

THE FREEING OF MAN'S BEING AS THE FOUNDATION FOR A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

A lecture by Rudolf Steiner on November 10, 1919

(Newly translated.)

When Goethe was traveling through Italy in order to bring clarity and greater maturity to his conception of the world, he wrote to his Weimar friends, who were well aware of what he had in mind with his archetypal plant, that this conception of his was brought back to him particularly strongly by the rich, exuberant plant-world of Italy. Beginning in an abstract way-though we shall soon see that there is no need to confine ourselves to an abstract view of the matter-he says: Such an archetypal plant must surely exist, for how otherwise could people recognize that each individual representative of the whole manifold plant kingdom is indeed a plant? As I have said, this is abstractly expressed; but Goethe goes on to speak far more concretely and forcefully about this archetypal plant. Thus he says, for example: If one has grasped the idea of this archetypal plant with one's mind, one can then out of such an image form for oneself pictures of actual individual plants which have the possibility of existing.

One needs only to consider aright what is actually being said by means of such words. Thus Goethe is seeking to develop in his mind an idea of the nature of plants in general, and he wants to have the possibility of forming a conception out of his archetypal plant which is an individual plant-not, however, a plant which he sees with his senses but which, as it were, adds to such plants one that does not exist as a sense-perceptible reality but nevertheless could potentially exist given the necessary conditions. What is actually being spoken of here? It is that man can in his soul dive down into sense-perceptible reality and experience thereby the spiritual aspect of sense-perceptible phenomena in such a way that he grows together with this spirit creatively living and weaving everywhere in nature.

That is the greatness of Goethe's way of looking at the world-that it is directed towards this diving down into reality and has the conviction that, insofar as one dives down into this reality, one arrives at its spiritual aspect and thus discovers the spirit inherent within it, which can be a guide through the whole confusing diversity of the sense-perceptible world itself ...

As you know, in the course of living in the world we perceive it through our senses and then we assimilate it. This is also of course what ordinary science does. We assimilate this world by thinking about it, laying bare its laws and forming mental pictures or ideas about it. You also know that this forming of mental pictures leads to something else, to something that is intimately connected with the health of our personal human nature. This forming of mental pictures about the world is associated with the fact that we are able to retain the impressions of the world through what we would call our memory, our faculty of remembering. People tend very easily to omit this faculty from their consideration, on the grounds that it seems so everyday. But this is precisely what is characteristic of a real aspiration for knowledge-that what may indeed be of an everyday nature must be conceived of by us as that in accordance with which the most important and significant questions must be opened up.

When we perceive the world of the senses, form mental pictures about it and after a time

seemingly bring it forth again from ourselves, so that we recall the experiences that we have had, there is much that is unconscious about the process of remembering. Just think how little you are the master of your memory, how lacking your faculty of remembering can be. Consider above all how little you are able to think about this process of remembering while you are engaged in outward perception. Or is it, rather, the case that, as we look at the world with our eyes and hear tones with our ears, we are at the same time making sure that there are the mental pictures which make it possible for us to recall everything? No, we would have to be consciously exercising another power apart from that of perception, apart from the workings of our senses. In ordinary life we do not do this. I would say that memory and its power functions alongside outward life. But it works subconsciously, in a certain sense exerting an influence on all life in the outer world of the senses, so that we carry this life with us in our lives by virtue of our memory. It is drawn forth from our subconscious as a power. In other words: we cannot draw forth what we cultivate unconsciously as our faculty of memory out of the depths of our soul simply by recalling our experiences; rather can we do this by trying to bring that power of memory which we otherwise hardly know-and which, as I say, functions alongside our experiences-to a conscious clarity such as is characteristic only of our outward perceptions, by drawing this power forth from unconscious depths and by living in what otherwise resides in the subconscious realm of memory. If we use our power of memory not in order to remember as such but so that the ideas and mental pictures which are otherwise kept alive only through the power of memory may be allowed to remain consciously present in our mind, we strengthen something in our mind through which we may-when the necessary time for this has arrived-come to know of a quite different kind of awakening from that which we experience every morning. If one again and again consciously works in a way that otherwise only the faculty of memory does, one experiences something of a new awakening in one's soul. One experiences something akin to the opening up of a completely different person in one's soul from the one who makes his way through the world of the senses. The spirit cannot be reached by theorizing about it. Philosophical debates which seek to arrive at the spirit purely through following a line of reasoning do not actually have anything in view other than talking about the spirit. The spirit wants to be experienced. And it can be experienced only if we uplift the activity of memory-which is otherwise deeply unconscious and lives at deeper levels of our human psyche-so that it lives within us with a light-filled clarity similar to that which we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, and so that in this process the conscious will lives in the way that it does when I turn my eye from this wall to that wall in order to look away from what I am seeing here to what I can see there. In that I make use of my senses, my conscious will lives in this process. This inner work of the soul must be wholly imbued with this will; and we will then arrive at what amounts to a continuation of our ordinary soul-activity in the same way that the waking life of day relates to sleep-life, which we know only through our dreams.

The faculty in human nature which can be uplifted to become a new organ of cognition and which Goethe calls the eye of the soul, the spirit-eye, is what anthroposophically orientated spiritual science would seek to bring to manifestation through a gradual focusing upon such inner work of the soul. In this way it would give expression to what ordinary science is unable to express, because it lives under the pressure that has been indicated. However, because humanity has a longing for it (this longing can be observed, if one can only be sufficiently unprejudiced), this pressure needs to be removed from human knowledge.

So you see that anthroposophically orientated spiritual science does not seek to be some kind of crazy mysticism, not something obscure, but a true continuation of what can be known through ordinary science. Anyone who has enjoyed a scientific education will find it easier to concentrate and meditate on thoughts; for he has grown accustomed to methods, to modes of research, which reject subjectivity in favor of objectivity. If one directs the qualities that one has developed through ordinary science towards meditation, one divests oneself of all human arbitrariness and brings something into meditation, into one's inner soul-activity, which is akin to the objective laws of nature herself. By adopting the methods of thinking and cognition proper to ordinary science, one will overcome the chaotic, unclear form of self-knowledge which is striven for in much mysticism of the daft and muddled variety, where people wish merely to brood over their own inner selves. Against this tendency to brood there stands that work upon oneself which with every step proceeds in a way that is worthy only of the most conscientious scientist, who extends his power of judgment over what is spread out before his eyes or his instruments.

That is the one aspect. I would say that it is the aspect that points towards the awakening of particular cognitive powers. The ordinary faculty of memory will of course not be present in such moments when one seeks to explore the spiritual directly, since this faculty has in such a case itself undergone a metamorphosis. It has become a spirit-eye which can perceive the spirit. With the ordinary kind of reasoning characteristic of the logic that has currency today, it is not possible truly to reach forward to the spirit. Anyone wishing to speak about a real advance towards the spirit must necessarily address the powers leading to the spirit which actually exist. Such a power is the faculty of memory. However, this faculty of memory must be transformed and become something entirely different. Any other path of entry into the spirit leads at the same time into the darkness, because the human will is thereby excluded and with it the most important part of man's being. Just as we do not regard as true memory the fantasy life welling up from the depths of our mind over which we have no control, so will the spirit-researcher not accept for his research any soul content which he does not wholly penetrate with the light of his will.

So much for the one aspect, the activity of mental picturing as it is applied in spiritual research. But there is something else in man that must also be made use of if one really wants to find the path into the supersensible, into the spiritual world. And just as spiritual science is challenged by the way that ideas are formed today out of the spirit of ordinary natural science, so in another sense is spiritual science challenged by the way modern human life is lived. Anyone who traces the evolution of the human soul through the last few centuries impartially and without the prejudices of a modern historian would be able to say that around the middle of the fifteenth century a mighty upheaval came about in the constitution of human souls, only in the civilized world, to be sure, but quite expressly within this world. It is a mere prejudice if, in considering only the outward historical facts, one believes a human soul of the civilized world in the eighth and ninth centuries AD to have had the same inner constitution as do human souls today. To be sure, there are also people today who are behind the times and who are still more or less in the eighth or ninth centuries; but they are of great interest, because they lead us in an outward sense back to those times. Nevertheless, all in all we may say: one needs only to examine human life in accordance with one's experience. An immense upheaval

has taken place which since the middle of the fifteenth century has manifested itself more and more strongly. If we would describe it more precisely, we would have to say: as one goes beyond this point, one finds that people related to one another completely differently than is the case today and as unconscious powers are seeking to guide mankind into the future. Whatever one may say to the contrary out of certain prejudices, something was being striven for with regard to the relation between one person and another that had its beginning at the time indicated. At the earlier time people were close to one another through blood-relationships and racial kinship, through everything that gave them a relationship to other people by virtue of their organism, or through other relationships of an organic nature (such as sexual love, for instance). Can we not see—if we did but want to do so that there is an increasing tendency for the old blood ties and family relationships to be replaced by what works from one person to another, that something reaches from the willing soul of one person to the willing soul of another? Can we not see that modern trends of development make it increasingly necessary for one person to approach another person through something altogether different from his mere bodily organism? We do indeed see that the consciousness of personality has been growing since the time indicated, that people have been becoming more and more inward and also more and more lonely. Since this time, I would say, the soul-life of the individual has been growing more and more isolated. The life of the soul is closing off from the outside world. Blood no longer speaks when we confront those closest to us in this sense. We have to stir ourselves inwardly. We have to live into the other. In a soul sense we have to become completely absorbed in the other. Particularly in those circles which with justice call themselves socialist, there is a grave misunderstanding of what might be called the social principle, the social impulse of modern times. This social impulse can be seen emerging, but only in the most limited circles do people know of what it consists.

It consists in that it happens all the more often that the impulse stirs in us solitary individuals of today to reach in a soul-spiritual sense through our will into other people, so that the person closest to us is so by virtue not of blood or organic relationship but of consciousness. In such a case we confront other people and have the need to 'live into' them. What we call wishing someone well, what we today call love, is somewhat different from what people referred to in this way in former times. But in so far as we enter into the other person in this way, it is as though everything that pulsates in us, that lives within us as will, were to receive the will of the other. We inwardly step over to the other person. It is as though we leave our body and enter into the body of the other. If this feeling increasingly takes the upper hand, if it spreads out lovingly to others as what I should like to call modern brotherly love, a real life-experience is engendered from this sharing in the will, in the entire soul-life of the other person. Many people could have this life-experience today were they not to let it become clouded by prejudices. Wherever it appears, it is rejected for reasons which are indeed not good. One needs only to recall a person like Lessing. At the end of his life, when all that he could bring forth by way of purely human greatness had passed through his soul, he wrote *The Education of the Human Race*, which culminates in his acknowledging the fact of repeated earthly lives. There are higher Philistines, just as there are blue stockings, and they have their judgments about such things. They say: yes, Lessing was a clever fellow throughout his life; but then he entered his dotage and arrived at confused ideas such as that of repeated earthly lives.

But these repeated earthly lives are not a fictional idea; they are what we experience if we do

not confront another person through a mere blood-relationship or some kind of organic connection but if we are able truly to reach over to what lives in his soul. Then we become completely absorbed in what is thrusting its way towards us—the spirit of the one person is reaching over to the other person, and from what he experiences in this way he is able to say: this bond that has been formed for your soul and spirit with the other person has not arisen through this life. Through this life there has arisen what resides in the blood. But what emerges as a necessity in the spirit has arisen through something that has preceded this life. Anyone who really traces these developments of the modern life of humanity since the middle of the fifteenth century—and a mist is still spread over these things as far as the majority of mankind is concerned—will arrive at the idea of repeated earthly lives by living together with other people. What manifests itself in this way emerges something like a dream. I say 'like a dream' for the following reason. When we go to sleep, we enter an unconscious realm. Out of this unconscious realm this or that emerges as a dream. This entering into the unconscious in sleep can be compared with diving down into the souls of our fellow human beings, as I have just characterized it. Then out of this diving down there appears out of this 'sleeping into' our fellows something like the dream of repeated earthly lives—not pictorially but in a very real sense; and this makes us aware that something of this kind has to be sought if we are to find our way through the world of the senses. And that which shines forth like a dream out of social life becomes a complete certainty if we cultivate the human will in the same way that I have previously described in the case of memory. But just as memory must become a fully conscious power, so must the will for its part renounce something which entirely governs it in ordinary life.

What is it that governs our will, our wishes and desires in ordinary life? If our desires did not spring forth from the organic life of our body, the will would so to speak have nothing to do. Anyone who scrutinizes the will in the light of experience knows that this will rests on our desires. But we can also free what works as the essential power of the will from our desires. To a certain extent we free it in social life. But this makes us begin to be aware of what really matters. We free it in social life through the fact that, when we love someone very close to us, when we immerse ourselves in such a person, we do not desire this person like a piece of meat. We love someone close to us not out of our desires; rather is there here an inclining of a desire-free will. But this desire-free will can also be cultivated through a particular training. This happens if we do not merely want what is to be obtained in the outer world—towards which one or another desire is directed—but if we incline our will towards our fellow human being and his development. This we can do. We all too often simply let life do this for us. But once one has outgrown school—that is, once one's education is no longer cared for by others—one can also cultivate an ongoing self-education, an ongoing self-discipline. We can take our own soul-being in hand, we can resolve to achieve this or that. If our lives have led us to a certain point, we can resolve to orientate ourselves in this or that sphere of life, to transfer our power of judgment to another area of life; in short, we can reverse our will. Whereas otherwise the will always works from within outwards, in the way that desires govern what is outside us, the will can be reversed, it can be directed inwards. In that we practice self-discipline through our will, in that we try to make ourselves better and better in one way or another, we are drawing upon that power of will which is free from desire. And what you find in my book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* and in the second part of my *Occult Science* has—in addition to the other aims which I have already characterized—the intention that the individual should

direct such a cultivating of the will towards himself, so that he increasingly-if I may put it like this-penetrates into himself with his will. But then if these two forces combine the power of memory drawn forth from the unconscious which then takes hold of the human will-the individual will then know himself as a spirit, he will know that he has inwardly taken hold of the spirit in a purely spiritual way, he will know that he has not achieved this through the organs of the body. He will know about spiritual activity in the spirit, he will know what it means to say that soul and spirit are independent of the body.