conscious way what it concerns. Also one is allowed to heal spiritually only in such a way as one heals physically: with full conscious overseeing the concerning circumstances.

Theosophy looks at the somnambulistic phenomena that way. You see that the theosophical view defers somewhat from the superficial external view which sees in the somnambulistic phenomena nothing else than pathological, abnormal phenomena to be rejected, and it also has somewhat different views of these phenomena than those have who believe only on account of them to get to know the higher spiritual life. Theosophy knows where these phenomena come from. It can inform of these phenomena using its clairvoyance. It considers the other attempts and movements, however, which are related to these phenomena in the sense that they regard them as manifestations of the spiritual life as brother movements, with which it strives for the same goal: to give a spiritual, a really idealistic world view, a true knowledge of the spiritual world to the present materialistic humankind.

This is a deep truth which a German seer about whom one normally does not know that he is a seer, namely Goethe, expressed that we cannot unveil the secrets of nature with the help of our tools, not by mechanical, physical tools, but that the mind has to search for the spirit everywhere

Nature, mysterious in day's clear light,  
Lest none remove her veil,  
And what she won't discover to your understanding  
You can't extort from her with levers and with screws.

Faust I, verses 672-675

But Goethe did not doubt the manifestations of the spirit around us; because he realised clearly what he expressed in his *Faust* in the nice words from which he said that a sage spoke them:

The spirit world is not sealed off –  
Your mind is closed, your heart is dead!  
Go, neophyte, and boldly bathe  
Your mortal breast in roseate dawn!

Faust I, verses 443-446

The translation of verses from Goethe's *Faust* were taken from *Faust I and II*, edited and translated by Stuart Atkinson, Princeton University Press (1994), © 1984 by Suhrkamp/Insel Publishers Boston

**etheric double body**: Steiner called it etheric body later.

Johann Heinrich Jung called Jung-**Stilling** (1740 – 1817), German physician, oculist, author  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Heinrich\\_Jung](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Heinrich_Jung)

Ludwig **Laistner** (1845 – 1896), German author and literary historian  
*On the Riddle of the Sphinx*  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig\\_Laistner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Laistner)

## The History of Spiritism

*Berlin, 30th May 1904*

Today it is my task to speak about a topic that has millions of enthusiastic followers in the world, on one side, that has found the most violent adversaries, on the other side, not only adversaries who combat this field of the so-called spiritism the sharpest, but also those who ridicule it who lump together it with the darkest superstition or what they call dark superstition; adversaries who want to ignore it only with empty words of joke and scorn.

It may be not easy to speak just in our present about such a topic where as a rule with the “pros and cons” the most violent passions are aroused straight away. I would like to ask those listeners among you who may be enthusiastic followers of spiritism not to roundly condemn me immediately, if to you any of my explanations seems to correspond not completely to your views, because we representatives of theosophy, nevertheless, are combined with the spiritists in one matter in any case: we have the intention to investigate the higher spiritual worlds, those worlds which are beyond the everyday sense-perception. We are in agreement on that. However, on the other side, I would like to ask the scientists also to realise that that movement in whose name I myself speak has not chosen the slogan only like a signboard, as a phrase, but in the most serious sense of the word: no human opinion is higher than truth. — I would also like to ask the scientist to keep in mind that he may take into consideration that the views of science were subjected to change in the course of times, and that is why the scientific views of today cannot be regarded as being fixed.

Let me now outline the development of the spiritistic movement without taking sides, because no human opinion is higher than truth.

I would like to emphasise above all that the founders of the theosophical movement, Mrs. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and the great organiser, Colonel

Henry Steel Olcott, went out from the spiritistic movement. They were experts of the spiritistic movement and turned to the theosophical movement only, after they had vigorously searched for truth before within the spiritistic movement, but had not found it.

Theosophy does not want to combat spiritism, but to search for truth where it is to be found.

I would like to emphasise something else that will surprise some of you, however, that will not at all surprise others who are in the know. Allow me to express it: you can never hear the last word about spiritism and similar matters from people like me who are forced to speak about that. You know that there is in any science a rule which is simply justified by the scientific methods, and the rule is that one shows the results of science before a bigger audience in popular way. If one wants to do more intimate acquaintance with these results, if one wants to get to know the more intimate truth, then a longer way is necessary: a way using the different methods in any detail. As a rule the researchers are not able to report in popular talks what takes place inside of the laboratories, of the observatories. That applies to the physical science. On the other side, in the great spiritual movements of the world somebody who is reasonable and allowed to express the words with regard to the spiritual views has to withhold the last word because the last words are still of quite different kind. They are of such a kind that they can hardly be discussed publicly. That is why you can never hear the very last word of this matter from an occultist — unless you are able and want to go his ways most intimately. But to those who are in the know of the matter something becomes clear from the way how a matter is said, what is said not only between the lines, but perhaps also between the words.

After this introduction I would like to move on the topic which certainly has a tremendous cultural-historical significance even for somebody who wants to make it ridiculous. I would like to speak about the matter in a sense which really throws light from this point of view: what does spiritism search for today? Does it search for something new, or is it something ancient that it searches? Are the ways on which it looks absolutely novel, or has humankind gone on them since centuries or even since millennia? — If anybody puts these questions to himself, he reaches his goal concerning the history of spiritism the fastest. What the spiritists search for is at first the knowledge of those worlds which are beyond our sensory world, and secondly the significance of these worlds for the goal, for the determination of our human race.

If we ask ourselves: were these problems not the tasks of humankind, since it strives on our earth and wants anything? — Then we must say to ourselves: yes. And because they are certainly the highest tasks, it would already appear as something absurd from the beginning if in the world history something absolutely new had appeared with regard to these questions. It seems if we look around in the old and new spiritistic movements, as if we deal with something

absolutely new. The strongest adversaries refer to the fact that it has brought something absolutely new into the world, and other adversaries say that the human beings had never needed to combat this movement like nowadays. There a change must have happened in humankind with regard to the way to look at the case. This is illuminated to us like lightning if we get clear in our mind that humankind has behaved in three different ways to the questions which we call spiritistic today.

There we have one way which we can find in the whole antiquity, a way which changes only in the Christian times. Then we have the second way to position ourselves to these questions, the whole Middle Ages through, till the 17-th century. Only in the 17-th century spiritism basically starts taking on a certain form that one can rightly call spiritism today.

The questions that the spiritist wants to answer today were the object of the so-called mysteries the whole antiquity through. I try only to characterise with few lines what one has to understand by mysteries. It was not the custom in antiquity to announce wisdom publicly. One had another view of wisdom and truth. One believed the whole antiquity through that it is necessary to train supersensible organs to the knowledge of the supersensible truth at first. One realised the fact that in every human being spiritual forces slumber which are not developed with the average human being, that spiritual forces slumber in the human nature which one can wake and develop by means of long exercises, through steps of development, which the disciples of the mysteries describe as very difficult. If the neophyte had developed such forces in him and had become a researcher of truth, one was of the opinion that he is to the average human being in such a way as a sighted is to a blind-born. This was also the goal within the holy mysteries. One aimed to achieve something similar in the spiritual field as today the doctor aims to achieve with the blind-born if he operates him that he becomes sighted. One was clear about the fact that — like with a blind-born who is operated the colours of the light and the forms of the things appear — a new world appears to somebody whose internal senses are woken, a world which the everyday reason cannot perceive. Thus the follower of the mysteries tried to develop a human being of lower level to one of higher level, to an initiate. Only the initiate should be able to recognise something of the supersensible truth by immediate beholding, by spiritual intuition. The big mass of human beings could get the truth by means of pictures. The myths of antiquity, the legends about gods and world origin, which simply appear today — indeed, in certain sense rightly — as childish views of humankind, they are nothing but disguises of the supersensible truth. The initiate informed people in pictures of that which he could behold within the temple mysteries. The whole Eastern mythology, the Greek and Roman mythologies, the Germanic mythology and the mythologies of the savage peoples are nothing but metaphorical, symbolic representations of the supersensible truth. Of course, only somebody can completely understand this who occupies himself not in such a way as anthropology and ethnology do it but



also with their spirit. He sees that a myth like the Hercules legend shows a deep inner truth; he sees that the conquest of the Golden Fleece by Jason shows a deep and true knowledge.

Then another way came with our calendar. I can indicate only roughly what I have to say. A certain basis of higher, spiritual truth was determined and made the object of the confessions, in particular of the Christian. And now this basis of spiritual truth was removed from any human research, from the immediate human striving. Those who studied the history of the Council of Nicaea know what I mean, and also those who understand the words of [St. Augustine](#) who says there: I would not believe in the truth of the divine revelation unless the authority of the church forces me. — Faith that determines a certain basis of the truth replaces the old mystery truth which retains it in pictures. Then follows the epoch when the big mass is no longer informed about the truth of the supersensible world in pictures, but simply by authority. This is the second way how the big mass and those who had to lead them behaved to the highest truth. The mysteries provided it to the big mass on account of experience; it was provided by faith and fixed by authority in the Middle Ages.

But beside those who had the task to retain the big mass by faith and authority were also those in the 12th and 13th centuries — they existed at all times, but they did not appear publicly — who wanted to develop by immediate own beholding to the highest truth. These searched for it on the same ways on which it had been searched for within the mysteries. That is why we find in mediaeval times beside those who are only priests, also the mystics, theosophists and occultists, those who talk in an almost incomprehensible language hard to be understood by modern materialists and rationalists. We find people who had reached the secrets on the ways which avoid the senses. In an even more incomprehensible language those people spoke who had the guidance of the spirit as mystery priests. So we hear from one that he had the ability to send his thoughts miles away; another boasted that he could transform the whole sea into gold if it was permitted. Another says that he could construct a vehicle with which he would be able to move through the air.

There were times when people did not know how to do with such sayings, because they had no notion of how they were to be understood. Moreover, prejudices flourished against such a kind of investigation since the oldest times. That becomes clear to us at once where these prejudices came from. When in the first centuries of our calendar the Christian culture spread over the countries of the Mediterranean Sea, it appeared that the cult actions and the ceremonies of Christianity and also most of Christian dogmas agreed with ancient pagan traditions, and were not so different — even if in a watered way — from that which had took place in the old pagan Mithras temples. There said those who had the task to defend the reputation of the church: bad spirits gave the pagans these views; they aped within the pagan world what God revealed to the Christian church. — However, it is an odd imitation which leads the way of the

original! The whole Christianity was aped in the pagan mysteries — if we apply the word of the accusers, what the church has later found! It is comprehensible that every other way than that of the authoritative Christian faith, as Augustine characterised it, was wrong and in the course of time it was regarded as such which was not given by good powers; since the church had to provide the good powers.

Thus these traditions continued through the whole Middle Ages. Those who wanted to come on their own ways, independently to the highest supersensible truth were regarded as magicians, as allies of the bad or of the bad spirits. The mark stone is the Faust legend. Faust is the representative of those who want to get by own knowledge to the secrets. Hence, the bad powers must have captivated him. One should only do research in the writings handed down from earlier times, only the trust in authority should lead to the supersensible powers. In spite of that, initiated minds realised — even if they were defamed as magicians and were prosecuted — that the time must come again when one has to progress to truth on own, human ways.

Thus we see occult brotherhoods originating in Europe from the middle of the Middle Ages on which led their members on the same ways as the old mysteries had done this to the development of higher intuitive forces. So that within such occult brotherhoods the way to the highest truth was taken like in the mysteries — I mention only that of the Rosicrucians, the deepest and most significant one, founded by [Christian Rosenkreutz](#). This way can be investigated strictly historically till the 18-th century. I cannot explain in detail how this happened; I can only give one example, the great representative of the occult science of the 16-th and 17-th centuries, Robert [Fludd](#). He shows for those who have insight into these fields in all his writings that he knows the ways how to get to truth that he knows how to develop such forces that are of quite different kind than the forces in us which see anybody of light before themselves. He shows that there are mysterious ways to get to the highest truth. He also speaks of the Rosicrucian Society in such a way that the relationship is clear to any initiate. I would like to present three questions only to you to show you how these questions were discussed in veiled form at that time. He says of them that everybody who has arrived at the lowest level must be able to answer them with understanding. These questions and also their answers may appear quite futile to the rationalists and materialists. The first question which anybody must answer who wants to rise in worthy way to higher spiritual spheres is: where do you live? — The answer is: I live in the temple of wisdom, on the mountain of reason. — Understanding this sentence really, experiencing it internally means already to have opened certain inner senses.

The second sentence was: where truth comes from to you? — The answer is: it comes to me from the creative -, and now there comes a word which cannot be translated at all into German: from the highest ..., mighty all-embracing spirit

who has spoken through Solomon and wants to inform me about alchemy, magic and the kabbala ... — This was the second question.

The third question is: what do you want to build? — The answer is: I want to build a temple like the tabernacle, like Solomon's temple, like the body of Christ and ... like something else that one does not pronounce.

You see — I cannot go into these questions further — that one veiled the supersensible truth in a mysterious darkness for all non-initiates in such brotherhoods, and that the non-initiate should make himself worthy at first and had to get to a moral and intellectual summit. Somebody who had not stood the trials who did not have the force in himself to find the experiences inside was not judged as worthy, was not admitted to the initiation. One considered it as dangerous to know this truth. One knew that knowledge is connected with a tremendous power, with a power as the average human being does not suspect at all. Only somebody is able to possess this truth and power without any danger for humankind who has got to that moral and intellectual height. Otherwise one said: without having reached this height he behaves with this truth and power like a child that is sent with matches into a powder magazine.

Now one was of the opinion in these times that only somebody who is in the possession of the highest supersensible truth can explain the phenomena as they are told everywhere and since millennia in a popular way — phenomena which the modern spiritism shows again. The matters were nothing new but something ancient that spiritism recognises today. In ancient times one spoke about the fact that the human being can have such an effect on the human beings as it is not the case, otherwise: certain human beings cause that knocking sounds are to be heard in their surroundings that objects move, contrary to the laws of gravitation, with or without touch that objects fly through the air without applying any physical force et cetera. Since the oldest times one knew that there are human beings who can be transported into certain states, today we call these states trance states, in which they speak about things about which they can never speak in the waking consciousness that they also tell about other worlds not belonging to our sense-perceptible world. One knew that there are human beings who communicate by signs about that which they see in such supersensible worlds. One also knew that there are human beings who are able to see events which are far away from them and also to report about that; human beings who could foresee and forecast future events with the help of their prophetic gift. All that — we do not verify it today — is an ancient tradition. Those who believe to be able to accept it as truth consider it as something natural. Such not physical, not sense-perceptible phenomena were regarded as true through the whole Middle Ages. Indeed, they were considered by the church of the Middle Ages in such a way, as if they were caused by means of bad skills, but this should not touch us. In any case, the way to the supersensible world was not searched for on the way of these phenomena in the time of the 17-th and 18-th centuries. Nobody claimed till those times that a dancing table, an anyhow appearing ghost which is

seen with eyes or in any way in trance could reveal anything of a supersensible world. Even if anybody told that he saw a blaze in Hanover from here, one believed it; but nobody saw anything in it that could seriously give information about the supersensible world. Reasonable people considered it as a matter of course that one could not look for the supersensible world that way. Those who wanted to get to supersensible perception searched for it by developing inner forces in the occult brotherhoods.

Then another time came in the development of the West, in which one started looking for truth scientifically. There came the Copernican world view and the researches of physiology; technology, the discoveries of the blood circulation, of the ovum et cetera. One attained insights into nature with the senses. Somebody who does not approach the Middle Ages with prejudices but wants to get to know the world view of the Middle Ages in its true form, convinces himself soon that this medieval thinking did not imagine heaven and hell as localities in space, but that they were something spiritual to it. In mediaeval times no reasonable human being thought to advocate that world view which one attributes to the medieval scholars today. Copernicanism is nothing new in this sense. It is new in another sense; in the sense that since the 16-th century sense-perception became decisive for truth; what one can see what one can perceive with the senses. The world view of the Middle Ages was not wrong as one often shows it today, but it was only a view which was not got with bodily eyes. The bodily sensualisation was a symbol of something spiritual. Also [Dante](#) did not imagine his hell and his heaven in the earthly sense; they were to be understood spiritually.

One broke with this point of view. The real psychologist of the human development finds out this. The sensuous was raised, and now sensuality conquered the world gradually. However, the human being got used to it without noticing it. Only the searching psychologist rushing behind the development is able to make a picture of it. The human being gets used to such changes. With his feeling, with his senses he looks at everything, and accepts the sensuous only as true. Without knowing it, people considered as a principle of the human nature to accept only what they can see in any way of what they can convince themselves by sensory inspection. People did not think much of such circles that spoke of an initiation and led to supersensible truth on occult ways; everything had to be sensually shown.

What about the supersensible view of the world? How could one find the supersensible in the world in which one wanted to seek for truth only in the sensory effects? There were rare, so-called abnormal phenomena which were not explicable by means of natural forces known till then; phenomena that the physicist, the naturalist could not explain, and which one simply denied because one wanted to accept the sensually explicable only. There were these phenomena which were handed down through millennia to which the human being sought refuge now: now one went to them. Simultaneously with the urge to keep only to

the sense-perceptible appearance the urge for the supersensible resorted to such phenomena. One wanted to know what scientific criticism could not explain; one wanted to know how it is. When one started searching for evidences of another world in these matters, the birth of modern spiritism took place. We can give the hour of birth and the place where it happened. [It was in 1716](#); there a book was published by a member of the Royal Society, a description of the western islands of Scotland. Everything was collected in it that was to be found out about the “second sight”. This is that which one cannot perceive with the usual eyes, but what one could find out only by supersensible research. Here you have the precursor of everything that was later done by the so-called scientific side to the investigation of the spiritistic phenomena.

Now we also stand already at the gate of the whole spiritistic movement of the newer time. That person from whom the whole spiritistic movement started is one of the strangest of the world: [Swedenborg](#). He influenced the whole 18-th century. Even Kant argued with him. A person who could bring to life the modern spiritistic movement had to be disposed like Swedenborg. He was born in 1688 and died in 1772. In the first half of his life he was a naturalist who stood at the head of the natural sciences of his time. He encompassed them. Nobody has a right to attack Swedenborg as an illiterate man. We know that he was not only a perfect expert of his time, but he also anticipated a lot of scientific truths that one discovered on the universities only later. So he stood in the first half of his life not only completely on the scientific point of view which wanted to investigate everything by the appearance to the senses and by mathematical calculations, but he also was far ahead of his time in this regard. Then he completely turned to that which one calls visionariness. What Swedenborg experienced — you may call him a seer or visionary — was a particular class of phenomena. Somebody who is only somewhat initiated in these fields knows that Swedenborg could only experience this class of phenomena.

I only give a few examples. Swedenborg saw a conflagration in [Stockholm](#) from a place which was removed sixty miles from Stockholm. He informed the guests, with who he was in a soirée, about this event, and after some time one heard that the fire had happened in such a way as Swedenborg had told it. Another example: a high-ranking person asked for a secret which a brother had not completely told before his death because he died before. The person turned to Swedenborg with the strange demand whether he could not discover him and ask what he wanted to say. Swedenborg ridded himself of the order in such a way that the person in question could have no doubt that Swedenborg had penetrated into this secret.

Still the third example to show how Swedenborg moved within the supersensible world. A scholar and friend visited Swedenborg. The servant said to him: you have to wait for some time, please. The scholar sat down and heard a discussion in the next room. However, he heard always only Swedenborg

speaking; he did not hear answering. The case became even more noticeable to him when he heard the discussion taking place in wonderful classical Latin, and particularly when he heard him intimately talking about states of the emperor Augustus. Then Swedenborg went to the door, bowed before somebody and spoke with him but the friend could not see the visitor at all. Then Swedenborg came back and said to the friend: excuse that I let you wait. I had lofty visit — Virgil visited me.

People may think about such matters as they want. However, one thing is certain: Swedenborg believed in them, regarded them as reality. I said: only a person like Swedenborg could get to such a kind of research. Just the fact that he was expert naturalist of his time led him to this view of the supersensible nature. He was a man who got used to accepting nothing but the sensuous, the sense-perceptible in the time of the dawning natural sciences. Everybody knows it who knows him; the reasons become clear in the talk which I hold next time here about the topic “Hypnotism and Somnambulism” — and that is why he also depended on it as such a man who sees the spiritual in the world. As well as he insisted to recognise only as right what he could calculate and perceive with senses, the supersensible was brought by him into the shape which it had to have for him; the supersensible world was pulled down to a deeper sphere under the influence of the ways of thinking of natural sciences. Because it approaches us in such way like the views of the sensory world, I cited the reasons. We hear next time how such a thing comes about. However, the preconditions are given by the own spiritual development of the human beings who got used to the sense-perceptible.

I do not want to speak now about the significance and core of truth of Swedenborg's visions, but about the fact that somebody sees — as soon as he enters this field which forms the basis of Swedenborg's views — his dispositions in this area, what he has developed in himself. A proof of it may be a simple example.

When the wave of spiritism spread in the second half of the 19-th century, one also made experiments in Bavaria. It became apparent there that with the experiments at which also scholars were present and took place at different places quite different spiritual manifestations happened. In such an event one asked whether the human soul is received via heredity from the parents, so that also the soul is hereditary, or whether it is made new with every human being. In this spiritistic séance it was answered: the souls are made new. Almost at the same time the same question was put in another séance. The answer was: the soul is not created, but is passed on from the parents to the children. — One thought that at one séance followers of the so-called creation theory were, and at the other séance some scholars were present who were followers of the other theory. In the sense of the thoughts which lived in them the answers were given. Whichever facts may be there, whichever reasons of these facts may be there, it became clear that the human being receives as a manifestation what corresponds

to his view. It is irrelevant whether it faces him only as an intellectual manifestation or as a vision; what the human being sees is founded in his own dispositions.

This search for sensuous-extrasensory proofs became just a child of the natural sciences of the materialistic time. The principle was actually drawn up that one had to seek for the extrasensory world as one had to seek for the sensuous one. Just as somebody convinces himself in the laboratory of the reality of forces of magnetism or light, one wanted to convince oneself of the supersensible world by the appearance to the senses. People had forgotten how to behold the spiritual in purely spiritual way. They had forgotten how to develop the belief in supersensible forces and how to learn to recognise what is neither sensuous nor analogous to the sensuous, but what can be seized only by spiritual intuition. They had got to be used to get everything on the sensory way, and that is why they also wanted to get these matters on the sensory way. Research moved on this way. Thus we see Swedenborg's direction going on. What appears offers nothing new to us; spiritism offers nothing new! We take an overview of this later and understand it then also better.

All the phenomena which spiritism knows were explained that way. There we see the South German [Oetinger](#) who elaborated the theory that there is a supersensible substance which can be seen as a physical phenomenon. Only, he says, the supersensible matter does not have the raw qualities of the physical matter, not the impenetrable resistance and the row mixture. Here we have the substance from which the materialisations are taken.

Another researcher of this field is [Johann Heinrich Jung](#) called Stilling who published a detailed report on spirits and apparitions of spirits and described all these matters. He tried there to understand everything in such a way that he did justice to these phenomena as a religious Christian. Because he had tendencies to be a religious Christian, the whole world seemed to him to manifest nothing but the truth of the Christian teaching. Because at the same time natural sciences made claims, we see a mixture of the purely Christian standpoint with the standpoint of natural sciences in his representation. Esotericism explains the phenomena by the intrusion of a spiritual world into our world.

You see all these phenomena registered in the works of those who wrote about spiritism, demonology, magic et cetera in which you can also find something that goes beyond spiritism, like with [Ennemoser](#), for instance. We see even carefully registered how a person can enable himself to perceive the thoughts of others who are in distant rooms. You find such instructions with Ennemoser, also with others. Already in the 19-th century you find with a certain [Meyer](#) who wrote a book about the Hades from spiritistic standpoint as a manifestation of spiritistic manipulations and stood up for the so-called reincarnation theory. You find a theory there to which theosophy has led us again, and which shows us that

the old fairy tales are expressions of the higher truth prepared for the people. Meyer got this view on account of sensuous demonstrations.

We find all the spiritistic phenomena with Justinus [Kerner](#). They are significant because of the moral weight of the author. There we find, for example, that near the [seeress of Prevorst](#) things — spoons et cetera — are repelled by her; it is also told that this seeress communicated with beings of other worlds. Justinus Kerner registered all the communications which he got from her. She informed him that she saw beings of other worlds which went through her, indeed, but which she could perceive and that she could even behold such beings which came in along with other people. Some people may say about these matters: Kerner fantasised and was fooled a lot by his seeress. However, I would like to say one thing: you know David Friedrich [Strauss](#) who was friendly with Justinus Kerner. He knew how it stood with the seeress of Prevorst. You also know that that which he performed goes in a direction which runs against the spiritistic current. He says that the facts of which the seeress of Prevorst reports are true as facts — about that cannot be discussed with those who know something about it, he considered the matters as being beyond any doubt.

Even if a bigger number of human beings existed who were still interested somewhat in such things, the interest decreased, nevertheless, more and more. This could be led back to the influence of science. It refused to look at such phenomena as true manifestations in the time of the forties when the law of energy conservation was discovered forming the basis of our physics when the cell theory was drawn up when Darwinism prepared. What came up in this time could not be favourable to the pneumatologists. Hence, they were strictly rejected. That is why one forgot everything that these had to say.

Then an event took place which meant a victory for spiritism. The event did not happen in Europe, but in the country where materialism celebrated the biggest triumphs in that time where one had made oneself used to consider only as true what hands can seize. This happened in America, in the country where the materialistic way of thinking intimated by me had strongly developed. It went out from the phenomena which belong in the broadest sense to those which one has to call abnormal but sensual. The well-known knocking sounds, the phenomena of moving tables and the knocking through them, the audibility of certain voices which sounded through the air accompanied by intelligent manifestations for which no sensuous reason existed — they pointed to the supersensible so clearly in America, in the country where one attaches much value to the outer appearance. Like by storm the view gained recognition that there is a supersensible world that beings which do not belong to our world manifest themselves in our sensory world. Like a storm this went through the world.

A man, Andrew Jackson [Davis](#), who concerned himself with these phenomena, was called upon for explaining these matters. He was, in similar way as



Swedenborg, a seer; he only did not have the deepness of Swedenborg. He was an unlearned American grown up as a farmer boy and Swedenborg was a learnt Swede. He wrote a book in 1848 (?): *The Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse*. This work arose from the most modern needs which had originated within the modern battle in which one wanted to accept the sensuous only in which everybody wanted to put his personal egoism forward, in which everybody wanted to grab so much to himself, wanted to become as happy as he only was able to. In this world one was no longer able to have sense for a faith which leads beyond the sensuous world, according to the ways of thinking which were tied to the material only. One wanted to see and one wanted to have such a faith which satisfies the needs and desires of modern humankind. Above all Davis says plainly that modern people cannot believe that a quantity of human beings is blessed, another quantity condemned. It was this what the modern could not stand; there an idea of development had to intervene. Davis was informed of a truth which shows an exact image of the sensuous world. It may be characterised by an example. When his first wife had died, he had the idea to marry a second wife. However, he had doubt, but a supersensible manifestation caused that he gave himself the permission. In this manifestation his first wife said to him that she had married in the sun-land again; that is why he felt to have the right also to marry a second time. In the beginning of the first part of his book he informs us that he was educated as a farmer boy like a Christian, but he realised soon that the Christian faith can deliver no conviction, because the modern human being must understand the what, the why and the where-to of the way.

I was sent out — he tells — to the field by my parents. There came a snake. I attacked it with the hayfork. But the tooth broke off. I took the tooth and prayed. I was convinced that the prayer must help. But ... [gap in the transcript]. How can I believe in a God who allows that I experience such a thing? He said to himself. He became an unbeliever. By the spiritistic séances in which he took part he got the ability of trance and became one of the most fertile spiritistic writers. He emphasises that the appearance of that world is approximately the same as that of the sensory world. It would be an unbelief that a good father does not care for his children, because the father makes long journeys for this purpose et cetera.

You see that the earthly world is transferred to the other world. Therefore, this way of thinking spread like a wildfire all over the world. In short time one could count millions of followers of spiritism. Already in 1850 one could find thousands of media in Boston, and one could also pay 400,000 \$ in short time to construct a spiritistic temple. You will not deny that that has a great cultural-historical significance. However, with regard to the modern way of thinking this movement had only prospects of success if science took hold of it, that means if science believed in it.

If I held a lecture about theosophy, I could speak in detail of the fact that still quite different powers stand behind the staging of the spiritistic phenomena.

Behind the scenery deep occult powers are at work. But this cannot be my task today. I tell another time who is, actually, the true director of these phenomena. But this is certain: if this occult director wanted to presuppose that these phenomena convinced the materialistically minded humankind of the existence of a supersensible world thoroughly if it should believe in it in the long run, the scientific circles had to be conquered. These scientific circles were not so hard to conquer. Just among the most reasonable, among those who could think thoroughly and logically were many who turned to the spiritistic movement. These were in America [Lincoln](#), [Edison](#), in England [Gladstone](#), the naturalist [Wallace](#), the mathematician [Morgan](#). Also in Germany was a big number of excellent scholars, they were experts in their fields, and were convinced of the spiritistic phenomena by media, like [Weber](#) and Gustav Theodor [Fechner](#), the founder of psychophysics. Friedrich [Zöllner](#) also belongs to them about whom only those who understand nothing of the matter can say that he became mad when he did the famous experiments with [Slade](#). Then, however, also a personality who is yet underestimated: this is the [Baron Hellenbach](#), deceased in 1887. He presented his experiences in spiritistic fields in his numerous books in such a brilliant way. For example, in his book about biological magnetism and in the book about the magic of figures, so that these books are true treasure troves to study which way this movement has taken — in particular in more inspired heads — in the second half of the 19-th century.

A European impulse came to the American movement and this went out from a man who stood in the European culture, from a disciple of Pestalozzi, and it originated at a time which is already significant because of its other discoveries. This spirit is [Allan Kardec](#) who wrote his *Spirits' Book* in 1858, in the same year in which many other works appeared epoch-making for the western education in different fields. We only have to call some of the works to indicate the significance of the mental life in this time. One is Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*; the other is a basic work about the psycho-physical field by Fechner. The third one is a work of Bunsen which familiarises us with spectral analysis and which gives the possibility to discover something of the material composition of the stars for the first time. The fourth one was the work of Karl Marx: *The Capital*. The fifth one was a work of Kardec, a spiritistic work, but of quite different kind as the American works. He represented the idea of reincarnation, the re-embodiment of the human soul. This French spiritism had as numerous supporters as the American one in short time. It spread over France, Spain and especially also over Austria. It was completely in accord with the ancient teachings of wisdom of theosophy. Also spirits like Hellenbach, an Austrian politician, could accept it. He represented the scientific form of spiritism Kardec had founded. Hellenbach played a prominent role in important political matters of Austria in the sixties and seventies of the last century and proved to be a clear and keen thinker at every step. Spiritism got a scientific form in Germany that way. Also such spirits founded the scientific

spiritism in Germany who did not want to speak like Hellenbach or Gladstone, Wallace, Crookes who assumed angelic spirits of the old Christendom but who wanted only to speak about the reincarnation of the human being and the intrusion of beings unknown to us whose forms Hellenbach leaves open. But also those who generally do not want to know anything about a yonder world were no longer able to not accept the facts as such. Even people like Eduard von Hartmann who wanted to know nothing about the theories of the spiritists, however, said that the facts could not be denied. They let themselves not be swayed during the period of the exposures. The most famous one was that of the medium Bastian by the [Crown Prince Rudolf](#) and the archduke [Johann of Austria](#). The media, which had convinced our scientific circles, were exposed with the medium Bastian. Everybody who simply has some insight in this field knows that Hellenbach is right when he says: nobody will claim that there are no wigs. Should one also believe that there is no real hair because one has discovered wigs? — To somebody who works in occult fields the sentence applies that one can prove to many a bank that it is a corrupt bank; yes, but did not this bank do also honest banking business once? The assessment of the spiritistic truth hides behind such comparisons.

We have seen that the scientific and materialistic ways of thinking since the 18th century — we can call 1716 the natal year of spiritism — have completely adapted themselves to the modern thinking, also to the materialistic views. A new form was sought for to be able to approach the higher, supersensible truth, and everybody who faced these facts tried to understand them in his way. The Christian faith found a confirmation of its ancient church faith; also some orthodox have accepted it to find favourable proofs of their case. Others also found confirmation from the standpoints of the material thinking which assesses everything only according to the material relations.

Also those who were thorough scientific researchers like Zöllner, Weber, Fechner and also several famous mathematicians like [Simony](#) et cetera tried to get closer to the case, while they moved from the three-dimensional on the four-dimensional. The philosophical individualists who could not believe that in the spiritual world also an individualistic development exists like in the physical one were led by means of thorough investigation to understand that the human way, this sensory way to be — to see with bodily eyes to hear with bodily ears — is only one way of many possible ways. The representatives of a supersensible spiritism like Hellenbach found their ideas confirmed on account of the spiritistic facts. If you imagine a person who knew to deal with the peculiarities of every single medium who knew how to adapt himself to the most difficult circumstances, so that it was a relief to meet him, Hellenbach was such a man. Also those who spoke only about a psychic force of which one does not and needs not think a lot also these followers of a psychic force, like Eduard von Hartmann or also spirits like du Prel of whom I will speak next time, they all explained the facts in their ways. There were many theories, from the popular

interpretations for the people who looked after the manifesting spirits, after writing media, after communications by knocking sounds et cetera, from these religious seekers in old way up to the most enlightened spirits: everybody explained these phenomena in his way. This was in the time when this lack of clarity prevailed in every field, in the time when the phenomena could no longer be denied — but the minds of the human beings proved to be absolutely incapable to do justice to the supersensible world.

In this time the ground was prepared to a renewal of the mystic way, to a renewal of that way which was taken in former times in the occult science and in the mysteries, but in such way that it is accessible to everybody who wants to go it. The Theosophical Society was founded by Mrs. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky to open an understanding of the ways. The theosophical movement revived the investigation of wisdom as it was nurtured in the mysteries and by the Rosicrucians in mediaeval times. It wants to spread what one has searched for in recent time on other ways. It is based on the old movements, however, also on the newest researches.

Somebody who gets a better understanding of the theosophical movement will find that the way of theosophy or spiritual science which leads to the supersensible truth is on one side really spiritual, on the other side, that it answers the questions: where does the human being come from, where does he go to, what is his vocation?

We know that one had to speak in certain way to the human beings of antiquity, in more different way to those of the Middle Ages, and again in another way to the modern human beings. The facts of theosophy are ancient. But you convince yourselves if you seek on the way of theosophy or spiritual science that it satisfies any demand of modern scientific nature if it is understood in its very own figure. He would be a bad theosophist who wanted to give up any of the scientific truths for theosophy. Knowledge on the bright, clear way of true scientific nature — yes, but no knowledge which limits itself to sensory things which limits itself to that which takes place in the human being between birth and death, but also knowledge of that which is beyond birth and death. Spiritual science cannot do this without having the authorisation of it — just within a materialistic age. It is aware that all the spiritual movements must converge at a great goal at last which the spiritists will find in spiritual science in the end. However, it searches the spiritual on other, more comprehensive ways; it knows that the spiritual is not found in the sensory world and also not by arrangements of sensory nature only, maybe by means of a beholding which is analogous to the sensory looking. It knows that there is a world of which one receives an insight only if one goes through a kind of spiritual operation which is similar to the operation of a blind-born that is made sighted. It knows that it is not right if the modern human being says: show me the supersensible like something sensory. — It knows that the answer is: human being, rise up to the higher spheres of the spiritual world, while you yourself become more and more

spiritual, so that the connection with the spiritual world is in such a way as the connection is with the sensuous world by means of your sensory eyes and ears. Theosophy or spiritual science has that viewpoint which a believer of the Middle Ages, a deep mystic, **Master Eckhart**, expressed, while he characterised that the really spiritual cannot be searched for in the same way as the sensuous. In the 13-th, 14-th centuries, he expressed meaningfully that one cannot receive the spiritual by sensuous performances, by anything that is analogous to the sensuous. Therefore, he says the great truth leading to the supersensible: people want to look at God with the eyes, as if they looked at a cow and loved it. They want to look at God as if He stood there and here. It is not that way. God and I are one in recognition.

We do not want to behold a higher world by means of events like knocking sounds or other sensuous arrangements. It is called a supersensible world, indeed, but it is similar to the sensuous world round us. — Eckhart characterises such apparently supersensible events saying: such people want to behold God as they look at a cow. However, we want to behold the spiritual developing our spiritual eyes like nature developed our bodily eyes to let us see the physical. Nature has dismissed us with outer senses to make the sensuous perceptible to us. The way, however, to develop further in the sensuous to the spiritual to be able to behold the spiritual with spiritual eyes — we ourselves have to go this spiritual way in free development, also in the sense of modern development.

### *Notes*

In the title of the talk, the term spiritism is used instead of the more common term spiritualism. Allan Kardec used it for the first time in his book *The Spirits' Book*. Since then it is used outside the English speaking world to distinguish spiritism and spiritualism (Spiritualismus). The latter term is applied to the opposite of (philosophical, religious) materialism.

St. **Augustine** (354 – 430): *Evangelio non crederem, nisi me ecclesia commoveret auctoritas* (*Contr. Epist. Manich.*, 5)

**Christian Rosenkreutz** (1378 – 1484), cf. CW 130  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_Rosenkreuz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Rosenkreuz)

Andrew Jackson **Davis** (1826-1910) *The Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse: Being an Explanation of Modern Mysteries* (1853).  
Davis dictated his first and most significant book in trance in 1845: *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations and a Voice to Mankind*.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew\\_Jackson\\_Davis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson_Davis)

Robert **Fludd** (1574 – 1637), English philosopher and physician, Rosicrucian  
*Apologia Compendaria, Fraternitatem de Rosea Cruce ...* (1616)

*Microcosmi Historia* (1619)

*Clavis Philosophiae et Alchymiae Fluddanae* (1633)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Fludd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Fludd)

**Dante** Alighieri (1265 – 1321) in his *Divine Comedy*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante\\_Alighieri](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante_Alighieri)

It was in **1716**: M. Martin *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, London **1703**

Martin Martin (? – 1719), Scottish writer

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Martin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Martin)

Emanuel **Swedenborg** (1688 – 1772), Swedish scientist and philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emanuel\\_Swedenborg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emanuel_Swedenborg)

**Stockholm**: the place from which Swedenborg saw the conflagration was Goteborg, 400 km away from Stockholm.

Friedrich Christoph **Oetinger** (1702 -1782), Swabian theologian and theosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich\\_Christoph\\_Oetinger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Christoph_Oetinger)

Johann Heinrich **Jung-Stilling** (1740 – 1817), German pietistic-mystic author

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Heinrich\\_Jung](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Heinrich_Jung)

Joseph **Ennemoser** (1787 – 1854), physician and mesmerist

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Ennemoser](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Ennemoser)

Johann Friedrich von **Meyer** (1772 – 1849), Protestant theologian, politician

*Hades, a Contribution to the Theory of Spirits* (1810)

[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Friedrich\\_von\\_Meyer](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Friedrich_von_Meyer) (the article in the English wikipedia is insufficient)

Justinus **Kerner** (1786 – 1862), German physician, poet, author

*History of Two Somnambulists* (1824), *The Seeress of Prevorst. Revelations of the Human Inner Life and about the Penetrations of the Spirit World into ours* (1828), *Leaves from Prevorst* (1831 – 1839), *The Somnambulist Tables* (1853)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinus\\_Kerner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justinus_Kerner)

**Seeress of Prevorst**: Friederike Hauffe (1801 – 1829), somnambulist, born in a little village, named Prevorst

David Friedrich **Strauss** (1808 – 1874), German theologian and writer (*The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1846))

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Strauss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Strauss)

Abraham **Lincoln** (1809 – 1865), 16-th President of the United States

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham\\_Lincoln](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln)

Thomas **Edison** (1847 – 1931), American inventor and businessman  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Edison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Edison)

William Ewart **Gladstone** (1809 – 1898), British politician, Prime Minister  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Ewart\\_Gladstone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Ewart_Gladstone)

Alfred Russel **Wallace** (1823 – 1913), British naturalist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred\\_Russel\\_Wallace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Russel_Wallace)

Augustus De **Morgan** (1806 – 1871), British mathematician and logician  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus\\_De\\_Morgan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus_De_Morgan)

Ernst Heinrich **Weber** (1795 – 1878), German physician, founder of experimental psychology  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst\\_Heinrich\\_Weber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Heinrich_Weber)

Gustav Theodor **Fechner** (1801 – 1887), German philosopher and experimental psychologist, the founder of psychophysics  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav\\_Fechner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Fechner)

Johann Karl Friedrich **Zöllner** (1834 – 1882), German astrophysicist. He explains that the spiritistic phenomena are caused in a four-dimensional space and appear as shadows in the three-dimensional space: *Transcendental Physics* (1878)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Karl\\_Friedrich\\_Zöllner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Karl_Friedrich_Zöllner)

Henry **Slade** (1835 – 1905), fraudulent medium [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Slade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Slade)

Baron Lazar von **Hellenbach** (1827 – 1887), Austrian politician, philosophical and socio-political writer, famous spiritist. *On the Magic of Figures* (Vienna, 1882),  
[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lazar\\_von\\_Hellenbach](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lazar_von_Hellenbach)

Allan **Kardec** (pen name of Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, 1804 – 1869), French spiritist, systematiser of spiritism  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allan\\_Kardec](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allan_Kardec)

**Crown Prince Rudolf** of Austria (1858 – 1889)

Archduke **Johann Nepomuk Salvator of Austria** (1852 – 1890?) *Einblicke in den Spiritismus (Insights into Spiritism)* (1885)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archduke\\_Johann\\_Salvator\\_of\\_Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archduke_Johann_Salvator_of_Austria)

Oskar **Simony** (1852 — 1915), Austrian mathematician and physicist: *On Spiritistic Manifestations from the Scientific Standpoint* (1884)  
Cf. R. Steiner mentions him in CW 169 *Toward Imagination* (Anthroposophic Press, 1990), lecture 6

Master **Eckhart** (~1260 – 1327), German Dominican monk and mystic Cf.  
R. Steiner CW 7 *Mystics after Modernism*





## The History of Hypnotism and Somnambulism

*Berlin, 6th June 1904*

Today I have to speak to you about a chapter of the newer cultural history which, indeed, repeats an ancient history in a certain form, but in such a peculiar, typical way that perhaps nothing is more suited than this chapter to show how difficult it is to bring certain great phenomena in the life of the spirit, in the life of the human being generally, closer to the official scholarship. Just today some — maybe a little bit harsh — words are necessary with regard to this chapter. Do not accept any word which I say in this direction in such a way, as if passion or emotion dictates it. I can assure you that I have the greatest respect to many a scholar with regard to his researches and his scientific ability, and that to him, nevertheless, some — I would almost like to say — painful word must be said speaking about the chapter of hypnotism in a short historical outline. At the same time we want to give short information of something related, of somnambulism.

A lot of people believe today that hypnotism is something quite new that it is something that science has conquered at most since somewhat more than half a century. You allow me to give you evidence from the 17-th century. The evidence which I would like to give you is from a book which one reads today a little, from the book of the Jesuit Father Athanasius [Kircher](#), and comes from the year 1646. I would like to inform of the words of this Jesuit father in fairly modern language. They are in a book with which Goethe dealt in detail in his history of the theory of colours because this father plays a quite important role also in the history of the theory of colours. In this book it is also spoken of that which the Jesuit father calls actinobolism. This would mean approximately: the radiating imagination. “This very big force of imagination appears even with the animals. The chickens have such a strong imagination that they get motionless and a peculiar daze if they only see a string. The following experience shows the truth of this assertion: [Miraculous experiment](#) about the imagination of the chicken. Lay a chicken, whose feet are tied together, on any floor, feeling caught it will try in the beginning to throw off the chain in any way, flapping its wings and moving its whole body. But, in the end, it will calm down after vain endeavours, despairing to escape, as it were, and submit to the arbitrariness of the winner. While now the chicken lies there quietly, draw a straight line of the same form as the string from its eye on the soil with chalk or any other paint, then let it alone after you have undone the chains: I say, the chicken, although it is relieved of the chain, does not fly away at all, even if one provokes it. The explanation of this behaviour is based on nothing else than on the lively imagination of the animal which takes that line drawn on the soil for its chain

with which it is tied up. I made this experiment often to the surprise of the spectators and I do not doubt that it also succeeds with other animals. Nevertheless, the reader eager to learn may inform himself about it.”

Another German writer, Caspar [Schott](#), gave a similar communication of the condition of animals approximately at the same time in a book entitled *Entertainment of the Human Imagination*. In it the concerning author who was a friend of Athanasius Kircher says to us that he took the instructions of this book from numerous attempts of a [French medical writer](#). What is reported in this book is nothing else than what we call hypnotism of animals. I have already spoken in a former talk about the relations of hypnotism and somnambulism; hence, I recapitulate this chapter only briefly today.

You know that one understands hypnotism as a state similar to sleep in which the human being is brought artificially by different means to which we still want to point in the course of the lecture. In this sleep-like state the human being shows different qualities he does not show in the waking consciousness and also not in the usual sleep. You can sting a person in the hypnotic trance with needles, for instance; he proves insensitive. You can lay down a person if he is in a certain state of sleep and stretch his limbs; then they become so stiff and solid that you can lay the person on two chairs, and the heaviest man can still stand on this rigid body.

Those who saw the experiments of the really extraordinary hypnotist [Hansen](#) in the eighties of the 19-th century know that Hansen laid the people, after he had transported them into hypnotic sleep, with a very small under-surface on two chairs and stood then on them, this heavy Hansen! These hypnotised bodies behaved almost like a board.

It is also known that somebody who has transported a person into such a sleep-like state can give him so-called suggestive commands. If you have transported a person into such a state, you can say to him: you get up now, go to the middle of the room and stop there like spellbound; you do not go on; you are not able to stir! — He carries out everything and then he stops like spellbound. Yes, you are able to do even more. You can say to the person concerned in a room full of people: here in this room is not one person excepting me and you. — He will say to you: here is nobody, the room is quite empty. — Or you may also say to him: here is no light — and he sees nobody. These are negative hallucinations. However, you can also give him hallucinations of other type. You can say to him, while you give him a potato: this is a pear, take and eat it! — And you can see that he thinks to eat a pear. You may give him water to drink, and he thinks that it is champagne.

I could still give a lot of other examples, but I still want to give some especially strange matters only. If you cause a visual hallucination in such a hypnotised person and say to him, for example: you see a red circle there on the white wall, he sees a red circle on a white wall. If you show him then, after he had this

hallucination, the red circle through a prism, this hallucination appears refracted exactly according to the refraction laws of the prism, just like another phenomenon. The visual hallucinations produced with hypnotised people follow the external refraction laws; they still follow other optical laws, but it would go too far if we wanted to give them in detail. Especially significant is to know: if we give a command to such a hypnotised person which he should carry out not straight away, but only after some time, this can also happen. I transport a person into hypnosis, say to him: tomorrow you come to me and say hello to me and then ask me for a glass of water. — If the experiment is carried out so that all preconditions are fulfilled, he knows nothing about the experiment after waking up; but tomorrow he feels in the time which I said to him an irresistible urge and carries out what I posed for him. This is a posthypnotic suggestion. This may apply to strange cases, in particular also to date suggestions. I can suggest to a hypnotised person to carry out a particular action in three times ten days; however, a lot of actions must be carried out before. Do not get a fright from it. Perhaps only an occultist is able to have an overview of the preconditions which are necessary; nevertheless, the person concerned will carry out the command which was given to him in three times ten days on time.

These are phenomena which are not denied by the fewest, also not by scholars who have occupied themselves with these questions. Somebody who studied the matters may hardly deny the information which I have given. However, what goes beyond that is denied by many people. But we have also seen that in the last decades such a sum of matters has been added from the part of the physiologists and psychologists, so that one cannot know how much is still added to the admitted matters.

I have shown you that such abnormal states of consciousness are also found indicated in the books of the 17-th century about which I have spoken. I could also explain with regard to other phenomena that knowledge of the hypnotic state has existed with the occultists of all times. However, the proof cannot be produced that the ancient Egyptian, in particular, the ancient Indian priest sages knew only what I have reported to you as the phenomena of hypnotism — and they are the most elementary ones: these sages knew even more. Because they knew even more, they were prevented to inform the big masses of their wisdom. We still see why. However, one thing is strange. The Jesuit Kircher is said to have received his wisdom indirectly from India. Keep in mind this story of the 17-th century that this wisdom was transmitted from India.

The following centuries, since the 17-th century, were not especially convenient for such matters in the external science. This external science made good progress in particular in the fields of physics, astronomy, and the investigation of the external sense-perceptible facts. I have already explained last time which significance this progress had for the human thinking. I have shown that above all this progress made people used to only look for the real knowable, the truth in the sense-perceptible matters, so that the human being got

used to not accepting what cannot be seized with the hands, seen with the eyes, conceived with the inferring reason. It is the age of Enlightenment to which we approach, that age in which the human average mind set the tone in which one wanted to recognise everything in the way as one recognises the physical phenomena. With physical phenomena the experiments must succeed if only the preconditions are properly produced. Everybody can fulfil these preconditions. However, in the field of hypnotism something else is necessary. The immediate influence of life on life is necessary there, yes, the immediate influence of a human being on a human being or of a human being on a living being is necessary. The procedure which the human being has to carry out with the chicken, like in the experiment which already the Jesuit Father Kircher explained to us in the 17-th century, this procedure had to be carried out by a human being. Also all the other matters of which I have spoken must be carried out by a human being to another living human being or being. It may be — and this is the most important question — because the human beings are very different from each other that the human beings would have such different qualities that they have an effect of quite different type on other living beings, above all on other human beings. Thus it could probably also happen because the human being is necessary to produce hypnotic phenomena that a person does not have the qualities which are necessary to hypnotise a human being, whereas another person has them. We not needed to wonder if this were that way. We know that an interaction takes place with the concerning matters, comparable to that of a magnet and iron filings. The iron filings remain at rest if you put wood into them; however, if you put a magnet, these filings position themselves in particular way.

We have to assume that human beings are so different from each other that the one can cause particular effects like the magnet, and the other can cause no effect like the wood. The purely rational clarification does never admit such a view. It supposes that one human being is like the other. The average scale is put onto the human being, and one does never admit that anybody can be a significant scholar, but has no ability, does not have the qualities to produce the hypnotic state. Nevertheless, there may be the case that it depends less on the human being who is hypnotised, but more on that who hypnotises who is active. The qualities may be even caused artificially in a human being who wields such a power on the other that such phenomena happen of which we have spoken, yes that much more important phenomena may happen. The rational clarification that makes no difference between human being and human being does not admit this. Those, however, who have concerned themselves with these matters, were aware of that up to the age of Enlightenment. Somebody who follows the course of history finds another view of science than we have it today. Sometimes these are only oral traditions which were passed on from school to school. There is never spoken about the state of the hypnotised person, about the state of that who should be hypnotised; it does not depend on him at all. However, methods are given to us which enable another person, the hypnotist, to cause such forces

in him that he can exert such an influence on his fellow men. In the occult schools particular methods are given with which the person receives such a power over his fellow men. However, one also demands in all schools that that who develops such a power in himself has to go through a certain development occupying the whole human being. There does not help the merely intellectual learning, there does not help only thinking and science. Only those who know and practice the mysterious methods who work the way up to a lofty level of moral development who go through the most different probations in intellectual, spiritual and moral respect rise above their fellow men and become priests of humankind. Their development makes it impossible to use such a power in another way than for the benefit of their fellow men. Because such knowledge gives the highest force because it happens by means of a transformation of the whole human being, it was kept secret. Only when other views gained acceptance, there one also obtained other views about these phenomena, other intentions. Occult traditions form the basis of the question for centuries, and it does not depend on something else than on that: which requirements has anybody to meet whom is given such a power, which methods are necessary, so that a human being can attain such an influence on his fellow men?

Thus this question was till the age of Enlightenment. Only in the daybreak of Enlightenment from such a side like that of the Jesuit father of whom I have spoken something of these phenomena could be divulged in popular scientific way. In former times anybody who knew the case and the way would never have had the audacity to speak about these phenomena in public books. Only by indiscretion something of this matter could come to the general public. Only when one did no longer know what a tremendous importance the saying has: knowledge is a power, only at this point in time, when one played — like the child plays with the fire — with a knowledge rather fateful under circumstances and did not know what to do with it. Only in such a time it was possible to discuss this knowledge, which means nothing else than dominion of the mind over the mind, in popular way. Hence, it is not surprising that the real official scholarship, which is a child of the last centuries, did not know what to do with these phenomena.

In particular, it did not know what to do when it was confronted by [Mesmer](#) with these phenomena in a strangely surprising way at the end of the 18-th century. Mesmer was a much defamed man, on the other side he was praised to the skies. This person made the question flow freely for the scholarship. The term Mesmerism comes from him. It was a quite peculiar person, a person as they may have appeared in the 18-th century in bigger number than this could be the case today; a person who, as we will see, had to be inevitably misjudged by many people, however, who was able to make this question flow freely because of his fearlessness — which admittedly appears to the outsider as adventurousness, as charlatanism.

In 1766, a treatise appeared by Mesmer about the *Influence of the Planets on Human Life* which the modern scholar must regard as a quite fantastic thing.

Darwin's biographer, [Preyer](#), esteemed by me — take this word seriously, because it concerns not a prejudice, but characterises him — showed an enormous impartiality just of this question what I have to appreciate, and, hence I choose him as a particular example of how little the changed science of the 19-th century can do justice to that which was written from quite different preconditions in the 18-th century. Preyer dealt with Mesmer's works with all good will and could find nothing else than empty words in them. Who does not assess such matters fantastically but with expertise, understands it, and he will even meet somebody with mistrust who believes to be able to protect Mesmer against Preyer. If one wants to judge correctly, the preconditions of such a judgment are more profound than one normally believes. However, this first treatise should not occupy us, because it shows to the insightful person nothing else than that Mesmer understood to master the science of his time from a lofty point of view and with a comprehensive look. I want to emphasise this, so that the faith does not appear that he dealt as a dilettante with such matters. No doubt, Mesmer was a perfect young scholar when he wrote his doctor thesis, and you can find what he wrote in countless theses of people who became quite well-behaved and competent scholars of the 18-th and still the 19-th centuries. Mesmer appeared with the so-called magnetic cures in Vienna in the last third of the 18-th century. He made use of certain methods to these magnetic cures at first which were common practice at that time, actually. It was in those days the tradition which never completely has died down that one can achieve healings by means as I will mention them. This tradition has come to life in that time. He made use of a method which had nothing captious: steel magnets were put on the ill part of the body or were brought near to it, supposedly or really they caused relief or healing of pains. Mesmer made use of such magnets in his institute for a longer time. Then, however, he noticed something particular. Perhaps he has not noticed that at this time, perhaps he has also already known it and wanted to use a more usual method only as a hiding means. He threw the magnets aside and said that the force went out from his own body that it is merely transferred as a healing force from his own body to the ill body in question, so that the healing is an interaction between a force which he develops in his body and another force which is in the ill body of the other. He calls this force animal magnetism. I tell this roughly; if I explained it in detail, it would take too much time. He had differences in Vienna very soon — about the results of his cure we do not want to talk. He had to leave the city and turned to Paris. At first he had quite extraordinary results there. He was unusually popular. However, the scholars could not get over that Mesmer earned 6,000 Francs monthly what is something awkward from a doctor's viewpoint if anybody earns so much. This should go without saying on the part of science striving for progress and tending to materialism.

You know that we are in the 18-th century in the age of Enlightenment that in France the emotions were running high and that one wanted to accept nothing

that one cannot see with eyes, cannot touch with hands, and cannot deduce with reason. You understand that the official science, which was influenced more or less by the materialistic school of thought, took offence at matters which one could not understand. Hence, Mesmer's healings became a public scandal. People said to themselves: these must be no real, but only imaginary illnesses, so that hysterical people are cured only in their imagination, or that sick people were relieved of pains in their imagination. In any case, one denied Mesmer's method. The result of the fact was that by order of the king two corporations were asked to give an expert opinion about Mesmerism. I would like to state that to you, so that you see how in those days science really faced these things; so that you see that one must not look at these matters with passion, but also see at the same time how in those days one had to misjudge the stance necessarily which one had to take toward Mesmer.

A woman was blindfolded, and one said to her that one has got Monsieur d'Elon who would magnetise her. Three of the representatives of the commission were attending: one to ask, one to write, one to mesmerise. The woman was not mesmerised. After three minutes the woman felt the influence, became stiff, stood up from the chair and stamped with the feet. Now the crisis was there. One spoke of this crisis also with Mesmer's healings, one ascribed the success to it. One brought a hysterical woman before the door and said to her that the mesmerist were in the room. She started shivering, and the crisis came.

The commission had stated that there is something strange, something that the commission could not expect. It had stated something after which it could make no other judgement, as that the whole procedure of Mesmer were a swindle. Everybody who understood a little bit of it had been able to forecast that they would come with a probability of 95 to hundred to this result, and that they could come with their preconditions to no other explanations. But, nevertheless, the commission was able to come to other results! Is this nothing at all that a woman only grasps the thought of a person, gets to all the states which are told to us here about the woman inside in the room like about the woman outside? Above all we have to ask, and this commission should have asked itself in those days also honestly and sincerely: could they expect such an effect of the thought according to their rationalistic point of view? Would have they had any possibility with their materialistic means to explain the effect of the thought on the bodily states? Even if we concede the right to the commission to condemn Mesmer, one never can concede the right to it that it left this case. The case had to be investigated further, just by the commission, because there is a particular scientific question without doubt.

I would still like to emphasise a fact which is significant for that who knows answer which has been assessed, however, only disparagingly. A big sum was offered to Mesmer, so that he hands over his secret to other people. It was also said that the sum was paid to him, but he would have kept the secret for himself and would not have informed others. This is understood by many as a swindle.

But short time after so-called hermetic societies appeared all over France in which the same arts were used to a certain degree. One did not say that he had betrayed the secret, but there were found those who exercised his methods. Who knows something about these matters understands that he only informed trustworthy persons of his secrets. It says nothing at all that he did not publish his secrets in the newspapers. Associate this statement with the fact that those who really know something of such matters do not inform of them, because it does not depend on informing but on developing certain qualities which produce these phenomena.

You understand now where the societies came from. It does not depend at all on the experiments; the experiments are still to be forbidden if they are carried out by unauthorised people. It depends merely on developing the hypnotist. Actually, the scientists could hardly give themselves any explanation of these phenomena at that time. Hence, these phenomena were thrown to the dead at first, as by the French Academy and also by the whole science. However, they appeared over and over again. In Germany such phenomena were discussed perpetually. Newspapers were founded specially for it. People who believe that such an influence can be exerted from person to person explain the fact assuming a fluid, a fine substance that goes from the hypnotist to the hypnotised person and exerts the influence. But even those who do not deny the influence cannot exceed materialism. They say to themselves: substance remains substance, no matter whether it is coarse or fine. — One could imagine the spiritual-effective as nothing else than something material. It is a result of the fact that one tried to interpret them in the materialistic age that these phenomena were interpreted that way

I cannot describe the different decades which followed Mesmer in detail. I only want to mention that the phenomena have never been forgotten completely, that even again and again people appeared who took these phenomena very seriously. There were also university professors who have described these phenomena in detail and already knew different matters, which we today subsume under the concept of hypnotic phenomena. They knew of the so-called verbal suggestion. They stated, for example, a lot more than what modern science wants to admit. One asserted of a scholar that he could read a book very well with shut eyes; that he could read with the heart and could read the words in such a state merely touching a book page. One asserted that one could also get to artificial somnambulism to see distant events, that is to become a clairvoyant. All these phenomena were revived — and it is the strange fact that the scholars of the 19-th century were forced to encounter it — by wandering hypnotists like Hansen who wandered in America during the forties who showed phenomena before the big audience and were paid for it. They often caused tremendous effects in their spectators. One called them soul tamers. In particular Justinus Kerner calls these people soul tamers because they produced soul effects by means of mere staring and looking. However, calling attention to the phenomena



has dangerous aspects because on one side dangers exist for the experimental subjects, on the other side, certain swindlers fooled the audience in the most unbelievable way.

I would like to speak of an experiment which was often made and of which I am convinced personally that it perplexed and cheated souls in big public gatherings again and again. The experiment consists in the following: here sits a blindfolded medium. It can see nothing. The concerning impresario walks around in the audience and says at the end of the hall: say something in my ear or put a question, and we want to see whether the medium can know something of it. Or write down a word or a sentence to me on a piece of paper. The one or the other happens, and after a short time the medium at the table, very far from the impresario, says the word which is whispered or is written down. Nobody excepting the two human beings knows anything about it, and the concerning impresario can show the piece of paper or allow the person concerned to ask whether the information of the medium is right. In truth nothing else than the following happened in many cases where I was present: the man who walked around was a very skilful ventriloquist. The medium moved the lips at the moment at which it should pronounce the word. The whole audience looked at the lips of the medium, and the impresario himself said the word or sentence in question. I have experienced again and again that in each case hardly two human beings were in the hall who could explain this experiment. Of course, such cases were mixed up repeatedly with flawless facts. One must be in the know there to be not fooled by wandering mesmerists. Hence, it is unfortunate that this case has to be pointed out to the scholars. There are ventriloquists who can produce whole melodies, piano playing et cetera by ventriloquism. Who knows these matters is not easily fooled concerning these questions.

In the forties and fifties the attention of the scholars was called to it once again by wandering soul tamers. In particular, it was a certain Stone who caused great sensation and became a talking point. Already some time before, however, such a showman had [induced a scholar](#) to scrutinise these phenomena once again. This scholar gave us scholarly treatises about these phenomena from the forties. They referred chiefly to the method of fixation, to staring at a brilliant object. This scholar has drawn attention straight away to the fact that with all these phenomena no specific influence goes out from the hypnotist to the persons to be hypnotised. Just this experiment of fixation was so significant to him because he wanted to show that these phenomena concern an abnormal state of the experimental subject. He wanted to show that no interaction takes place, but that everything that happened is nothing else than a physiological phenomenon caused by a cerebral process. He wanted to show that Mesmerism is absurd with which the concerning person must have the particular qualities. Thus the tone was given basically in which from now on these questions were treated by the official science for the second half of the 19-th century. Only with few exceptions this question was understood in such a way as if it could be treated

like an everyday scientific experiment, as if it concerned nothing else than a fact which has significance only if it can be brought about again like another scientific experiment which can be performed and repeated any time. This requirement was also put to this experiment. Under this condition science also deigned to study the phenomena. However, the study was carried out in a rather unfavourable age. To characterise to you how unfavourable the age of the fifties, sixties was, I want to state something else that is the most significant for the observer of the development of the 19-th century that is ignored, however, by the official science as a rule.

Long time before Stone, before the academic scholarship, a man appeared in Paris who was a Catholic priest before, who had gone then to the Brahmans to India, and who used the methods which he had got to know in India, hypnotism and suggestion, also the inspiration of person to person, to his healings. This man, called [Faria](#), explained all the phenomena in another way. He said that it would depend only on one matter; it would depend on the fact that the hypnotist can cause a particular mental condition in the person to be hypnotised that he was able to transport the masses of ideas of the person to be hypnotised into a state of concentration. If this concentration is achieved if the whole mass of ideas of the person concerned is concentrated upon a particular point, the concerning state must happen. Then the other phenomena must also happen, and also the more intricate ones, which Faria shows.

There you have an explanation and interpretation from somebody who understood the case really. But he was not understood. He is simply overlooked. This is also explicable. — I have said that the Jesuit Father who discussed this case first and who got his wisdom from India indicated the explanation in the heading. However, the scholars did not understand a lot of it, so that the learnt Preyer said still in 1877 if the church attributes these phenomena to imagination, this shows only how much imagination the church has. He got personal about the Catholic priest to have become a Brahman. However, one always finds that hypnotism was used to healings and to soothe the pain with operations. Those who had relationship to Faria managed that a person to be operated did not perceive pains by means of mental influence. In 1847, chloroform was discovered; a means of which the materialistic researchers could believe and also said rightly that it prevents pain with operations. Thus the understanding of the other analgesic had got lost for long time. Only single, really thinking researchers also dealt with these phenomena in the next time. Who observes more exactly finds again and again that the doctors know the appropriate methods very well, but here and there they let it show that behind the phenomena is something that they do not understand. And those who are more reasonable expressly warn generally about dealing with these phenomena, with this field which is so subjected to deception that even great scholars can be fooled; hence, it cannot be warned enough about it.

Certain scholars, for whom one had to have, otherwise, the highest respect, had this standpoint. I only mention the Viennese researcher [Benedikt](#), much appreciated by me, who pointed to these phenomena again and again, already during the seventies. He is the same researcher who established the idea of the so-called moral insanity which is normally not understood. One does not need to agree to the theory, also not to that which he speaks about hypnotism and magnetism. Already as a young man he paid attention to Mesmerism and thought that something is behind it; but he never dealt with it in such a way as for example [Liébeault](#) and [Bernheim](#) of the Nancy school. Benedikt was that who sharply opposed and emphasised that even [Charcot](#) warned about attempts of interpreting these phenomena. You can nowhere find a plausible reason with Benedikt for his opposition against the whole theory of hypnosis, but his instinctive utterances are moving in a strangely correct line. He always says only: who carries out experiments in this field must realise that the persons, with whom he carries out such experiments, may fool him as well, maybe without knowing it, as they can also provide something true for him. — He emphasised on the other side that in the way as science wants to take hold of the matters no results can be got.

After again a wandering hypnotist, Hansen, had demonstrated the most horrendous experiments to the people which scholars copied in the laboratory and were partly successful, we see magazines taking hold of the case. Thick books are written which are cannibalised by journalism, and these matters become questions of the day and popular writings are published, so that everybody can have instructions of these matters in his vest pocket. These were in particular the scholars of the Nancy school, Liebeault and Bernheim, who interpreted these phenomena scientifically. A quality had to be ascribed to these phenomena which makes them synonymous and belonging to the other scientific phenomena. Thus we see then that the exterior which is not denied by the materialists should be decisive for causing hypnosis. Bernheim has managed to exclude all methods and admitted the verbal suggestion only: the word which I speak to the person concerned has an effect in such a way that he gets to this state. Hypnosis itself is an effect of suggestion. If I say: sleep! — Or: lower the eyelids! — Et cetera, the corresponding image is caused and this causes the effect. Thus materialism had happily put the phenomena of hypnosis in a coffin; thus that retreated into the background which all those know who know a lot about these matters: that it depends on the effect of a person on the other person; that a person has either the natural disposition or develops it using particular methods and develops to a powerful person important for his fellow men.

It was completely disregarded that this personal influence had an effect. The point of view of the average mind should be applied with which all people are on a par which does not want to accept a development of the human being to a certain height of moral and intellectual education. That which is important was put in a coffin.

From this point of view the whole modern literature is written. In particular it is the philosopher [Wundt](#) who knows nothing to do with it who says that a particular part of the brain becomes ineffective. Also a friend of mine whom I hold in high esteem, Hans [Schmidkunz](#), wrote a psychology of suggestion in which he explains in detail that these processes are only an increase of phenomena to be observed in the everyday life which are caused naturally that one does not yet know, however, where the explanation must be searched for. While we have considered the history of this fact, we have entered a kind of dead end. Nobody can find anything else in the contemporary literature about this chapter than a more or less big aggregation of simple, elementary facts. The effect of a person on another person is explained more or less insignificantly in a materialistic way. But one will convince himself of the fact above all that the official science did not cope with these facts, and that nothing is more unjustified than if today medicine presumes to put these phenomena in a coffin for itself if it claims that it should be the field of medicine only, that it should be a privilege of medicine to deal with these facts. To any really reasonable person it is clear that modern medicine knows nothing to do with these facts and that, above all, those are right who point to the danger of these matters. Not without reason people like Moritz Benedikt warned about a scientific study of these matters. Not without reason they said that even Charcot has to pay attention because these states which he causes as an objective observer could overcome him subjectively. Not without reason they wanted to protect science against the treatment as the Nancy school has usually done which has achieved nothing for the really reasonable person but worthless attempts of registration or explanation which basically mean nothing. Quite rightly Benedikt pointed to the fact that one cannot distinguish in the whole literature of the Nancy school which is a superficial or a positive performance and whether one has abandoned himself to self-deception or has been cheated.

This is the instinctive judgement of Benedikt whom certain, in particular deeper medical minds of today appreciate. This judgement is typical because it reproaches us instinctively with the true facts. Instinctively Benedikt points to that which it depends on. The first one is that these matters — and Benedikt expresses this with clear words — must not be lumped together with other to experiment with them. Hence, he only investigates those facts which approach him without his help. If anybody gets to natural hypnosis and suffers no change by the hypnotist, we have investigated these phenomena scientifically. However, as soon as we exercise an influence on our fellow men in this regard, then we do it from person to person, from the force of a person to that of the other, then we change the state of the other person, and then it depends on it what clings to our person how this person is in a certain way. Those know this who know the higher methods which science does not have at all. If you are a bad human being, an inferior human being in a certain way, and you exercise a hypnotic influence on your fellow men, you do harm to them. If you want to exercise such an appropriate influence so that with it encompassing cosmic forces have no

harmful effects, then you have to be acquainted with the secrets of the higher spiritual life, and you are able to do this only if you have developed your force to a higher level. It is not a matter of experimenting here and there. These phenomena are those which are exercised perpetually round us. When you enter a room and there are other people, then interactions take place. Those are analogous to hypnotical phenomena. If such an influence is exerted consciously, one must be worthy and capable to exert such an influence.

Therefore, a healthy life will be in this field only again unless the demand exists to study these phenomena according to science, but if the old method is renewed again that somebody who has aroused the power in himself who can be the hypnotist must develop particular higher forces in him first. One knew this once. One knew how the phenomena are. It was a matter of preparing the human beings that they were able to carry out such phenomena. Only if our medical education is another again if the whole humankind is led again to a higher moral, spiritual and intellectual level and the human being has proved himself worthy, only if the test is carried out in this sense, one can speak of a prosperous development of this field. Hence, nothing is to be hoped from the modern academic treatment of hypnotism and suggestion. They are understood in a quite wrong way. They only must be considered correctly again. If this happens, one sees that these phenomena are basically more common than one thinks usually. Then one understands a lot of our surroundings. Then one also knows that one cannot popularise these phenomena beyond a certain degree at all because these phenomena belong to the human inner development then. The highest power is not acquired by vivisection of the spirit but by the development of forces in us. Moral, mental, spiritual higher development is that which makes us again worthy to speak a clear word in these fields.

Then we also understand our ancestors again who did not want to show these matters in their deepest significance to the secular world. One wanted to say nothing else if one spoke of the veiled picture of the Isis that nobody is allowed to lift her veil if he is guilty. With it one wanted to make it clear that the human being can recognise the highest truth only if he makes himself worthy. This will throw a new meaning and a new light on the saying: knowledge is power. — Certainly, knowledge is power. And the higher the knowledge, the bigger is the power. The guidance of the world history is based on such power. It is the caricature of it which science wants to show us today. But one is allowed to attain such knowledge which wakes up the hearts, such a power which is allowed to intervene in the hearts and freedom of others by an insight which is good fortune for the human being at the same time before which he stands there reverentially. Our ideal must be that our knowledge seizes our whole being that we stand before the highest truth and recognise that the truth which we experience in ourselves is a divine revelation at which we look as something holy. Then we again experience knowledge as power if knowledge is again a communion with the divine. That who unites in knowledge with the divine has a vocation to realise the saying: knowledge is power.

## Notes

Athanasius **Kircher** (1601 or 1602 — 1680), German Jesuit scholar and polymath. *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1646)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius\\_Kircher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius_Kircher)

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## What Does the Modern Human Being Find in Theosophy?

*Berlin, 8th March 1904*

The theosophical world view is for those who need a more solid foundation of their concepts and ideas with regard to the supersensible world, and for those who strive for such a more profound foundation of the knowledge of soul and mind. Those are really not few in our time.

We see that the cultural scholars made every effort for a long time to investigate the origin of the religions. They search for the origin of the religions with primitive tribes, with the so-called original peoples to recognise how the religious images have developed in the course of time. In these religious images that is included basically which ideas the human being made to himself in the different epochs, ideas of the supersensible, psychic and spiritual worlds. There we see that — on the one side — the researchers make every effort to trace all religions back to nature worship originating in the simple, childish, naive human beings. On the other side, we see other researchers tracing back the origin of the religions to the fact that the simple, naive human being sees his fellow man stopping to live stopping to breathe, sees him dying, and that he cannot imagine that nothing more should remain. We see that he forms the idea — on account of his different experiences of the supersensible world, of his dreams, of his spiritual experiences which the primitive human being has to a greater extent than the civilised one — that the forefather, the deceased ancestor, is still there, actually, that he is effective as a soul, holding his hand protectively over his descendants and the like.

So some researchers trace the origin of religions back to the ancestor worship, to the soul cult. We could still state a lot of other similar researches which should teach how religion came into the world. The human being tries to get a solid support for the question: are our images of a life after death, of a yonder realm which is not enclosed within the sensory world, how are our images of an eternal life solidly founded? How does the human being get to such images? — This is one kind how the human being tries today to found these ideas of the supersensible.

The theosophical world view is not eager to offer this foundation to the present humankind. Whereas the cultural studies come back to the experience of the primitive, simple, naive, childish human being, the theosophical world view asks rather for the religious experience of the most perfect human being, of that who has come to a higher level of the spiritual view what he can develop as his view, as his experience of the supersensible world. What the human being who has developed his inner life, who has got certain forces, certain abilities which are not yet accessible to the average person of today what such a human being is



able to experience of the higher world is the basis of the theosophical world view. It is this higher experience which goes beyond the sensory one, which rests on the so-called self-knowledge of the soul and the mind, and forms the basis of the theosophical world view. What is this higher experience? What does it mean to experience something of the spiritual and astral worlds? Most of the human beings of today understand that fairly hard. This was not the case in former times. Today, however, the human being has moved with his experience to the sensuous world, the world of the external phenomena. In this world of the external phenomena the modern human being is at home. He asks how does this appear to the eye, how does that feel to the touching hand how can one understand this or that with the reason. He only sees the world of the external phenomena. Thus this world of the sensory experience lies before him openly. Let us have a look once at that which this sensory experience can give us. We want to understand how this sensory experience faces us. We look at something that belongs to these external phenomena. We look at any being, at anything of the world. We can show that all these things of the world have come into being once; they formed and were not there once. They were built up either by nature or by human hand, and after some time they will have disappeared. This is the quality of all things which belong to the external experience that they come into being and pass. We can say this not only of the lifeless things; we can say this also of all living things, also of the human being. He comes into being and passes if we look at him as an external phenomenon. We can say the same about whole nations. You need only to throw a glance at the world history and you see how peoples which have been setting the tone for centuries which have done big, tremendous actions disappeared from the world history, for example, the Ostrogoths and Visigoths. We move on from there to the phenomena which one calls human creations, to that which is regarded as the highest and most marvellous human performances. If we look at a work of Michelangelo or of Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), or to something other, to a significant work of technology, you have to say to yourselves: such a work remains for centuries or millennia; and may the human eyes feel contented at the sight of the works of Raphael or Michelangelo, may human hearts be delighted at the sight of such works — but you cannot ignore the thought that that which appears here as an external phenomenon perishes once and disappears in the dust. Nothing remains of the external appearance. Yes, we can still go on. Natural sciences teach us today that our earth that our sun originated in a particular point of the cosmic evolution and the physicist already states that one can almost calculate when that point in time must have happened at which our earth has arrived at the end of its development at which it goes to a state of inflexibility, so that it cannot continue its development. Then the end of the external appearance has come. Then everything sense-perceptible has disappeared. Thus you can study the whole realm of external forms, of external phenomena — you find everywhere in this world: coming into being and passing; or if we go to the realm of the living

beings: birth and death. Birth and death hold sway in the realm of the forms, in that realm which is accessible to the sensory experience.

We ask ourselves: is this realm the only one which is to us? We ask ourselves: is the realm, in which birth and death hold sway continually, the only one which is accessible to the human beings? For somebody who only accepts the sensory view who wants to know nothing about self-knowledge of the mind, of abilities which exceed the mere consideration of forms, the consideration of the external phenomena to him it may probably appear in such a way, as if everything is contained in the appearing and disappearing phenomena, in the processes of originating and passing, in birth and death. You can also not get to a higher view if you consider nature and spirit as you gain the external experience. You cannot go far beyond birth and death in the same way, by means of the senses. You need to become absorbed in higher mental abilities; not in abnormal mental abilities which only particular people have, no, only in those soul forces which are beneath the external superficial layer. If anybody transports himself into that soul region, he is able to obtain another view about the things and beings with deeper consideration. Look at the simplest one: the plant life. There you see birth and death perpetually changing. You see a lily originating from the germ and you see the lily disappearing again, after it has delighted your eye some time and has pleased your heart. If you do no longer see with the eye of your body, but with the eye of your mind, you see even more. You see the lily developing from the germ and becoming a germ after its development again. Then a new lily comes into being which produces a germ again. Look at a seed; there you see how in this world a form comes into being and passes, but any figure already contains the seed and the germ of a new figure. This is the nature of the living; this is the nature of that which one calls force which exceeds the mere form and the mere figure.

There we come to a new realm which we can see only with the eyes of the mind which is as absolutely true for the eye of the mind as the external form for the bodily eye. The forms originate and pass; what appears, however, again and again what is there with every new figure time and again is life itself. For you cannot seize life rationally with natural sciences, with external observation rationally. However, you can see it flowing through the originating and passing figures with your spiritual eye. Which is the character of life? It appears time and again. As well as birth and death are the qualities of the external phenomena and forms, rebirth and perpetual renewal are the qualities of life. The form which we call alive has enclosed in itself the force, the same force which is able to let come into being a new figure in a new birth instead of the old one. Rebirth and once more rebirth is the being, the typical in the realm of the living beings as birth and death is the typical in the realm of the forms, the external figures. If we ascend to the human being if the human being considers himself, takes a look at his soul, then he finds that something exists in him that represents a higher level than life which we have seen with the plant; that this life must have,

however, the same quality like the life in the plant, going from figure to figure. We have said that it is the force which allows the new figure to be reborn from the old one. Look at the little seed; its external appearance is insignificant. What you cannot see, however, is the force, and this force, not the external appearance, is the creator of the new plant. The new lily comes from the insignificant seed because the force of the new lily slumbers in the seed. If you look at a seed, you see something externally insignificant, and of the way, as it has formed life, you can make an idea of the force to yourselves. If you see, however, in your own soul with your spiritual eye, then you are able to perceive the force in yourselves with which this soul works, with which this soul is active in the world of forms.

Which are the forces of the soul? These forces which cannot be compared at all with other forces, but are on a higher level and are not immediately identical to the life-force of the plant, these forces are sympathy and antipathy. The soul is thereby active in life and does actions. Why do I carry out an action? Because any sympathy located in my soul drives me. Why do I feel revulsion? Because I feel a force in myself which one can call antipathy.

If you try to understand this perpetually surging soul-life by means of internal observation, you find these two forces in the soul again and again and you can attribute them to sympathy and antipathy. That must induce the thoughtful soul observer to ask: what about it? Which forces must exist in the soul? — If you asked: where from has the lily originated — and you would say: this lily has originated from nothing, then one did not imagine that it has come from the seed in which already the force was put by the former plant; then one did not assume that from the seed a new figure could originate. The new figure owes its existence to the old, dead figure which has left behind nothing but the force of the creation of a new one. As we never understand how a lily comes into being if not another lily releases the forces to the creation of a new lily, just as little we can understand how the surging soul-life which consists of sympathy and antipathy could be there if we did not want to trace it back to the origin. Just as we must be aware of the question that every plant and its figure must be traced back to a preceding one, we must also realise that the force cannot have originated from nothing.

Just as little the force of the lily can disappear into nothing, just as little the force of the soul can disappear into nothing. It must find its effect, its further shaping in the external reality. We find rebirth in the realm of life, we also find it — considering our soul intimately — in the psychic realm. We only need to pay attention to these thoughts in the right way. We only need to imagine that infinite consequence, and we can easily move from the thought of rebirth or reincarnation on the force which must enliven the soul, without which the soul cannot be thought at all, if one does not want to imagine that a soul has originated from nothing and disappears into nothing.

With it we also come in the psychic life to reincarnation, and we only need to ask ourselves: how must reincarnation be in the psychic life? — The matter here is that you do not keep to the sensory view, but that you develop the view of the spiritual life in yourselves to understand the perpetual change of the figures in connection with the unchanging life. There you only need to take a great German spirit, then you will get an idea how you can look with the spiritual eye at the life flowing from figure to figure. There you only need to take Goethe's scientific writings, which are written so gracefully, where you have lively considerations of life seen with the spiritual eye and you will recognise how one has to look at life.

If you transfer these considerations to the view of the soul-life, you are led to the fact that our sympathies and antipathies have developed that they have arisen from a germ, as well as the plant has come from a germ with regard to its figure. This is the first primitive mental picture that forms the basis of a main thought of the theosophical world view, the idea of the reincarnation of the psychic life. What we ask from the point of view of the thoughtful reflection is: how have we to imagine the intricate soul-life if we do not want to believe in the reincarnation of the soul? — One may argue: certainly, it would be a psychic miracle; it would be a psychic superstition if I had to admit that my soul-life has originated all at once, and that it has to have its effect, too. One could argue: yes, but the preceding figure of the soul does not need to have been on our earth, and its effect also does not need to be anywhere on this earth. — However, also there you can overcome the apparent cliff with some thoughtful reflection. The soul enters the world; the soul has a sum of dispositions, these are developed and have not originated from nothing. As little the psychic from the physical, as little anything psychic has originated from the material as little an earthworm has come into being from mud. As well as life comes into being only from something living, the soul can have originated only from something psychic. The origin of the soul must be on our earth. If its abilities came from distant worlds, they would not fit into our world, and then the soul would be not adapted to the life of the world of appearance. As well as any being is adapted to its surroundings, the developing soul is adapted directly to its surroundings. Hence, you have not to search for the preconditions of the present soul-life anywhere in an unknown world, but in this world first of all. With it we have conceived the thought of reincarnation.

Thus everybody can get the idea of the reincarnation of the soul only using pure thoughtful reflection if he wants to become engrossed really. This has forced all the excellent spirits, who understood the living nature, to the idea of transmigration in this sense, in the sense of transmigration from form to form, a transmigration which we call reincarnation, reincarnation or re-embodiment. I still want to refer to one of the most excellent spirits of the newer time, to Giordano [Bruno](#) who expressed the reincarnation of the soul as his creed considering the human being. Bruno died a martyr's death because he agreed

openly as the first to the father of modern natural sciences, Copernicus. Thus you admit that he knew to assess the external figure in its sensory appearance. However, he understood even more. He knew how to look at life flowing from figure to figure, and that is why he was led to the idea of reincarnation by itself. If we go on, we find this teaching of reincarnation with [Lessing](#) in his *Education of the Human Race*. We find it touched also with [Herder](#). We find it indicated in various forms with Goethe even if Goethe did not express himself very clearly in his careful kind. [Jean Paul](#) and countless other writers could still be mentioned. What these modern spirits induced, on whom our whole cultural life is dependent who also have influenced the most important conceptions, is not only the endeavour to satisfy the human being, but that, above all, an image is created by this teaching which makes the world explanation only possible. The soul incarnates perpetually. Sympathy and antipathy have been there and will always be there. The theosophical world view has to tell this about the soul. We return now to our starting point. We have seen that figure transforms to figure, form to form in our sensory world that everything emerges and disappears, is birth and death. We have seen that also the most wonderful works which are created pass. If we ask ourselves, however: is only the work involved in the work? Is with the creation of Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio) or Michelangelo or with the simplest, primitive human creations, is nothing else involved there than this work? — Nevertheless, we have to distinguish the work and the activity which the human being has used, the activity which any being has used to achieve a work or something that can be called a creation. The work is given away to the external world of the figures and forms, and in this external form the work is subjected to the destiny of these external figures, to emergence and disappearance.

But the activity which takes place in the being itself, that which took place in the souls of Raphael or Michelangelo in those days when they created their works, this activity is also that which the soul, so to speak, draws back again in its own being. This is the activity which did not flow out into the work. As well as a seal impression remains in the seal, this activity remained in the soul; and with it we get to something that remains in the soul not only for a short time, but that remains as something imperishable in the soul. If we look at Michelangelo some time later, has his activity passed him without a trace?

No! This activity has increased his internal abilities, and he moves up to a new work, he creates not only with that which was before in him, but he creates with the help of that force which has only originated from his activity in former works. His forces are raised, are consolidated, have been enriched on account of his first activity. Thus the activity of the soul creates new abilities which transform again in the work, take action again, withdraw again into the soul and give forces to a new activity. No activity of the soul can get lost. What the soul develops as an activity is always the origin, the cause of a rise of the soul being, of developing a new activity.

This is the activity and life of the soul, this is the imperishable, and this is really formative force, this is not only a figure, not only life, this is a creative force. With my activity I create not only the work, but I cause a new activity, and I always create a new activity through the preceding one.

This forms the basis of all great world views. In a very nice way an old Indian writing tells how one has to imagine this activity inside of a being. It tells how all figures disappear in an endless world of figures how birth and death hold sway in the external world of the forms how the soul is born repeatedly. But even if lily on lily comes into being, a time comes when no new lily originates, a time comes when the soul does no longer live in sympathy or antipathy. The living is born time and again; what does not stop, however, is the activity which always increases which is imperishable.

This third level of existence, the always increasing activity, is characterised by the fact that it does not belong to the transient or to the constantly creative. On the first level our figure is a sensuous being, it is a being born repeatedly as a soul, and it is an imperishable higher being as spirit. The consideration of the spirit itself and its demands shows us that sympathy and antipathy must originate and also pass, even if their time of existence is much longer than that of the external figure. What does the spirit demand from the human being if he immerses himself in this spirit?

This spirit has the quality to remind us energetically and strongly time and again that it can never be content with the soul only, with sympathy and antipathy. This spirit says to us that the one sympathy is justified the other is not. This spirit is the guide of our soul activity. We have the task if we want to develop as human beings to arrange our sympathy and antipathy according to the demands of the cultural life, which should lead us to the heights of development. With it the spirit has the control over the world of mere sympathy and antipathy from the start, over the mere psychic. If the spirit overcomes the world of the unjustified lower sympathy and antipathy again and again, the soul ascends to the spirit. There are initial states of the soul; then it is involved in the figures of the external reality. At that time its sympathy went to external forms. But the higher developed soul listens to the demand of the spirit, and the soul develops from the tendency to the sensuous to the sympathy for the spirit that way.

You can still pursue that in other way. The soul is a demanding being at first. The soul is fulfilled with sympathy and antipathy, with the world of desire. However, the spirit shows the soul after some time that it is not allowed to demand only. If the soul has overcome the desire by the decision of the spirit, it is not inactive, and then love flows from the soul just as desire flows from the undeveloped soul. Desire and love are the opposite forces between which the soul develops. The soul which still clings to sensuousness and external appearance is the demanding soul; the soul which develops its relationship to and harmony with the spirit is that which loves. This leads the soul in its run

from reincarnation to reincarnation that it turns from a desiring soul to a loving soul that its works become works of love.

We have shown the third form of the feelings, and we have represented the basic qualities of the spirit at the same time, have shown its effectiveness in the human being and have shown that it is the great educator of the soul from desire to love, and that it pulls up the soul to itself like with magnetic forces. On the one side, we see the world of the figures and forms, on the other side, the world of the imperishable spirit, and both associated with the world of the psychic. In this discussion I have merely taken a thoughtful self-reflection into consideration which every human being — if he finds the necessary rest in himself and is involved not only in external observation — can see with the eye of the spirit. Somebody, however, who has developed the higher spiritual abilities in himself, an occultist, learns something else. He knows not only how to reach these three worlds with the apt consideration, but he has a view of life and spirit, just as the external eye has a view of the external sensory reality.

As the eye distinguishes light and darkness, as the eye distinguishes different colours, the spiritual, the developed, open eye of the occultist distinguishes the higher, brilliant light of the spirit which is no sensory light which is a brighter shining light in higher worlds, in higher spheres, and this radiant light of the spirit is for the occultist also reality as our sunlight is reality for our view. We see that the sunlight is reflected at single things. In the same way the occultist distinguishes the self-illuminating spirit from the peculiar glimmering of the light, which is reflected by the world of figures, as psychic flame. The soul is reflected light of the spirit, spirit is radiating creative light.

These three fields are the spiritual world, the soul-world and the world of figures, because they appear to the occultist that way. Not only are the fields of existence different. — The external figure is for the occultist the emptiness, the darkness, what is basically nothing, and the great, only reality is the sublime, shining light of the spirit. What we feel as a brilliant light, what is put around the figures is the world of the psychic which is born again and again, until it is got by the spirit, until this has completely moved it up to itself and joins with it. This spirit appears in manifold figure in the world, but the figure is the external expression of the spirit only. We have recognised the spirit in its activity, in its always increasing activity, and we have called this activity karma.

What is now the really important and typical aspect of this activity of the spirit? This spirit cannot remain unaffected in its activity by the action which it has done once on the level which it had then. I would like to make clear to you how this activity of the spirit must have its effect. Imagine the following: you have a vessel with water before yourselves and you throw a warm metal ball into this vessel. This ball heats up the water; this is the work of the ball. However, the ball itself has experienced a change while it caused a change.

The change remains as long as a new change happens. If the ball has done this work, then it has the imprint of its work, then it carries this character with it. If you throw the ball into a second vessel, it will not be able to warm up this second water again because of its first activity. Briefly how it works the second time is a result of its first activity. By this simple metaphor one can realise how the spirit works in its activity. If the spirit does a particular work, then not only the work is characterised, but also the activity of the spirit gets the same imprint. As the ball has cooled down and has received something permanent that way, the spirit has got its permanent signature, its character from its action. Whether good deeds whether bad deeds, the deeds do not simply pass what clings to the soul. As well as the action was, the imprint exists which the action has received and which it carries from now on.

That leads us to recognise that — as the great mystic Jacob [Böhme](#) says — on any action a sign is imprinted that cannot be taken away from it from now on, only if a new action takes place, so that the old imprint is replaced with a new one. This is the karma which the individual human being experiences. While the soul progresses from rebirth to rebirth, the imprints of its actions remain on it, the signature which it has attained during the actions, and a new experience only results from old experiences. This is the strict teaching of karma developing the concepts of cause and effect which the theosophical world view represents. I am the result of my former actions, and my present actions have their effects in future experiences. With it you have the law of karma. Somebody who wants to consider himself in his actions completely as a spirit must consider himself in this sense, he has to realise that any action has an effect that there is also the law of cause and effect in the moral world as it is in the external sensory world of forms.

These are the three basic laws of the theosophical world view: birth and death hold sway only in the world of forms, reincarnation holds sway in the world of life, and karma, or the perpetually forming and increasing activity, holds sway in the realm of spirit. The form is transient, life bears itself over and over again, and however, the spirit is eternal.

These are the three basic laws of the theosophical world view, and with it you have also received everything that the theosophical world view can introduce in the human life. The spirit educates the desiring soul to love. The spirit is felt by all within the human nature if this human nature is engrossed in its inside. The single figure is only interested in that which belongs to it as a single figure. Hence, this single figure works only for itself, and this working for itself is working in selfishness, is working in egoism. This egoism is all over the world of figures, of the external forms, the principal law. But the soul does not consist only of the single figure; it goes from figure to figure. It is longing for perpetually returning to a new birth. However, the spirit makes every effort to develop the perpetually transforming higher and higher, to form it from the imperfect to the perfect figure. Thus the soul leads in its desire from birth to



birth, the spirit educating the soul leads from the undivine to the divine; for the divine is nothing else than the perfect to which the spirit educates the soul.

The education of the soul by the spirit from the undivine to the divine, this is the theosophical world consideration. Thus you also have the ethics of the theosophical world view. As well as the spirit cannot avoid educating the soul to love and to transform desire into love, the theosophical world view has as its first principle to found a human community which is built on love. The moral philosophy of the theosophical world view has got to harmony with the eternal laws of the spirit that way. Nothing else than what the spirit has to recognise as its innermost being, the transformation of desire into love, has led to the foundation of the Theosophical Society encompassing the whole humankind with the soul-fire of love. This ethical world view illuminates the theosophical movement.

We ask ourselves now: does the modern human being find his satisfaction in this world view? — The modern human being is used to no longer believe in external traditions, in external observation and in any authority. The human being rather develops in such a way that he looks for a world view which satisfies his thoughts which satisfies the self-knowledge of his mind. If the modern human being is eager to attain this self-knowledge, then there is for him nothing else than this theosophical view which excludes no confession basically, however, encloses everything. Because this theosophical view really offers to the soul what it looks for. The soul continually puts questions about the human destiny and his dissimilarity to itself. Can a thoughtful soul endure that on one side innocent human beings live in bitterness and misery, and on the other side, people live apparently in happiness who do not deserve it? This is the big question which the human soul has to put to destiny. As long as we consider life only between birth and death, we never find an answer to this riddle.

We never find consolation for the soul. If we look, however, at the law of karma, we know that any bitterness, any misery is the result of causes which were there in former lives. Then we say on one side: what the soul experiences today as its destiny is the effect of former experiences. This cannot be anything else. Consolation becomes this explanation immediately when we look at the future because we say: somebody who experiences something painful or bitterness and grief today can complain of his destiny not only, but he has to say to himself: bitterness, heartache have effect on the future. What is your pain today is for your future life in such a way as the pain of a child if it falls: it learns to go. Thus any grief is the cause of a rise of the soul-life, and the soul finds consolation immediately if it says to itself: nothing is without effect. The life which I experience today must bear its fruit for the future.

I want to mention another phenomenon, the conscience. This phenomenon is inexplicable at first. It becomes immediately clear to us if we look at its development. If we know that every soul shows a particular level of

development, then we admit that the urge for figure lives in the undeveloped soul. However, if the spirit has drawn the soul to itself, has united more and more with it, the spirit speaks at any moment of sympathy and antipathy. The human being hears the spirit speaking from his soul; he perceives this as the voice of conscience. This conscience can appear only on a particular level of the human development. We never see the voice of conscience with primitive peoples. Later when the soul has gone through different personalities, the mind speaks to the soul.

These are the main concepts of the theosophical world view, and you have seen how clear this view is for that world of the external forms. Yes, we would never understand this world of forms if we did not understand them from our mind. However, somebody who lives only in the external figure who can be carried away in the world of forms is on the level of the transient, is on that level where he develops selfishness and egoism because our external form only has interest in the form.

But he develops out of selfishness because the spirit becomes more and more speaking. However, we only recognise this spirit, which is the same in any human being, if we bring ourselves to consider the eternally imperishable, the innermost core of the human being. We recognise the human being only in his innermost being if we get to his spirit. If we recognise the innermost core of the human being, we recognise the spirit in ourselves. However, only that who regards the other human being as a brother understands the spirit in the other human being; he understands him only if he completely appreciates brotherliness.

That is why the theosophical movement calls brotherliness the ideal which the spiritual development of humankind wants to achieve under the influence of this world view.

Dear audience, the modern human being finds this in the theosophical movement. Because this movement offers to the modern human being what he looks for, it has spread in the course of 29 years over all the countries of the earth. We find it in India, Australia, America, in all countries of Western Europe. It is to be found everywhere because it brings clear conceptions to this modern human being. Theosophy offers this to the modern human being. It is something that the modern human being looks for, it is something that the modern human being feels, something that any human being has felt clearly who knew how to look with thoughtful look at nature and human life and found what applies itself to this view of the spirit and impresses that which gives satisfaction, consolation, courage and life.

It is the view that the transient that birth and death are not the only one, but that in this transient, passing creative life of the external being the inner being of the spirit enjoys life. Then we safely look at the past and full of courage at the future

if this view has become our conviction. Then we say from the deepest soul full of consolation and courage what the poet expressed by full conviction:

Time is a flourishing countryside  
And nature a big living being,  
Everything is fruit, everything is seed.

### *Notes*

Giordano **Bruno** (1548 — 1600), Italian Dominican monk, philosopher, mathematician, astrologer and astronomer.

Cf. R. Steiner *CW 7 Mystics after Modernism*, chapter on G. B.

Gotthold Ephraim **Lessing** (1729 – 1781), German writer, philosopher.

*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts (On the Education of the Human Race)* (1780)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotthold\\_Ephraim\\_Lessing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotthold_Ephraim_Lessing)

Johann Gottfried **Herder** (1744 – 1803), German theologian, poet, philosopher

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_Gottfried\\_Herder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Gottfried_Herder)

Jean **Paul** (1763 – 1825), German writer

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean\\_Paul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Paul)

Jacob **Böhme** (1575 — 1624), German mystic. Cf. R. Steiner *CW 7 Mystics after Modernism*, chapter on J. B. (Anthroposophic Press, 2000)

## What Do Our Scholars Know about Theosophy?

*Berlin, 28th April 1904*

If a school of thought should be successful in the course of human evolution, a school of thought, which does not find acceptance or may even not enjoy the knowledge of the so-called authoritative circles, of the ruling spiritual circles, then it has to fight with the reluctant powers all the time which distinguish themselves within the human civilisation.

We only need to remind of that which happened as Christianity had to assert itself against old ideas, against an old spiritual current in the world. We need only to remind that in the beginning of the new school of thought Galilei, Copernicus, Giordano Bruno had to fight against the so-called authoritative circles. We are allowed to suppose that the school of thought inaugurated by Giordano Bruno had to fight against traditions.

In a similar situation is today that school of thought that is represented under the name theosophy in the literature, in talks and the like since several years. If you remember of the destiny of such schools of thought more or less unknown at the moment of their appearance, you find that the way how the ruling circles, the so-called authoritative circles face them, indeed, changes with the fashions of civilisation that, however, the essential part, the lack of understanding, combined with a certain narrow-mindedness, appears over and over again. It is no longer standard today to burn heretics, and in particular liberal circles would protest to be lumped together with such people who burnt heretics. But it may less depend on that. Today the burning of heretics is no longer really trendy. But if we examine the attitude, from which the persecution of heretics arose, and the reasons of such a persecution and compare it with that which takes place in the soul of somebody who fights against the theosophical school of thought more or less today or opposes against it, then we find a similar attitude and similar inner soul processes with the adversaries.

We do not want to enter into discussion with the whole circle of the adversaries of the theosophical world view. We want to confine ourselves rather to that which is connected with our contemporary scholarship; we want to consider the relation of our contemporary scholarship to the theosophical or spiritual-scientific world view as I call it since some time.

Perhaps, it is not meaningless if one starts this consideration with small symptoms. I start with a very widespread small encyclopaedia, a so-called pocket encyclopædia, which says on its title-page or at least in its preface that it is collated by the best scientific people. If we open it under the catchword "Theosophy", we find as an explanation only two words: "God-seeker, dreamer." Such a kind of learnt consideration of the theosophist is now no

longer common in all similar reference books, of course. But somebody does probably not become cleverer from this short remark who wants to get to know something about theosophy also not from the other similar reference books.

I have tried to examine in the real philosophical reference books at least externally what is to be found there. I do not want to give an anthology of quotations from such reference books. I would like to give an example only what is to be found in the *Dictionary of Philosophical Concepts and Terms*, published in Berlin in 1900. In one of the newest works which lists the most of theosophical concepts the following you can read: [*Gap in the shorthand notes.*] ... these are about three lines with these names. Who wants to get an idea of theosophy from this short representation has to say to himself: also in such philosophical dictionaries we find nothing else than a not correct translation of the term and some names.

Also, otherwise, it does not look especially good if we want to orientate ourselves about that which is represented here as theosophy what the contemporary scholarship knows about that. But the easier this contemporary scholarship wants to condemn theosophy on account of a few little things which it has picked up from any theosophical brochure. We can make the strange experience: a shrug and the remark, “what the theosophical literature spreads is nothing else than warming up a few Buddhist concepts,” or: “it is nothing else than spiritistic superstition expressed somewhat differently.” You can hear such things in abundance. What you hardly hear, however, is a real answer to the question: what is, actually, theosophy? You will find — maybe not only in coffee parties — that which has really happened in a coffee party recently which is, however, not at all so untypical for the standpoint of our contemporaries to theosophy.

There a lady said to another: how is it that you have become a theosophist? This is something terrible, something awful. Take into account what you do to your family; consider how you are in contradiction to that which other people think. — She was silent for a few seconds and said then: what is really theosophy? This did not happen in learnt circles, but you could find something of that kind also in the learnt circles. You can find the judgement again and again that theosophy is nothing scientific at all that it is only enthusiasm of some fantastic people that they bring forward assertions which one cannot prove.

I want to criticise by no means where I want to characterise the relation of our scholarship to theosophy, not even our relation to the circles of scholars. Because nobody else than that who has an overview of our present bringing up of scholars from the theosophical point of view knows better that from this education, from the concepts and ideas of it nothing else can arise than a high-spirited and a somewhat snooty shrug about that which theosophy asserts and which can really appear to that scholarship — because it cannot understand it better — as rapture and as a completely unscientific gossip.

We really want to be fair towards this scholarship. The theosophist stands on a point of view and has to stand on one which I want to show at an example which has not taken place on theosophical ground which could have taken place, however, easily on theosophical ground. The theosophist is in a similar position to the contemporary scholarship rejecting the sneering and the reproach of rapture, as just in the example the recently deceased philosopher Eduard von [Hartmann](#) to the materialistic-Darwinist interpretation of nature. I do not want to take sides of the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* by Eduard von Hartmann. But over and over again one would have to point to the way how he faced his adversaries. — In 1869, the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* appeared, a book of which the theosophist not needs to take sides exactly, a book which was, however, a courageous action at that time. Just the relation of this book to the scholarship of that time can give an example how today the spiritual scientist or theosophist faces his adversaries. This *Philosophy of the Unconscious* was a courageous action in a certain way. At that time, the waves of the materialistic science surged when the materialistic science had grown up into a kind of materialistic religion,

Books like *Energy and Matter* by Büchner, other books by Vogt, Moleschott and the like who considered energy and matter, the purely sensuous existence as the only one, they caused great sensation, have experienced many editions and conquered hearts and souls. In that time, everybody was regarded as being a poor devil and a fool who did not join in this choir of materialism who spoke about a self-creative spirit. In this time, when one was of the opinion that Darwin's work delivered the scientific way of thinking for materialism, in this time, when philosophy itself was a word which one considered as something that was overcome, in this time, Eduard von Hartmann let his *Philosophy of the Unconscious* appear, a philosophy which has one advantage in spite of its big shortcomings that it attributes the world directly to something spiritual everywhere, looks for the basis of something spiritual in all phenomena, even if the spiritual is considered as something unconscious, even if it takes a particularly high rank.

One thing is certain: there the spirit offers sharp resistance to the materialistic attitude. While at that time the Darwinist school of thought explained nature completely from energy and matter, Eduard von Hartmann tried to understand it in such a way that the spirit should become evident as the inner effectiveness of a spiritual work. — Then those came who believed to be entitled to look down with a shrug on everything that spoke of spirit and judged: there was never anything dilettantish like this *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. A man speaks there, actually, who has learnt nothing about all the phenomena which Darwinism now explains so scientifically.

There was a lot of counter writings at that time. One also appeared by an unknown author. Its title was *The Unconscious from the Standpoint of the Theory of Evolution and Darwinism*. It was a thorough refutation of the

*Philosophy of the Unconscious*. The author showed that he was familiar with the latest development of natural sciences. Ernst Haeckel said in a brochure that it would be a pity that the author did not call himself, because he himself could have presented nothing better against Eduard von Hartmann than what is in this writing. Oscar Schmidt wrote a brochure and said that no naturalist would have been able to say anything better against the limitless dilettantism of Eduard von Hartmann than the anonymous author of this brochure. “He may reveal his name to us and we consider him as one of ours.” — The brochure was soon out of stock and the second edition appeared with the name of the author. That was enough to silence the people. It was Eduard von Hartmann. Since that time the chorus was silent of those who had written about the dilettantism of the *Philosophy of the Unconscious*.

You can argue something against such a procedure, but you cannot deny that it was thoroughly effective. Somebody who was regarded at first as a man who knows nothing has shown to the scientific circles that he could be cleverer than they could ever be. Let me use this trivial expression, it would be good even if somewhat anachronistic to do the same. But that who is at the summit of the theosophical world view could also easily, very easily write together all that stuff which one can today produce against theosophy. This has to be emphasised above all: theosophy is nothing that is directed against the real, true science if it is properly understood. Theosophy is able to understand the true, real science any time as Eduard von Hartmann could understand his adversaries. The reverse is not so easy in the one and the other case. However, we have also to understand where from this could come that way.

If I held a lecture only about that which our scholars know about theosophy, then this lecture could have become rather short, and I would have hardly needed to stand before you longer than for a few seconds. But I would like to go deeper; I would like to speak of the reasons why our contemporary scholarship can know so little about theosophy which opens a new way of thinking about the matters of the world.

If we look around today in our contemporary scholarly literature, we find that these considerations differ, already externally, from all the literature about hundred years ago. If we take a book which has, for example, the title: “The Origin of the Human Being, the Human Being and His Position to the World,” we hardly find anything else than that once the human being did not live on earth that he began his existence on earth in a childish, half animal condition. Then we are made aware of the fact that animal ancestors lived before this time on earth and that these developed to the present-day human being. — If we take another book which should inform us about the secrets of the universe, then we find that it deals with that which you can see through the telescope and what you can achieve with mathematics. In other words: everywhere something that I have called factual fanaticism in my book *Goethe’s World-View*, that factual

fanaticism which keeps to the sensuous facts — to the sense-perceptible facts, at most to that which the armed senses can perceive.

Everything belongs to that which is presented today in the most detailed way in any possible popular writing, and what the human being is solely able to provide of the riddles and secrets of the world on account of scientific facts. If we look around in the circles which draw their knowledge only from such books, then we find that there are, actually, all kinds of intermediate stages that, however, these intermediate stages are to be found between two extremes. The one extreme is the sober scholars. They only accept as scientific what they can see and infer with their reason from the seen. There the world is explored with instruments in all directions. There one searches for written documents, there the time and the development of humankind is investigated according to pure facts. The one is said to be natural sciences, the other is said to be history.

In history you find quite strange things sometimes. In particular if one deals with experiences of spiritual science. You find that there are people who write thick books about the old Gnostics, for example, or about any branch of ancient spiritual wisdom who do not want at all to know anything about this spiritual wisdom itself. They look at this purely historically; they only register the written documents and are contented with it. Today one does not need to be a gnostic to write about Gnosticism. Today scholarly circles regard this almost as a principle. And as the best principle is regarded to be possessed as little as possible from the matters about which one writes, actually. If you take this factual fanaticism on one side, you have nearly what induces such scholarly circles to say: we can notice these matters, we know these matters; what goes beyond them is the object of faith. Everybody can believe or not believe what he wants. — The result of this attitude is a certain indifference to all the objects, thoughts and beings which go beyond the only sensuous facts. Then one says: if anybody needs them for his faith, we leave them to him, but science has nothing to do with them.

A thick dividing wall is raised there between science and faith, and science should be nothing else than what can be perceived purely with the eye and with the ear, nothing else than the consideration of facts and what one abstracts from it. Anything else should not be investigated. — Then, however, something else appears which possibly says: it is not right that science stops anywhere, but this is right that the human being develops more and more and that he unfolds more and more forces in his works, so that he can know everything that there are no limits of knowledge. Indeed, the last objects of knowledge are to be attained only in infinite distance, but they are in such a way that we can approach them more and more. Limits must not be raised anywhere. It seems to be a summit of arrogance if such representatives appear who claim that this ability slumbers in every human being. Develop it and you will see that the objects which once were objects of your faith can become objects of your knowledge, of your wisdom. It is not different with the objects which refer to the immortality of the



soul, to the spiritual world, to the big and to the small world in space and to the whole development of the human being; it is not different from the matters which we also meet in the usual natural sciences.

Or, what does a human being, who takes a popular book about astronomy, know from own experience about that which the book says to him? I ask you: how many knowing people are among those who believe in the materialistic history of creation? How many are among those who swear on the materialistic spirit who have seen through a microscope and know how to investigate these matters? How many are there who believe in Haeckel and how many who know in this field? Everybody can become a researcher if he has the time and the energy for it. This also applies to the spiritual matters.

It is brainless if one says that the matters come to an end. It is brainless as well if one says that you have to believe what is in Haeckel's history of creation, that you yourselves cannot investigate this. In no other sense theosophy speaks of objects and matters of the higher world. One has been accustomed to use the term theosophy for this spiritual science. Not because it has God solely as the object of its consideration, but because it makes a distinction between the external sensuous human being who sees, hears, smells, tastes with his five senses, and combines the sense-perception with his reason — and the other human being who lives in this bodily human being who slumbers in it and can be woken and uses such spiritual organs, spiritual sensory tools, as the body has the physical sensory tools. As the body sees with the physical eye, the mind sees with the spiritual eye. Like the body hears with the physical ear, the mind hears with the spiritual ear.

If the human being takes care of his spiritual development himself, these spiritual organs of perception can be trained, so that the inner human being is able to look into a spiritual world. Because one calls such an inner human being the divine one, I make the difference. What the external sensuous human being beholds, gives sensuous wisdom, what the inner divine human being beholds is, in contrast to sensuous wisdom, theosophy, divine wisdom. Thus it is meant if one speaks of theosophy. One does not speak of theosophy, because God is the object of research, because God is something that becomes obvious to the occultist only at the end of the things, on the summit of perfection. The theosophist will dare least of all to investigate God, although we know that we live, work and exist in Him.

Just as little as somebody, who is sitting on the beach and dives his hand in the sea, believes that he can exhaust the whole sea, the theosophist believes just as little that he can embrace God. However, like somebody, who is sitting on the beach and gets out a handful of water, knows that the scooped water is of the same being as the whole big encompassing sea, the theosophist also knows that he carries a divine spark in himself that is of the same kind and being as God. The theosophist does not claim that his being can embrace God, he does also not

claim that in his human soul the infinite God lives, or that the human being himself is God.

He will never come up with such a thing. However, what he says, what he can experience and get to know is something different, this is just this that in the human being a part of God lives, which is of the same kind and being as the whole godhead, as well as the handful of water is of the same kind as the whole encompassing ocean. As the water in the hand and the water in the sea are of the same kind and being, also that which lives in the soul is of the same kind and being as God. Therefore, we call heavenly what is inside of the human being, and we call the wisdom divine wisdom or theosophy which the human being can investigate in his innermost core.

This is a thought process which everybody would have to admit if he wanted to think only logically. Often someone objects to theosophy: you demand that the human being goes through a development. However, not everybody is able to verify everything the theosophy maintains. — Somebody who understands the matters will never maintain that any human being if he can have only the necessary patience, force and endurance cannot get to that condition which single human beings have got in the course of human development. But something else is in the so-called proofs of theosophical truths. Something is to be found in the theosophical literature and in theosophical talks or can be heard, otherwise, somewhere within the theosophical movement about which somebody who has a modern education says to himself: these are assertions. One can accept them, but no theosophist does prove them; he just maintains them. — This speaking of proofs is something that appears over and over again that one objects to theosophy over and over again. How is it? — It behaves as follows.

What theosophy spreads as a higher spiritual wisdom can be investigated if those forces which slumber in every human soul are woken. These forces and abilities, which we call the forces and abilities of the seer, of the spiritual beholding, are necessary to investigate the matters. If one wants to investigate, to discover the facts of the spiritual world, these abilities and forces are necessary. However, it is something different to understand what the spiritual researcher has found. Mind you, one needs the forces of the seer to find the spiritual truths, but that one only needs the clear, logical human mind going up to the last consequences to understand them.

That is essential. Someone who states that he cannot understand what theosophy maintains has not yet thought enough about it. On the contrary, we can better understand what science maintains today. Just what we understand, if we stop at true science, about the facts of nature, about the matters of the apparently lifeless and of the living nature — even if we take the facts of the history of civilisation — if we want to understand them, we can never understand them if we approach them only with the materialistic scholarship

which is nothing else than materialistic fantasy. We can understand what true science delivers to us if we know the true science of the spiritual world. To somebody who sees deeper science as it is presented by Ernst Haeckel, for example, becomes only understandable if one has theosophy as a precondition, as a basis.

A comparison should make clear what I want to say. Imagine that you have a picture before yourselves which shows any scene, any saint's legend. You can try to understand this picture in double way. Once you place yourselves before the picture and try to let revive in your soul what has lived in the soul of the painter. You try to rouse in your soul what the picture shows as spiritual contents. Something lives in it that raises your soul, makes it lofty, and invigorates it. However, you can still react differently to this picture. You can go and say that this does not interest you. Also what the painter has imagined does not interest you particularly. However, you want to get to know how he mixed the paints which substances are mixed in the paint which he painted on the canvas. You want to test how this is there on the canvas, how much of the red and green paints were used where straight and where crooked lines were applied.

These are two different approaches to a picture. It would be brainless to say about the one: you look at something that is false. — No, he looks at something that is absolutely true. He looks how the paint sticks to the canvas and how it is composed. He looks whether and how the paints have cracked et cetera. This can be real truth. Then there the other comes and says to the first: this is not the right thing what you think. This is only a thought. You can objectively find what I investigate.

I want to give an additional example, so that we understand each other precisely. Somebody plays a sonata on a piano. You listen to this sonata with musical ear; you indulge in the marvellous realm of sounds which this sonata delivers to you. This is a way how you can investigate what takes place here. However, another way could also be the following. Anybody comes there and says that this does not interest him which one hears with the musical ear. But there stands a piano, in it strings are stretched. These strings move. I want to hang up little paper tabs on these strings. They jump off if the string moves and thereby I can study where the strings move and where they are in rest. I want to completely refrain from that which you hear there with your ear. One cannot prove that objectively.

As well as this second viewer behaves to the first viewer; the characterised scholars behave to the theosophists. No theosophist thinks of denying scholarship. Just as little as that who goes into raptures about the spiritual contents of a picture says that that is not true which the other investigates about the paints, just as little that who has a musical ear will say that that is not true which the other investigates with the little paper tabs — because it is true, it is true what the naturalist investigates about his material. Nothing should be argued

against it. But that escapes these natural sciences which is essential in the world process. Just as that which is essential escapes somebody who looks only at the little paper tabs and what also escapes somebody who only investigates the paint and maybe still the material, the canvas.

Then some people come and say: there is something subjective, this lives only in the soul and cannot be proven objectively. One has to investigate what can be really found. Outside only the oscillatory etheric matter, the oscillatory substance exists. Indeed. One answers as a theosophist to such people: if you only investigate the matter, you only find your matter outside, as well as that who blocked his ears can only find what one can see in the little paper tabs.

Still a few years ago one got up the objectivity of science to mischief. It is this the so-called atomistic theory where one calls that subjective which the human being perceives as sensory sensation what he perceives as sound, colour et cetera, and traces it back to objective processes. These processes should be oscillations of any substance. At that time — as an example — one called it always only red. Red, one said, is only in your eye. Outside in space is nothing else than an oscillation of the ether of so and so many millions oscillations. — This pseudoscience, which is no longer science but religion, transformed the world of perception into a huge sum of atoms which are in oscillatory movements. This nonsense of transforming everything that we experience as colour-fresh and lively contents into abstract processes which are nothing else than calculated things, nothing else than results of brooding and speculation, this nonsense lately withdraws somewhat. We see that already the atom and its oscillatory movement is regarded by reasonable naturalists only as a calculation approach and in the better circles of thinkers one does no longer take care of the inaccuracy of the atomic hypotheses et cetera. But it has collected in the brains of the human beings to look at the world as an objective nothing, as only materialistic oscillation processes, so that it has penetrated the theosophical movement and theosophy itself in the first years. We had to experience that the most spiritual movement was severely infected by materialism. We had to experience that one could read in the most different theosophical books over and over again that this is this or that vibration. In particular the English books did not get tired to talk about vibrations.

It is a characteristic of our time that this materialistic tendency could come into the most spiritual movement. We still have much to do for long time to overcome this childhood disease of theosophy. However, only if the time has come when within theosophy one no longer speaks about moving atoms, then that cleverly thought-out construction of monads has disappeared which whirl down from the heights and take in everything — an absurd materialistic idea. One has to realise that theosophy concerns the recognition of the spiritual as such and one has to be aware of the fact that one lets the materialistic science have the swinging little paper tabs and lets it investigate the paints and the canvas. Theosophy deals with the development of the higher senses, the

knowledge of the higher senses, it includes what the human being sees, summarises, surveys with the higher soul forces, and what he hears with the musical ear — the swinging string expresses it spatially. If you have understood this, you know to some extent what theosophy is.

Hence, we have also to completely renounce to believe that a kind of harmony is possible between the modern scholarship and theosophy. It is not possible. — This harmony only comes if scholarship itself has progressed so far that it can understand theosophy. Indeed, we have to do it with the chemical investigation of the paints, with the investigation of the lines, with the investigation of the canvas, with the investigation of the little paper tabs on the moved strings, but this does not exclude that with the higher development of the spiritual forces the higher spiritual is revealed to us in that which we investigate externally. The modern scholarship is far away from understanding this matter.

One becomes mild towards this scholarship if one sees, for example, that somebody who has been born out of this scholarship cannot understand anything that is scholarly in the deepest sense and has originated from spiritual science at the same time. I know that I say something extremely offensive for many listeners who have learnt physics. But it is something symptomatic about which I have to speak. Which physicist would not disparage what one calls Goethe's theory of colours. It is a matter of impossibility to speak about it, but times will come — and they are not far -, when one recognises the objections against Goethe's theory of colours as outdated prejudices. You can read further details about Goethe's theory of colours in my book about *Goethe's World View*.

Goethe's theory of colours was born out of a spiritual world view and for that who can understand this, this theory of colours is the proof of Goethe's deep thinking. But it does not start from the prejudice that colour is an oscillatory ether. It stands rather on a ground which can be circumscribed as I try it now. I ask you to follow me in my subtle thought process. If anybody sees the red colour outside, his eye sees red at first. Now there comes the physicist and says: this red colour is only subjective. This is a process in space or in the brain. However, what is real outside is nothing but an oscillatory movement of the ether.

If now anybody comes who says: what you see there is only an oscillatory movement of the ether, then reply the following: try to imagine this oscillatory movement of the ether. Is this colourless? It must be colourless, because you want to explain the colour from the oscillations. Hence, what is outside must be colourless. Then I ask: does it still have maybe other qualities; does it maybe have the quality of heat? There the physicist answers: heat even comes from oscillatory movement. However, these people are funniest if they say: these oscillations do not have sensory qualities, but only those qualities which we can think.

If one regards now that which the senses say as subjective, one must also regard that which one thinks as subjective. Then one must also say: what you have calculated there as an oscillatory nebulous mass is subjective all the more, is never perceived, but is only calculated. Everything is calculated subjectively. Who realises that that which we experience in ourselves is objective and that the objective can become the most subjective has a right to speak about the fact that also the calculated has an objective existence. He also does not regard red and green, C sharp and G as only subjective phenomena.

Now I have said a number of matters which are dreadful heresies to scientifically thinking people. One talks a lot that times have changed. Yes, times have changed since Giordano Bruno. At his time the dogma of infallibility was not yet valid. Today the dogma of infallibility is valid, as you know, in certain Catholic circles. But this dogma of infallibility is not born only out of Catholicism. It came into being as an external law, as an external dogma. However, the infallibility dogma also lives as an attitude in the minds of the materialistically thinking, monistic freethinkers. They regard themselves — I do not say that everybody regards himself as a little pope — but as so infallible that they regard everything as superstitious that does not come from their circles. If one counters these infallible physicists and psychiatrists — they do not say that they are infallible, but one feels it -, then he is dismissed. He is no longer burnt, but he is made a fool with the means which is trendy today.

The theosophist does not necessarily look for approval. Compared with truth approval is something indifferent. Who has understood the truth of a mathematical theorem does not care whether a million people agree or not. Truth is not decided by majority. Someone who has recognised a truth has recognised it and needs no approval. Thus the theosophical movement prefers the careful supporters. It does not want to have children but such human beings who form a judgement, with all care, after the most profound examination. The demand to be careful is something that gives me the deepest sympathy.

From that which I have tried to show you can infer that theosophy is far away to criticise the contemporary scholarship. Should the theosophist fight against it? He would do something very foolish, because it would be as if that who looks at a picture with displeasure wanted to fight against somebody who studies the chemical composition of the paints. If, for example, an appearance like Ernst Haeckel is defended from theosophical side, this does not need to be wrong. One can defend him if one recognises him from a higher point of view sees how he appears there and knows how to classify the matters in the world evolution. The theosophist is able to give the right position to the contemporary development in any field.

Thus the relation of the newly arising spiritual current is which tries to look at the world in such a way as single extraordinary spirits looked always at it. But it was not possible during the last centuries to give this spiritual science as it was

given once. What one calls theosophy today is a small part of encompassing world wisdom, of occult science. This is something that has always existed with extraordinary human individualities since millennia, even since there are human beings. In the form, however, as single great spirits have owned it, it could not be given to the big mass. Nevertheless, it was not withheld from the big mass. If you check the legends and myths of the nations impartially, you see that these legends and myths are the metaphorical expressions of a science which contains more wisdom than the present-day science offers. This science would regard it as fantasy if one said that wisdom is in these fairy tales. This world wisdom has been announced in the most different religions; depending on how the one or the other people needed it according to its temperament and the climate. If we have an overview of everything that was given to humankind in the most different forms, we are led to a common core, to encompassing world wisdom. Today not everything can be already handed over to the bigger part of humankind, because somebody who rises toward this world wisdom has to go through particular inner ordeals. This world wisdom can be handed over only to somebody who goes through these ordeals. In former times also the elementary part was handed over only in the closest circle to well-prepared pupils with the corresponding intellectual, moral and mental qualities. There are even today persons who regard it as wrong to deliver the occult profundities by theosophy to the big mass of the human beings. However, the reproach is unfounded because there is no alternative today. Who understands the structure of the spirit of the present age knows that inner truth and wisdom of the religious world view feel alienated because one can no longer understand them.

This was different once. Then the wisdom which is announced today by theosophy was the property of the single human being. One gave the big mass the appropriate wisdom in pictures. The feeling nature of the big mass was suited to take it up in the pictures. The big mass could live with these pictures only. Truth was in the religions, truth was in the basic religious views. Theosophy only makes this clear again to us in the deepest way. The human being could understand it with his feeling in ancient times. Our time demands that he can also understand what is contained in the religions.

Thus occult science is forced to come out a little bit, to contribute something to the verification of the religions, to give the elementary part of spiritual truth at least. A time would be dreary and desolate if humankind were alienated from all knowledge of the spiritual worlds and from any relation to them. Only that who does not understand the case can believe that humankind could exist without relation to the spiritual, without belief in spirit and immortality. Like the plant needs food juices, the soul needs something spiritual that forms its basis. Theosophy does not want to found a new religion. But it wants to bring truth home to the human being again in a form which is suited to the modern human being, in the form of thinking comprehension. Thus theosophy brings the old

truth in new form to our contemporaries, unperturbed by those who, going out from the materialistic superstition, turn against this spiritual current.

As well as the external natural science rests upon that which it investigates and calculates with the help of the microscope and telescope, theosophy uses the most significant instrument of which Goethe speaks: what the skilled ear of the musician is, this is the human soul compared with all tools -, and further:

Nature, mysterious in day's clear light, lets  
none remove her veil,  
and what she won't discover to your understanding you  
can't extort from her with levers and with screws.

Faust I, verses 672 — 675

Who understands the world is the most perfect instrument, and supported on the spiritual beholding theosophy will produce such instruments more and more.

The answer to the question: what do our scholars know about the real basis of theosophy is: nothing. — They can know nothing because all their ways of thinking can bring them to nothing else than to look at theosophy as a fantastic stuff. Who has understood, however, that scholarship cannot get involved in theosophy, which has gone out from quite different bases, also understands that this scholarship will be in need to illuminate the structure of spirit more intensely. This scholarship provides such flowers. But a real comprehension of the soul only can make such things comprehensible, which the modern scholarship knows.

Or: what has somebody to think who regarded Goethe, Schopenhauer, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer and others as great spirits if this materialistic scholarship has brought it so far that you can find in a little book about Goethe's illness, about Schopenhauer's illness — also in other works — these illnesses considered from the point of view of the materialistic psychiatry? One calls a particular type of insanity [manic depression](#), schizophrenia another, and paranoia a third one. These three forms of insanity are taken to show that one can also find symptoms of insanities with the great spirits who are regarded as leaders of humankind. One found the symptoms of manic depression with Schopenhauer, paranoia with Tasso, Rousseau and others. Indeed, the same author has called an even bigger number of people feeble-minded. He is the [author of the book \*On the Physiological Idiocy of Women\*](#) which concerns one half of the whole humankind. It would be easy to consider the author from his own viewpoint and to scrutinise him. — However, one must not laugh at these matters. The materialistic science must get to this because these are partial truths. But one can get only to the right insight if one sees the spirit working behind it. Then one sees that often a higher spiritual development must be purchased for the same symptoms, as on the other side health for other symptoms. One is able to do this only if one explains them from the theosophical standpoint.



I would like to tell something else. You know that I have pointed to ancient times of development when our civilisation did not yet exist when there has been a continent between this Europe and America, the continent of the old [Atlantis](#). I have already pointed to the fact that this Atlantis has been found again by the naturalists. In the magazine [Kosmos](#), 10-th issue, a naturalist speaks of animals and plants which lived on this Atlantis. Indeed, such a naturalist admits this, but he does not admit that other human beings lived in those days. He does not admit that the old Atlantean land was covered by a wide nebulous sea that the ground was not covered by such an air as it forms our atmosphere today, that the expression which the old Central European peoples have in their myths: Niflheim, nebulous home, means something real that our Atlantean ancestors lived in a nebulous country. I have sometimes pointed to that.

Few days ago a lecture was held in a famous society of naturalists in which was pointed out to the fact that most probably in the time of our Atlantean ancestors on the earth very large land masses were covered with fog. One concludes this speculatively from different other phenomena. Above all, it is pointed out to the fact that the plants, which need sunshine which grow in the desert, are of a later date and did not yet exist at that time, while those, which need little sunshine which could exist at Niflheim, the nebulous home, are the older ones.

Here you see that natural science lagging behind says to you what theosophy has said before. We have a time ahead when also the other matters must be gradually admitted by these natural sciences. Theosophy does not have to get used to the fantastic, objective atomic theories, but the facts which theosophy announces from the higher standpoint will be proven by the external natural sciences. This is the course of the future development. Even if the modern scholars know nothing about it, their own progress leads them to it. — No thinker should doubt that one can see more, can behold more with a developed soul than with mere senses and mere intellect.

It is the recognition of the developed human being as the most perfect instrument to investigate the world — theosophy wants this to be accepted. Everything else results automatically. If you say that the human being has reached the highest levels and will not keep on developing, then you do not need theosophy. If you say, however, the laws which have held sway in the past, will also hold sway in the future, single human beings have always stood higher than others of their surroundings — if you admit this, then you have already a theosophical attitude, in principle. One does not become a theosophist because one uses the words theosophy, brotherliness, unity et cetera. Brotherliness is something that all good people understand.

If I see people always talking about brotherliness and then also behold them feeling an inner lust if they talk about brotherliness, harmony, unity, then I always think of the oven and the first principle of the Theosophical Society which demands to establish the core of a general human fraternisation. It is for

nothing if one says to the oven: dear oven, heat the room and make it warm. — If one wants that the oven gives off heat, then one must put heating material into it and kindle it. One must put heating material into it. This is the spiritual force, the ability to behold on account of the development of the higher worlds. By the development of the spiritual world that truth and wisdom in the human souls take place which must lead as wisdom and knowledge automatically to the general human brotherhood. Then we arrive at that which is expressed in the first principle of the theosophical program if the human being can be an instrument to behold into the spiritual worlds. If the organs of perception concealed in the human being are got out of the soul, theosophy is a progress which one is able to pursue. If one compares this theosophical attitude with the attitude of theosophists, of great, lofty personalities who lived in prehistoric time, then we find it also in a sentence from Herder's pen: our tender, feeling and sensitive nature has developed all senses which God has given it. It cannot do without them, because that which results from the whole use of the organs shines to all. These are the vowels of life and so on.

Even if we only take the external physical senses into consideration, we can say in the theosophical sense, nevertheless: the physical and spiritual senses must be developed, because by the harmony of the spiritual and physical organs of perception the vowels not only of life, but also those of the eternal, infinite, spiritual life are kindled.

You read in Goethe's poem *The Secrets*:

From the power which ties all  
beings escapes that human being  
who overcomes himself.

The human being is neither free nor not free, he is developing.

### *Notes*

Karl Robert Eduard von **Hartmann** (1842 – 1906), German philosopher  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl\\_Robert\\_Eduard\\_von\\_Hartmann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Robert_Eduard_von_Hartmann)

Eduard Oscar **Schmidt** (1823 — 1886), German zoologist. *Goethes Verhältnis zu den organischen Wissenschaften* (1853), *Descendenzlehre und Darwinismus — The Doctrine of Descent and Darwinism* (1873)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard\\_Oscar\\_Schmidt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_Oscar_Schmidt)

Conrad Ferdinand **Meyer** (1825 – 1898)), Swiss poet and historical novelist  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conrad\\_Ferdinand\\_Meyer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conrad_Ferdinand_Meyer)

**manic depression:** Steiner uses the obsolete term “zirkuläres Irresein” (circular insanity, French: folie circulaire). This form of insanity is today called manic depression or bipolar disorder.

**author of the book *On the Physiological Idiocy of Women:*** Paul Julius Möbius (1853 – 1907), German neurologist. *Über das Pathologische bei Goethe* (1898). *Über Schopenhauer* (1899)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Julius\\_Möbius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Julius_Möbius)

**Atlantis:** cf. R. Steiner CW 11 *Cosmic Memory*

**Kosmos:** Theodor Arldt (1878 – 1960), German geographer. *Das Atlantisproblem*

## Is Theosophy Unscientific?

*Berlin, 6th October 1904*

Eight days ago I tried to show what the modern human being can today find within theosophy. Before I continue this cycle of talks, the special question of theosophy is to be discussed and its relation to the big tasks of the present civilisation, to the significant spiritual currents of our time. That is why I would like to enter into the so important question whether theosophy is unscientific. This is that reproach which affects the theosophical movement most seriously in a time, in which science has the conceivably biggest authority, maybe the only real authority. However, in such a time this misunderstanding weighs a lot. Thus it must upset the theosophist particularly if the reproach is done repeatedly from the part of science, in particular from the part of those who want to create a configuration of life and world on scientific basis that theosophy is unscientific. A phenomenon of the last years, which must be symptomatic of the interests of our time to us, shows that the majority of people look just for this authority of science. However, the question which I only want to touch now will be exactly discussed in the talk on science. Nevertheless, I would like to point to the big sensation which Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* made to show that just the teachings of this book make obvious to someone who recognises its value as I do where the interest lies. This book wants to build up a whole world-picture on the basis of natural sciences. More than ten thousand copies of it were sold; then a cheap popular edition was organised for one mark, and more than hundred thousand copies of this edition were sold during few years since its appearance. The book is translated into almost any important language. However, this seems to me less significant than that which I say now. Haeckel received more than

5000 letters concerning scientific questions. The letters contain almost the same questions, and we see that with it an important central need has been met. A supplement of the book *The Riddle of the Universe* is the book *The Wonders of Life*. In the preface Haeckel tells to us what I have just said. In this book you can also read the reproach which is done to theosophy, the reproach to be unscientific. The question is a burning one.

Hence, we have to understand how the whole position of our theosophical spiritual movement is compared to science. Who only has an overview of the last centuries cannot at all get it clear in his mind. One has to go back to the origin of human knowledge, to a time which is far away from our time, to the daybreak of human knowledge or at least to that which we call human knowledge today.

To understand completely how immense the contrast is between the view of the scientific problems today and in that daybreak of human knowledge, we have to realise that modern science declares itself to be absolutely incapable to answer the big questions of existence. In the preface of *The Wonders of Life* you find repeated what Haeckel has often said: he represents the standpoint of science against the medieval superstition and the revelation. Between truth and superstition there is no mediation, there is only either-or possible. He states with it that that which he has gained on the basis of his scientific studies is the only truth and that everything that other millennia produced is error, superstition and unscientific, already because the researchers of the former centuries knew nothing about the big discoveries of the 19-th century.

The natural sciences of our time declare to be unable to answer particular questions. Indeed as I have indicated already in the previous talk, these natural sciences try to lead us back to bygone times, they try to find the primeval animals and plants and lead us back to the point in time when probably the first life came into being on earth. But the questions, these important central questions which Bois-Reymond put and Haeckel tried to answer in the book *The Riddle of the Universe*, the questions of the origin of life find no answer in natural sciences. Today, of course, the naturalist tries to give an answer to these questions, in particular Haeckel attempts it. He shows how the earth came from a fire-liquid state, cooled off bit by bit, became more solid, how then water could form and collect, and how finally the conditions were there that the living beings originated. He tries to show how one could imagine that life has come into being from the lifeless. This is what he wanted to oppose to all older convictions: that life once came into being from the lifeless and that everything that depends on life — also the human being — is nothing else than a product of the inorganic matter that it is based on nothing else than what we have in physics and in chemistry. However, Haeckel tries in vain to show that the human being is nothing else than the result of the miraculous dynamics and mechanics of the human organism. Because the big question comes now. The naturalist approaches the point in time when on our earth the conditions should have

existed that the first living being originated from the lifeless matter. And there you find a concession with the researchers, even with Haeckel: we cannot form any mental picture of the condition in which our earth was at that time when the first life appeared. We do not know how the external nature was at that time, and, therefore, we cannot say how at that time the lifeless changed into life.

This is one group of the researchers. They had many followers in the first third of the 19-th century, as well as even today. If, for example, the great English researcher Darwin was asked for his opinion in the first time when one said that one must understand life from matter, he himself would have conceded that it is impossible to understand life from lifeless. Huxley said, on account of his study of comparative anatomy, in the last time of his life that we are just within the world evolution; why should we not be able to think that that which we see round ourselves could not develop higher? We cannot declare the realm of beings finished; we have to look up from the lower beings to the higher beings which are not accessible to us, because we do not have senses for them. The reasonable naturalists made such thoughts and objections to themselves.

It is interesting that the German biologist [Preyer](#) has come because of his studies which were based on Darwinism to quite different views about life. He did not consider that life has developed from the lifeless, but he got to the result that at that time when the earth developed the first living being of our type the earth was not lifeless but one single living being, and that at that time generally nothing lifeless existed on our earth. The lifeless has developed only from life. You see that the Darwinist Preyer transformed the view, which other naturalists represented, just into the opposite, considering the earth as a huge living being. This was, as Preyer assumes, millions of years ago. A huge living being was our earth which you can compare with a human organism or an animal organism of today. Today also the human being has life and something apparently lifeless in him. Our bony system is apparently something lifeless. It separated from the living as something lifeless. Preyer imagines approximately that the earth was once a huge living being, and that the living earth has precipitated the lifeless, the dead, the rock and the rock masses, as the human being the skeleton. This is an important step which the naturalists and the philosophers have done in the last time.

And this step has to lead inevitably to an additional one; it has to lead to the step that not only the lifeless has developed from life, but that also all physical, the living and the lifeless have developed from the higher, from the spiritual. If the researchers pursue the way which they have taken today initially, they get to the sentence: not only the lifeless developed from life, but life itself developed from the spiritual. The spiritual was first, it separated life at first, and then life separated the lifeless. However, this is nothing else than the basis of the theosophical world view. The theosophical world view differs from the present, materialistic-scientific view because it makes the spirit the first and everything else dependent of the spirit. The materialist makes matter the first and derives

everything from matter. I have already suggested last time that the teaching of the senses points to the reason why the modern naturalist wants to insist on his sentence that life can be derived from the lifeless, from the spiritless. I have pointed to the great sentence that the physiologist [Johannes Müller](#) and other significant physiologists expressed first. [Helmholtz](#) and then [Lotze](#) put it in the formula: the world round us would be dark and dumb if we did not have eyes and ears, which transform the oscillations of the air into that which is colours and sounds to us. — Natural sciences themselves say to us that everything that we see in the physical world round us is dependent on us. If we did not have particular eyes and ears, we could not see and hear the world in this particular way. The physiologist can give the reasons to us why the eye and the ear form in a particular way. This is due to the fact that we take part in the physical world with our eyes. Theosophy now shows the basic concepts of which I speak in eight days. We see a thing because we put the eye in the correct position to the thing which we want to see. We understand a thing because we have reason and apply it to get a world view from the pictures of the objects. Hence, we are able to make a world view to ourselves. Theosophy expresses this that way: the human being is aware of the physical world.

However, we have now to put the question: does the human being live only within the physical world? By way of a hint we can explain to ourselves this question if we imagine that anybody has no ears; he does not hear the sounds of his fellow men. They could produce sounds and words, but without ears you would not perceive the sounding manifestations of the external physical world. You must have ears to realise the physical world. — Does the human being consist, however, only of such physical manifestations? No, you know that within the body, in which the human being and also the animal are enclosed, not only physical activities exist, but that in the human being also feelings, desires, passions, and wishes exist. These desires, wishes, impulses and passions are also realities like the physical functions, the physical activities. Just as you digest and speak, you feel, wish and desire. Digesting and speaking are physical manifestations, and we can perceive them with physical senses for our physical consciousness. Why can we not perceive the other reality, which is also in us, the wishes, desires, emotions and passions? It is spoken fully in line with natural sciences if we say: we cannot perceive them because we have no senses for them.

However, just the world view underlying the theosophical movement shows that the human being can not only become aware of a physical, but also of a higher world. If we look at the manifestations of this higher world, then the wishes, desires, passions and impulses are as discernible realities as the physical perception is, as language is the physical expression of a physical activity. Then one says that the consciousness of the so-called astral world has awoken. The human being stands then as a being of impulses, of desires and of passions before us as he awakes as a physical being and can throw back the light

impressions for our physical eye. How these higher senses awake how the human being can attain the higher consciousness, we hear this in the lecture cycle about *The Basic Concepts of Theosophy*. The human being lives in this higher world, but his consciousness, in so far as he is an average modern human being, has not awoken for this higher world.

Then there is still a third world, a world of thinking, and a world of the higher spiritual life which lies above the passions, desires, wishes and impulses. This world of thoughts, the world of spirituality, is still less accessible to the physical consciousness. Anybody should not deny this world of the pure spirit who stands on the standpoint of modern philosophy, but take into account that only the modern human being is lacking the organs to perceive it. The human being lives also in this third world. He thinks in this world, but he cannot perceive it. Hence, we have to say: the human being lives in three worlds. We call these three worlds: the physical world, the psychic world and the mental world. In the common theosophical parlance we call them: the physical world, the astral world and the spiritual world. The human being is only aware of the first, the physical world, and, hence, he can only find something of the physical world scientifically. He can find anything of the other worlds only if he sees, perceives and is conscious in them as he is in the physical world today.

So we have in the human being a threefold living being before ourselves which forms a whole of body, soul and mind which is aware, however, only in the physical world. Therefore, the naturalist doing research within the physical world can look back only as far as the physical world presents itself to his scientific eye. Also to the scientific eye, equipped with any means of science, no other world comes up than that which comes up to the usual sensory life. Even if he looks back to the evolution of the earth for millions of years, he looks back to the point where from the astral daybreak — it is more luminous than any physical light — the physical has gradually condensed.

Only the eye which has become clairvoyant can penetrate to those evolutionary conditions where the physical from the astral and the astral from the spiritual have arisen; where the spirit gradually condensed to the living and later to the lifeless. That is why the physical researcher can no longer use his method of research where as it were the physical flashes where it has developed from the psycho-spiritual. That is why the physiologist rises to the periphery, to that condition where the living becomes the spiritual. To a more distant past the spiritual researcher rises and with it he creates a more encompassing world-picture, a world-picture which extends far beyond that which the physical researcher knows.

We have shown that the theosophical world view does not need to be unscientific, because it designs a somewhat different world view than the physical research. Other experiences are underlying it — the awakening on the spiritual plane. As you have to move in a room which is dark groping the way

and perceive touching, and as another impression originates if the dark room is illuminated, everything appears new to the spiritual researcher, whose eyes are opened, in new activity, in another light. This researcher did not become unscientific because his experience was enriched. The logic of the theosophist is as certain as the logic of the best naturalist. Only this logic moves in another field. It is a strange ignorance if one wants to deny the scientific nature of our research, before one has tested it. We think in the same way on the higher planes as the physical researcher does on the physical plane; this harmonises the theosophical method of research and the physical one.

Now we have to explain why the modern researcher expresses this hard either-or and rejects everything that is not physical. The theosophical researcher realises why this has to be that way: this is connected with the development of humankind. Because the theosophist considers the development of humankind in a higher light and because he can perceive the events, so to speak, in the spiritual realm, the theosophist is able to recognise by the development why the sole authority is attributed to the physical intellectual science. What one calls science today has not always been there. Exactly the same way as any plant, as any animal has developed, as the genders and human races have developed, the spiritual life has also developed. Modern science itself has not always been in the same stage. It is a product of development. However, there was in the oldest times a way of human consideration although it was not scientific in the modern sense. Therefore, one has to go back to that time when the rudiments of our human life come into being.

Everything is in development. The human race was more different from that of today millions of years ago than one imagines it. This difference comes also up in the talks about the *Basic Concepts of Theosophy*. Another human race, the Atlantean one, has led the way of the human race of today. Plato still tells about it. This race is a fact that cannot be denied by the natural sciences. It has differently imagined, differently lived, and developed other forces than the humankind of today. Who wants additional information, can read up more about this human race in my magazine *Luzifer*. After the decline of this human race, this “root race”, such imagination, such thinking and looking developed finally as it is today. Within our present root race we distinguish seven subraces again according to the theosophical view from which our own is the fifth one.

Humankind of today developed slowly, the cultural life developed slowly. If we go back to the spiritual life of the first subrace of our root race, this spiritual life presents itself quite differently than our present-day spiritual life. The thinking of these human beings was different. It cannot be compared with our inferring rational knowledge at all. This thinking was spiritual, which came about by intuition, by a kind of mental instinct — but also this is not the correct term, it is more a spiritualised kind of thinking. This spiritualised kind of thinking contained all the other human mental activities like in a germ, lying side by side today, harmoniously in itself. What is separated today as



imagination, as religious devoutness, as moral feeling and at the same time as scientific nature was a unity in those days. As well as the whole plant is enclosed in the seed, in a unity, that which is separated in many mental activities today was enclosed in a unity. Imagination was not that imagination which we regard as an unreal one. Imagination was fertilised by the spiritual contents of the world, so that it produced truth. It was not what we call artistic imagination today; it was that which contained truth in its images at the same time. The feeling and the ethical will were connected intimately with this imagination. The whole human being was a unity, a spiritual cell. We can imagine it externally if we check what has still remained to us.

If you study the ancient cultural products, as for example the Vedas of the ancient Indians, you find art, poetry and spirit flowing like from a spring. At that time truth, poetry and sense of duty flow like from a single centre of the human being, from common intuition. We can also study the images which have remained from the oldest druidic times which form the basis of ours, — and we find that the temple constructions, the stone settlements of the druids are modelled on cosmic measures. Everything shows us a former development.

Then we come to the next subraces. There we see that the mental activities separate that they have spread out in the beginning like the branches of a tree. We see later, in the Chaldean-Egyptian age, that the science of astronomy separates from the purely practical science; that part by part separates from that which was a uniform view and becomes special attempts. We can pursue a particular law in our fifth root race: the human being of this fifth root race gradually conquers all fields of the physical world. If we consider the just described spiritual human being of the outset of our age, we see that everything is spirit with him.

The old Vedic priest did not yet know the tendency to the physical. The physical was something unworthy to him; he only looked at the eternal course of the events, his look was directed to the heaven, the earthly matters hardly touched him. In our time this Vedic view appears like an anachronism; we see that these views do no longer cope with the physical, and that just the Indian people suffers from the fact that its inner look gets darker, is forced back by a world which can no longer understand this view. The human being had to conquer the physical world with his mind; the human being has dived in the physical world and has to work on the physical world more and more.

The look was directed to the inner self at first, then, with the Chaldeans and Egyptians, it was directed to the stars. If we progress to the Greeks, we see how with them bit by bit that which was once united, philosophy, religion and art meet us as three completely separate mental activities. The ancient Vedic priest was a poet, researcher and religious prophet at the same time; if we progress to Hellenism, we see the philosopher, the artist, the priest appearing apart. What has happened according to the law of development in ancient Greece? The

physical world was first conquered by means of one of the mental activities, by imagination. The tremendous Greek art is the conquest of the physical world with the means of imagination.

We progress to the first Christian time. It prepared already in the Old Testament, in the antiquity, but the new field was only conquered by the spirituality of the Christian time. It is the ethical field, the moral life. If you go to the older Greece, you see the moral appearing not separated from the general world view. Only with Socrates and Plato it begins that the moral being separates itself. Christianity conquers the moral world. As well as the old Hellenism conquered the physical in the art by imagination spiritually, Christianity conquered the physical morality, the moral life on earth, spiritually. This is the second phase of development.

If we skip over some time, we see around the turn of the 15-th century to the 16-th century splitting again what was combined once. We see the world viewer, the philosopher, and the researcher separating. There was still no separation between philosophers and scientific-physical researchers before. Look back at the first time of the Middle Ages, look at Scotus Eriugena, at Albertus Magnus, at those who cared for the cultural life in the world, you will see that there everything goes hand in hand. Between spiritual-philosophical researchers and purely physical researchers was no separation. You can still find reminiscences of the unity of philosophy and science with Descartes and Spinoza. The philosophical thinking went once hand in hand with the natural sciences. In the 15-th, 16-th centuries this separation takes place: science separates from philosophy; science becomes independent. A new field of the physical life is conquered: the field, which is to be conquered by physics, astronomy et cetera, briefly by purely physical rational science. Now we see what was united once — science, art, philosophy, religion, ethics — going separate ways.

Attempts were made later repeatedly to reunite what was a unity once. We see this aspiration also with Goethe. We see him trying hard to create spiritual natural sciences and to find a bridge between science and art. A sentence shows this: “The beautiful is a manifestation of secret laws of nature which would have remained hidden to us without its appearance.” Also Richard Wagner tried to combine the myth of the religions in a new art form which should be more than the art founded on pure imagination.

These attempts remind of something that existed at all times. Beside the separate ways which religion, art, science and ethics have gone there was always what one calls the big unity. Beside science, art and philosophy there were the mysteries. The whole world view was performed to the initiate of the mysteries. One did not explain to him scientifically what was once and how the world laws are: an image of life was created there. In the Dionysus drama one revealed to him how the human being, the spirit-man, has submerged into the physical matter how the spiritual has condensed to matter to rise to the spiritual again in

future. In great pictures this piece of art, this Dionysus drama, was performed in the ancient Greek mysteries. It was shown how Dionysus, the son of Zeus and Semele, is saved by Pallas Athena and how his heart is saved by Zeus. This is the performance of a great human drama; it should show nothing else than the life within our earth. It should be shown how the human being has dived in the physical body how he has saved his soul with the help of the spiritual in his innermost being and how he develops again to a new divine existence.

In the Greek culture then appears that separate which constitutes a unity in the deepness of the mystery temples. What Socrates tells and what Plato shows in his philosophy is nothing else than an external image, a separation of that which was found in the mysteries. If you read Plato, you see the philosophical presentation of the mystery drama; if you read the tragic destinies of the heroes, you have a weak reflection of the mystery drama in these heroic dramas. Philosophy has developed from the ancient art. In our time the last separation happened: the rational science which is limited to the physical world has conquered the world; the microscope and the telescope have conquered the world. As well as the Christian art conquered the internal feeling world the physical science conquered the outer nature. This was the task, the big world mission: to conquer what was a unity once in separate fields.

It is the mission of a new dawning time to pave the way for the unity of all four, of science, philosophy, ethics and art; theosophy wants to prepare the mission of new humankind. That is why the first significant work, the *Secret Doctrine* by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, appeared with the subtitle: *The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*. — The theosophical world view behaves that way to the single branches which bury the mental life today. You see why it cannot find consolation, if the scientific world view confronts it with an either-or.

You see why the theosophist who looks at the whole can look reconciling at science and can almost expect an additional rise in the scientific sphere from the future development of science. This is the ideal of theosophy. Because humankind is a whole in every single human being, this ideal is the big human ideal of our time. On separate ways the human beings of our root race had to arrive at their goal. However, the big world law is that the ways go apart for a while; then they must reunite. Now it is the time of reunification.

A unifying world view can be only a tolerant world view. That is why the big principle of tolerance stands at the head of our movement. It would be a misunderstanding if one wanted to assess the theosophical movement on account of any truth. We do not unite on account of a particular single truth, of a dogma, not of that which this or that person has recognised or believes to have recognised. Anybody who expresses a truth in the theosophical movement, even if resolutely and energetically, does not express it in the sense as others demand that one must confess to it. Have a look at the single confessions, also at the

schools of scientific thinking, materialism, monism, dualism et cetera, everywhere you can see one thing: the follower of such a confession or school believes to own the only truth and eliminates everything else. Either-or is the motto. The quarrel of the sects, of the views is the result. Theosophy differs quite basically from that. Truth has to develop in every single human being. Who expresses his knowledge, expresses it only to stimulate his fellowmen. The theosophical teacher is aware that in every human being truth has to be got out. In doing so, absolutely tolerant human beings unite in brotherliness to a common big goal; they unite in the Theosophical Society, in the spiritual-scientific movement. The most tolerant attitude, tolerance in feeling and thinking is to be found in this movement.

The theosophist realises, just if he has advanced in his way of knowledge, that in the breast of any human being the truth core rests that he only needs to be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere to develop. It is all the cooperation on which it depends. Where theosophists unite, they create that atmosphere round themselves in which the single human germ can thrive. They regard this cooperation as their proper task. This distinguishes the theosophical movement basically from all others. Others combat each other — but we unite. Others are monists and consider dualism as wrong; however, we know that dualism and monism find a unity in an even higher harmony if anybody goes on searching spiritually in himself.

The great spirits have expressed this, also Goethe — connecting with his words to old masters — how in the human being the divine truth must develop how it has to come forth from the single human heart. He headed one of his scientific works with the following motto that could be also a motto of our theosophical movement:

Were not the eyes like the sun,  
How could we see the light?  
Did not God's own force live in us,  
How could delight us the divine?

Theory of Colours. Didactic Part

## **Notes**

William Thierry **Preyer** (1841- 1897), English physiologist. *The Hypotheses of the Origin of Life in Naturwissenschaftliche Thatsachen und Probleme* (1880) – *Scientific Facts and Problems*.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Thierry\\_Preyer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Thierry_Preyer)

Johannes Peter **Müller** (1801 – 1858), German physiologist

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Peter\\_Müller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Peter_Müller)

Hermann von **Helmholtz** (1821 – 1894), German physician and physicist

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann\\_von\\_Helmholtz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_von_Helmholtz)

Hermann **Lotze** (1817 – 1881), German philosopher and logician. *Grundzüge der Psychologie (The Principles of Psychology)* (1880)

*The Basic Concepts of Theosophy*: contained in CW 53 *The Origin and Goal of the Human Being*

## Is Theosophy Buddhist Propaganda?

*Berlin, 8th December 1904*

This lecture is intended to discuss one of the most popular prejudices about the theosophical movement: that theosophy is nothing but Buddhist propaganda. One has even coined the word for this movement: New Buddhism. It is without doubt that our contemporaries would have to argue something against the theosophical movement if in this prejudice were anything right. Someone who stands, for example, on the Christian point of view asks himself rightly: what does a religion like Buddhism mean to somebody who has a Christian confession or is educated in a Christian surrounding. Is Buddhism not a religion that was intended for quite different circumstances, for another people, for quite different conditions? And someone who stands on the point of view of modern science may say to himself: which important matters can Buddhism deliver to us who we live with the scientific concepts which have been obtained in the course of the last centuries, because everything that it comprises belongs to a range of thoughts which originated many centuries before our calendar? — Today we want to deal with the question how this judgement could originate, and which value it has, actually.

You know that the theosophical movement was brought to life by Mrs. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in 1875 that it has spread since that time over all civilised countries of the earth that thousands upon thousands of people who look for the solutions of the questions of life have found satisfaction in the deepest sense that it has produced researches which deeply speak to the soul of the modern human being. This movement has a rich literature and has produced a number of men and women who are able to independently speak in its sense. You cannot deny this. And we have to ask ourselves: how is the relation of this movement to the religions of the East, to Hinduism, and in particular to Buddhism?

The title of one of the most popular books in our field is to blame considerably for this prejudice which I have mentioned. It is the book by which countless human beings were won over for the movement, the *Esoteric Buddhism* by Sinnett. It is an unfortunate coincidence that the title of this book could be misunderstood so thoroughly. Mrs. Blavatsky says about this book that it is neither Buddhist nor esoteric, although it is called *Esoteric Buddhism*. This judgement is exceptionally important for the assessment of the theosophical movement. However, Buddhism stands on the title-page of Sinnett's book, but this Buddhism would not have to be spelt with two d, as if it came from Buddha, but with one d, because it comes from **budhi**, the sixth human principle, the principle of enlightenment, the knowledge. Budhi means nothing else than what

was called Gnosticism during the first Christian centuries. Knowledge by the internal light of the spirit, doctrine of wisdom.

If we understand the term “Buddhism” in such a way, we are soon able to admit that the teaching of Buddha is nothing else than one of the manifold forms in which this teaching of wisdom is spread in the world. Not only Buddha, but all great teachers of wisdom have spread this Buddhism: the Egyptian Hermes, the old Indian Rishis, Zarathustra, the Chinese teachers of wisdom Laozi (Lao Tse) and Confucius, the initiates of the old Jews, also Pythagoras and Plato, and, finally, the teachers of Christianity. They have spread nothing else than Buddhism in this sense, and esoteric Buddhism is nothing else than the internal teaching, in contrast to the external teaching. All great religions of the world made this difference between internal and external teaching.

Christianity knew this difference between esoteric and exoteric content, in particular in the first centuries. The esoteric differs quite substantially from the exoteric. The exoteric is that which a teacher announces before the community, what is spread by means of words and books. It is that which everybody understands who is on a certain level of education. The esoteric teaching is not spread by means of books; the esoteric part of every religion of wisdom is spread only by mouth to ear and still in quite different way. There must be an intimate relation of the teacher to his pupil to bring esoteric contents to a human being. The teacher must be a guide to his pupil at the same time. An immediate personal band has to exist between teacher and pupil. This relation between teacher and pupil has to express what goes far beyond the mere information, beyond the mere word.

Something spiritual has to be in this relation between teacher and pupil; the mental power of the teacher must have an effect on the pupil. The will exercised in wisdom lets something stream into that which moves on the pupil or the little community immediately which shall partake in the esoteric lessons solely as a little community. This little community shall be taken up step by step to the higher levels. One cannot recognise the third level if one has not adopted the first and second completely. Esotericism comprises not only a study, but a complete transformation of the human being, a higher education and discipline of his soul forces. The human being who has gone through the esoteric school has learnt not only something; he has become more different concerning his temperament, feeling nature and character, not only concerning his insight and knowledge.

What is entrusted to the external world or to an external book can be only a weak reflection of a real esoteric instruction. Hence, Mrs. Blavatsky says rightly that Sinnett’s book is no esoteric Buddhism, because whenever any teaching is generally given by a book or publicly, it is no longer esoteric; it has become exoteric, because the peculiar shading caused by the finer soul forces, the whole spiritual breath which must penetrate and warm up that which esotericism comprises, all that has disappeared from the information that a book delivers.

However, one thing is possible: somebody whose slumbering abilities can be easily aroused, and who has the intention and the tendency to read not only between the lines of a book, but to suck as it were at the words, that can suck out from a book what as esotericism forms the basis of this exoteric book. One can come under circumstances up to a lofty degree in the esoteric teaching without receiving immediate personal esoteric lessons. But this changes nothing of the fact that an immense difference is between any kind of esotericism and exotericism. The Christian Gnostics of the first centuries tell that in the words of Origen, of Clement of Alexandria if they spoke to their intimate pupils, the immediate soul fire, the immediate spiritual force had an effect, and that these words had another life then, as if they were spoken before a big community. Those who got the intimate lessons of these great Christian teachers know to tell how their souls were completely transformed and changed.

In the last third of the 19-th century it became necessary to wake up the spiritual life in humankind as a counterbalance for the materialistic world view which has not only seized the scientific, but also the religious circles, because the religions have taken on a completely materialistic character. It had become necessary to revive the internal spiritual life. This internal life can be aroused only by somebody who goes out in his words from the force that is created in esotericism. It had become necessary that some people spoke about the matters again who knew not only from books and instructions, but from immediate personal observation something about the worlds which are above the physical plane. Just as somebody can be an expert in the fields of the natural sciences, somebody can also be an expert in the fields of the soul-life and the spiritual life. One can have immediate knowledge of these worlds.

At all times there have been such human beings who had spiritual experiences; and those who had such experiences were the important rulers and guides of humankind. What has flowed in as religions onto humankind has come from the spiritual and psychic experience of these religious founders. These religious founders were nothing else than envoys of the great brotherhoods of sages who have the real guidance of the human development. They transmit their wisdom, their spiritual knowledge into the world every now and then to give a new impulse, a new impact in the progress of humankind. To the big mass of the human beings it is not visible where from these inflows come to humankind. However, those know where from these impulses come who can do own experiences, who have the connection with the advanced brothers of humankind, who have arrived at a level which humankind reaches only in distant times. This connection itself by which the word of the spirit speaks to the co-brothers and co-sisters from within through the advanced brothers of humankind is esoteric. It cannot be attached by an external society; it is attached immediately by the spiritual force.

From such a brotherhood of advanced individualities a current of wisdom, a new spiritual wave had to flow in again onto humankind in the last third of the



19-th century. Mrs. Blavatsky was nobody else than an emissary of such higher human individualities who have attained a lofty degree of wisdom and divine will. Of such kind as they come from such advanced human brothers were also the communications which form the basis of the *Esoteric Buddhism*.

It happened now – due to a necessary, but not yet easily understandable concatenation of world-historical spiritual events — that the first influence of the theosophical movement went out from the East, from oriental masters. But already when Helena Petrovna Blavatsky wrote her *Secret Doctrine*, not only oriental sages as great initiates provided the teachings, which you can find in the *Secret Doctrine*, to Mrs. Blavatsky. An Egyptian initiate and a Hungarian one had already added what they had to contribute to the new big impact. Since that time some new currents have still flowed into this theosophical movement. That is why for somebody who knows what proceeds behind the scenery from own knowledge – it proceeds inevitably behind the scenery because it can penetrate the theosophical current only slowly — it does no longer make sense to maintain that in this theosophical movement only a new Buddhism is contained today. Not only the average human being is depending on his surroundings, on his age and his nation, but also the most advanced human being. Also somebody who has attained a lofty level of wisdom and divine will is still depending on his surroundings in certain way. The great sages of the movement emphasised that immediately in the outset of this movement. The great sages had come from oriental knowledge, from the oriental world. They belonged to a brotherhood which is rooted in that which one calls the profound Buddhism of the East. This brotherhood has its roots not in the so-called southern Buddhism which you can find in particular on Ceylon, but in the northern Buddhism which comprises not only the pure and noble doctrine of moral and justice of the southern Buddhism, but also a sublime doctrine of the spiritual life of the world. This northern Buddhism can be regarded in certain sense as a kind of esoteric doctrine, in contrast to the southern Buddhism.

Why had the renewal of the spiritual life to be stimulated from this side? Was this necessary? We are not fooled by the whole state of affairs which is here, but we express it in such a way as it presents itself to the impartial knower.

All great world religions and all great world views come from envoys of these great brotherhoods of advanced human beings. But while these great religions do their wandering through the world, they must adapt themselves to the different national views, to the reason, to the times and the nations. Our materialistic time, in particular since the 15-th, 16-th centuries, has not only materialised science, but also the confessions of the West. It has forced back the understanding of the esoteric, of the spiritual, of the real spiritual life more and more; and thus it happened that in the 19-th century only very little understanding was there of a more profound wisdom. Nevertheless, with regard to the origin of the European religion we have to say that those who have a spiritual conscience looked for the spiritual but that they found very little stimulation in the Protestant confession of

the 19-th century that they were dissatisfied with that which they could hear from the confessions and theologians.

Just those who had the deepest religious needs found the least satisfaction in the confessions of the 19-th century. These confessions of the 19-th century were revived in the core by the esoteric core of the universal teachings of wisdom. Theosophy led countless people back to Christianity who had turned away from Christianity because of the interesting scientific facts. The theosophical movement has deepened this Christianity again, it has shown the true, real form of Christianity, and it also has led many of those to Christianity who had no longer been able to satisfy their souls and hearts with it. This is because theosophy does nothing else than to renew the internal core of Christianity, and to show it in its true figure. However, it was necessary that the stimulation went out from the little circle of the East in which still a continuous flow had been preserved from the times of an advanced spiritual life in the beginning of our root race.

From the Middle Ages up to the modern times there were great sages also in Europe; and there were also such brotherhoods. I have to mention the Rosicrucians over and over again; but the materialistic century could only accept little from this Rosicrucian brotherhood. Thus it happened that the last Rosicrucians had already united with the oriental brothers at the beginning of the 19-th century who then gave the stimulus. The European civilisation had lost any spiritual power, and that is why the big stimulations had to come from the East at first. Hence, the word: *ex oriente lux*. — Then however, when this light had come, one found the spark again, so that also in Europe the religious confessions could be kindled.

Today we do not in the least need to adhere to the reminiscences of Buddhism. Today we are able to show the matter absolutely from our European culture, from the Christian culture without pointing to Buddhist springs or origins or other oriental influence. It is noteworthy what one of the most significant theosophists of India said about the world mission of the theosophical movement on the congress of religions in Chicago. Chakravarti delivered a speech and said: also in the Indian nation, the old spiritual life has got lost. The western materialism has also entered in India. One has also become haughty and refusing in India towards the doctrines of the old Rishis, and the theosophical movement has acquired the merit of bringing the spiritual teaching also to India. — So little it is correct that we spread Indian world view that just the reverse holds true: that rather the theosophical movement brought the world view, which it has to represent, to India again.

The scholars who dealt with the investigation of Buddhism in the course of the 19-th century argued from their point of view against the term “esoteric Buddhism.” They said: Buddha never taught anything that one could call esotericism. He taught a popular religion which preferably concerned the moral life, and spoke words which can be understood by everybody; however, a secret doctrine is out of the question with Buddha. Hence, some also said that there

cannot be an esoteric Buddhism at all. A lot of incorrect things were written about Buddha and Buddhism. You can see this already from passages of the little book which appeared with Reclam. There you can read: “that is even more which I recognise and do not announce than what I have announced to you. And truly I have not announced this to you because it brings you no profit because it does not promote the holy life because it does not lead to the resistance, not to the suppression of desire, not to peace, knowledge, enlightenment and nirvana. That is not why I have announced that to you. What have I announced to you? This is the suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, and this is the way which leads to the cessation of suffering. I have announced this to you.”

Such a passage shows us immediately that Buddhism is a doctrine which was not announced publicly. Why it was not announced publicly? Because an esoteric teaching cannot be announced publicly! Buddha wanted nothing else from his people than to announce uplifting ethics and moral doctrine with which everybody can become mature to be accepted to a school of wisdom, to esotericism, after he had developed the necessary virtue, temperament and character. Buddha announced to his most intimate disciples what he had to say beyond the exoteric.

The northern Buddhism has preserved this secret doctrine of Buddhism and all great religions of wisdom in a living spiritual flow. That is why that influence which has led to the foundation of the Theosophical Society could go out from them. In particular our contemporaries are reluctant to receive any favourable influence, whether from Buddhism, from Hinduism or any other oriental religion. As we meet there a prejudice of the most unbelievable kind, one could also prove with regard to countless other matters how little the oriental confessions have been understood in Europe, and how those talk about these confessions in Europe who have never taken pains to penetrate into them and behave in such a way, as if anything completely strange to the western wisdom has to flow into the West.

Thus one says that Buddhism leads to asceticism that it leads to estimate nonexistence higher than life. One says also that such asceticism, such hostility to life does not befit the active modern human being. They say: what does such asceticism mean to us? One only needs to report a passage of the Buddhist writings to show how little reasonable the reproach of asceticism is with regard to Buddhism. The term “Bhikshu ([Bhikkhu](#))” signifies a pupil in Buddhism. If any Bhikshu deprives a human being of his life, holds a eulogy on death or stirs up others to suicide and says: what is this life of use for you? Death is better than life! — If he gives reasons for the postmortal life that way, he has fallen off and belongs no longer to the community. — A strict order of Buddhism reads that way and a ban to speak to anybody of the fact that death is more valuable than life: this is one of the biggest sins in the true Buddhism. If you take such a thing, you can estimate, from there going out, how little appropriate the ideas are

which are announced over and over again by those who have dealt with this matter insufficiently.

It is difficult to get rid of prejudices which have nested in such a way. One can only point to the true figure of these matters time and again. Indeed, one has spoken then, but the same objections come soon again. One can say a hundred times that the nirvana is not non-existence, but fullness and wealth of being that it is the highest summit of consciousness and being that there is no passage — also not in the exoteric writings — from which it follows that a true expert imagines nirvana as non-existence: one can repeat a hundred times, but over and over again people speak of renunciation of life. Nirvana is exactly the same about which also Christianity speaks. But only those who were initiated into the deeper secrets of Christianity can point to it.

One cannot deny that the true Christians that the scholastics and mystics were deeply influenced by [Dionysius the Areopagite](#). You find with him that if one speaks of the divine being with which the human must unite at the end of the evolution one should attribute no predicate which is got from our earthly conceptions to this highest being. We have obtained everything that we can say about qualities in this world. If we attribute such a quality to the divine being — as this Christian esotericist says —, then we say of the divine that it is identical to the limited, it is identical to that which is in the world. Hence, Dionysius the Areopagite speaks in his writings of the fact that one should not even say God, but Super-God, and that one has to take care above all not to attribute any worldly quality to this divine being to preserve the holiness of this concept. One has to realise that the divine being cannot have the qualities we can experience in the world but much more.

The great cardinal [Nicholas of Cusa](#) renewed this view in the 15-th century, also the Christian mystics, Master Eckhart, Tauler, Jacob Böhme, generally all mystics who had received insight of the big riddles of existence from immediate experience. Thus the western Buddhists also spoke of nirvana. We may get a better idea of nirvana if we look for the European, Christian terms of it.

Somebody who goes back to the 16-th century and examines the words of that time finds that it is more difficult to detect their sense. Hence, it is also completely incorrect what is said about nirvana from philological side. That who speaks of the theosophical movement as of a Neo-Buddhist movement is not able to say anything correct about the Buddhist school of thought. Those who have spread the prejudice do not know at all of what they talk. For it is not necessary to resort to the oriental sources. Only the first stimulation went out from this oriental spring. What we have today does not pour out to us from Buddhism. On the contrary, since the first times of the theosophical movement the life, the immediate spiritual life has become more and more active in the theosophical spiritual current. If today anybody who wants to announce the original theosophical doctrine wanted to announce a Buddhist confession only, it

would be just in such a way, as if anybody who wants to teach mathematics today does not teach what he himself knows but to teach the old Euclid or the old Descartes.

This is the important feature of the theosophical movement that the first great teachers were only the great initiators, and that since then men and women appeared who have really spiritual experience, who are able to impart the spiritual knowledge. What are to us Zarathustra, Buddha, Hermes et cetera?

They are to us the great initiators before whom we stand in reverence and admiration because if we look at them the forces are stimulated in us which we need. Knowledge cannot be conveyed by the greatest sages on account of their authority. There is good reason, if we still are in another relation to Buddha, Zarathustra, Christ than to the great teachers of mathematics or physics. What is announced as a principle of wisdom becomes immediate external life in the human being.

It is not external knowledge like mathematics or natural sciences, but it is a lively life. What the science of wisdom conveys speaks to the whole human being. It runs through the whole human being up to the fingertips. If it flows out of him, wisdom itself flows out; it flows out from one being to the others. However, we stand to Jesus, Hermes, and Buddha not in such a way as we stand to science, but in such a way that we stand with them in a common life that we live and work in them. On the other hand, they are the initiators only. If wisdom has become ours, they consider their task as fulfilled. That is why it does not depend on dogmas, not on doctrines or on anything you find in books but on the fact that the lively life is in movement, is pulsating. Somebody who does not know in his deepest heart that a lively life penetrates any single member, any single human being who belongs to the theosophical movement, that he is flowed through by lively spiritual currents does not understand the theosophical movement in the right way. We do not have a book in the hand and announce the tenets of the book, we are life, and we want to impart life. As much life we impart, as much theosophy will work.

If we understand this, we also realise that it does not depend on the text of the doctrine, but on the immediate spiritual experience which somebody has to announce which he himself has to tell. This is the big misunderstanding that one believes that one has to swear on the words of any masters in theosophy, or one has to repeat these or those dogmas or tenets which come from higher individualities, and then this is theosophy. One believes that somebody is a theosophist if he speaks of the astral world and of devachan, and spreads what he reads in the books. This does not yet make anybody a theosophist. It does not depend on that which is announced, but how it is announced that it is announced as immediate life. Hence, somebody who lives the life correctly which comes from these books Mrs. Blavatsky or somebody else wrote lives this life individually.

This is the best stimulation which somebody can receive which he can also attain from Blavatsky if he is able to receive something spiritual in himself and to spread it again. We need human beings who know how to announce out of themselves what they have experienced in the higher worlds. Then it is a matter of indifference whether it happens in words of the East, in words of Christianity, or with the new-coined words. In the true theosophist words and not concepts do live, the spirit lives in him. The spirit has neither words nor concepts, it has immediate life. All concepts and words are only external forms of this spirit living in the human being.

This will be the progress of the theosophical movement. It becomes the more theosophical, the more we have men and women who understand the theosophical life who understand that it does not depend on speaking about karma and about reincarnation, but on that: to make the spirit, which lives in them, the moulder, the creator of the words. Then we do not speak at all with the words which were valid in the theosophical movement, and, nevertheless, we are better theosophists. We do not have orthodox adherers and heretics again in the theosophical movement. If we distinguished orthodox adherers and heretics, we would no longer have understood the theosophical movement at the same moment. For no other reason we can have neither a Hindu confession nor a Buddhist one. We speak to every human being in such a way that he can understand it according to his progress and the conditions of time.

It is not correct if we speak to our Europeans in Buddhist phrases because for our European hearts and souls Buddhism is something strange in its form. We really have to put ourselves in the souls, but not to force anything strange on them. It would be contrary to the sense of the theosophical movement if we wanted to force a foreign religion which is not rooted in the people's life. This was just the secret of the teachers of wisdom that they found words and concepts to speak to everybody, so that he understood them.

Among the teachers of wisdom Hermes, Moses, Pythagoras, Buddha, Christ Jesus show that to us. They announced to the peoples what they could understand at their places and at their times. Hermes would never have taught anything else than what was suitable for the Egyptian heart. Buddha would never have taught anything else than what was for the Indian heart. And we have to teach what is for the western heart. We must cling to what already lives in the people. This was the secret of the great teachers of all times. We deepen the core of wisdom of the great religions that way again and above all we find access to every heart. We must forget to swear on dogmas, forget to look for the right thing recognising a tenet.

We have to look at life only. Then we no longer give grounds for such prejudices, as if we wanted to announce a new Buddhism, as if we wanted to do Buddhist propaganda. Those who understand theosophy as a modern spiritual movement speak to the Christians in Christian images, to the scientists

scientifically. The human being can err in detail, but in his deepest inside he must find truth in whichever form it expresses itself. But one talks, as if one wants to give stones that somebody who looks for bread if one speaks to him in strange forms.

This gives us a hint at the same time how wrong and inaccurate it is if we make any dogmatism in the sense of an old church to that which we are based on. We have no such dogmatism. Those who know how it really stands with the theosophical movement do not look at dogmas. What we have to teach is deeply inscribed in any soul. The theosophist does not have to look for that which he has to announce in a book or in a tradition, this issues from no dogma, this issues from his heart only. He has to do nothing else than to get his listeners to read what is inscribed in their souls. Somebody who wants to help has to be an initiator.

Thus the theosophist stands before the life of any single soul, and wants to be nothing but the initiator who helps to self-knowledge. More and more people will understand the theosophical movement that way and then achieve it by positive work that such a prejudice can no longer exist like that that we want to do Buddhist propaganda, as if we wanted to inoculate anything strange to Christianity. No, the past is dead unless it is revived. Not that has life which we read in the books and documents, but that which comes into being in our hearts every day anew. If we understand this, we are right theosophists only. Then is in our society theosophical freedom, theosophical self striving of everybody, no oath on any dogma, merely research, merely striving, merely longing for own knowledge. Then there is no heresy, also not anything that could be recognised as not accessible, not fight, but combined striving to always united spiritual life! This was always the attitude of the great spirits. This was also Goethe's attitude he nicely expressed in the words:

He only merits freedom and existence  
who wins them every day anew.

Faust II, verses 11575 — 11576

### *Notes*

**Budhi** — **Buddhi**: the correct spelling of the sixth human member is buddhi.

**Bhikkhu**: cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikkhu>

**Dionysius the Areopagite**: in his writing *On the Divine Names* (*De divinis nominibus*)

**Nicholas of Cusa** (1401 – 1464), German theologian, philosopher, astronomer  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas\\_of\\_Cusa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_of_Cusa)  
Cf. CW 7 *Mystics after Modernism* (Anthroposophic Press, 2000, 71ff)