

The Driving Force of Spiritual Powers in World History

Lecture 3 — 16th March 1923

Recently it has repeatedly been my task to point out that it would be just as possible to write a person's biography for the time spent between going to sleep and awakening as it is for the time spent between awakening and going to sleep. Whatever man goes through between awakening and going to sleep is experienced through his physical and etheric bodies. Because in his physical and etheric bodies he has suitably developed sense organs, he is conscious of the world around him, for it is linked with his physical and etheric bodies so that it forms, as it were, a unity with him. But because at his present stage of evolution he does not possess similar organs of soul and spirit in his ego and astral body — organs which, if I may be permitted this paradoxical expression, would be super-sensible sense-organs — he is unable to be conscious of his experiences between going to sleep and awakening. Accordingly, only with spiritual sight would one be able to perceive what is contained in the biography of the ego and astral body, which runs parallel with the biography lived through with the help of the physical and etheric bodies.

In speaking about man's experiences between awakening and going to sleep we naturally include the events which take place in his physical and etheric environment, things which happen in connection with him, things he experiences and things which are caused by him. Thus we must speak of a physical and etheric environment, a physical and etheric world inhabited by man in the period between awakening and going to sleep. Similarly he inhabits another world between going to sleep and awakening, only the nature of this world is quite different from that of the physical and etheric world. Through spiritual vision it is possible to speak about this world which is just as much our environment when we sleep as the physical world is our environment when we are awake. You will find the elementary facts in the descriptions given, for instance, in my book *Occult Science: an Outline*. There you will find, albeit only in brief, a description of how the realms of the physical and etheric world, the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms, extend on into the realms of the higher Hierarchies. Let us give this some consideration today.

If, while awake, we direct our eyes or other sense-organs outwards towards our physical and etheric environment, we perceive the four kingdoms of mineral, plant, animal and man. If we then ascend further into those regions which can only be perceived supersensibly, we find that which may be called the continuation of these kingdoms: the kingdom of the Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai, the kingdom of the Exousiai, Dynamis and Kyriotetes, and the kingdom of the Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim.

Thus we have two worlds which permeate one another: the physical and etheric world and the super-sensible world. And we already know that we live in this super-sensible world between going to sleep and awakening; we know that we have experiences there, although these experiences cannot make their way into our ordinary consciousness because we have no organs of soul and spirit.

As a matter of fact a more exact understanding can be reached of what man experiences in this super-sensible world, if the same sort of description of this world is given as is given of the physical and etheric world with the help of science and history. In order to set forth what we may call a super-sensible science of the actual course of the world we inhabit in sleep, we must begin by pointing out certain details. Today we shall first turn our attention to an event of deep significance for the whole of human evolution during the last few thousand years.

We have already discussed this event frequently from the point of view of the physical and etheric world and its history. Now we shall look at it from the other side, as it were, taking our viewpoint not in the physical and etheric world but in the super-sensible world. The event I am referring to and which I have often portrayed from the one point of view took place in the 4th century A.D.

I have described how the whole disposition of man's soul in the Western world changed during this 4th century A.D.; how in fact without spiritual-scientific insight into the matter we today no longer have the slightest understanding of human feelings and sentiments as they were before the 4th century A.D. But we have often portrayed these feelings and this disposition of soul, describing what human beings experienced round about that century. Today we shall turn our attention for a moment to the experiences undergone by the Beings of the super-sensible realm during this time. So we shall be concerned, so to say, with the other side of life and speak from the viewpoint of the super-sensible realm.

That thoughts are confined to the head is a preconceived notion of man's so-called enlightenment. We should learn nothing about things through thoughts if these thoughts were confined to the heads of men. Anyone who believes that thoughts are to be found only in men's heads is a victim of the same prejudice, paradoxical though it may sound, as a person who believes that the sip of water which quenches his thirst arose on his tongue instead of flowing into his mouth from his glass. Really it is just as absurd to say that thoughts arise in men's heads as it is to say: If I quench my thirst with water from my glass, this water has come into being in my mouth. For thoughts are quite definitely spread throughout the world. Thoughts are the forces at work in things. And the organ of our thinking merely taps the cosmic reservoir of thought forces, taking the thoughts into itself. Accordingly we must not speak of thoughts as though they were something belonging to man alone. We must speak of thoughts with an awareness that they are forces which govern the world and are spread throughout the cosmos. But they do not just fly about at random; they are always borne and worked upon by beings of one kind or another. And most important of all: they are not always borne by the same beings.

Turning to the super-sensible world, we find by means of super-sensible investigation that until the fourth century A.D. the thoughts through which human beings make the world comprehensible to themselves were borne, or perhaps one should say, poured forth (earthly expressions are little suited for the description of such lofty events and beings) by the Beings of the Hierarchy called the Exousiai or Beings of Form.

If an ancient Greek wanted to account for the origin of his thoughts through knowledge of the Mysteries, he would have had to say the following: I lift up my spiritual vision to the Beings revealed to me by Mystery knowledge as the Beings of Form, the Forces of Form. They are the bearers of the cosmic intelligence, they are the bearers of the cosmic thoughts. They cause the thoughts to stream through the events of the cosmos, and they bestow these human thoughts upon the soul which becomes aware of them by experiencing them. When someone in the days of ancient Greece adapted himself to the super-sensible world by means of a special initiation, he was able to come to an experience of these Beings of Form; he actually beheld these Beings, and in order to find a true picture or Imagination of them he had to attach to them, in a way as an attribute, the thoughts which flowed shining through the universe. This ancient Greek saw how these Beings of Form as it were sent out shining thought forces from their limbs, forces which entered into the world-processes and there continued to work as world-creative forces of intelligence. He would say perhaps: Throughout the universe, throughout the cosmos, it is the task of the Beings of Form, the Exousiai, to pour thoughts through the universal processes. Therefore just as science based on sense-perception describes the activities of human beings by recording what they do individually or co-operatively, so a science based on super-sensible perception, in examining the activities of the Form Forces during the era under consideration, would have to describe how these super-sensible Beings cause the thought forces to flow from one to the other, how they receive them from each other, and how embedded in this outflowing and receiving lie the universal processes which present themselves to man externally in the shape of natural phenomena.

And then came the 4th century A.D. in the evolution of mankind. For the super-sensible world it brought an event of the utmost importance: the Exousiai, the Forces or Spirits of Form, transferred their thought forces to the Archai, the Primal Forces or Principalities.

At that time the Archai, the Principalities, took over the task previously carried out by the Exousiai. Events of this kind do take place in the super-sensible world. And this was an event of immense cosmic importance. The Exousiai, the Spirits of Form, retained merely the task of controlling external sense-perceptions; with special cosmic forces they rule over everything present in the world of colour, tone and so on. Accordingly, those who have insight into these things must say with reference to the times which follow the 4th century A.D.: the thoughts which rule the world are transferred to the Archai, the Principalities; now, all the manifold forms of the world, the constant metamorphoses seen by eyes and heard by ears constitute a fabric woven by the Exousiai, who formerly gave thoughts to human beings and now give them sense-impressions, while the Archai now give them thoughts.

This reality of the super-sensible world was mirrored here below in the world of the senses by the fact that in ancient times, for instance, the times of the Greeks, thoughts were perceived objectively in things. Just as today we believe we perceive red or blue on things, so a Greek found that a thought was not merely grasped by his head but that it radiated forth from an object in the same way as red or blue radiates forth.

I have described this human side of the matter in my book *Riddles of Philosophy*. In this book you will find a description of how this important event in the super-sensible world was reflected in the world of the physical senses. Philosophical terms are used there because the language of philosophy is suitable for describing the material world, whereas in discussing the point of view of the super-sensible world one also has to mention the super-sensible fact that the task of the Exousiai has been transferred to the Archai.

The preparation of such things in humanity takes many epochs. And such things are linked with basic transformations of the human soul. When I say that this super-sensible event took place in the 4th century A.D., this is of course only an approximation applying merely to the central period, whereas the whole process took place over many ages. Preparations began in pre-Christian times and the change was not completed until the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries A.D. The 4th century A.D. is only the central period and is alluded to in order to have something definite to point to in the historical development of mankind.

This is also the point in human evolution when men's outlook into the super-sensible world begins to become wholly obscured. The consciousness of the soul loses the capacity of super-sensible vision and perception while the soul devotes itself to the world. You will perhaps understand this more clearly in your souls if light is thrown upon it from another angle.

What is the point I am trying so insistently to make clear? It is that human beings begin to feel increasingly aware of themselves as individuals. When the thought-world passes from the Spirits of Form to the Principalities, from the Exousiai to the Archai, man feels more aware of the thoughts of his own being, because the Archai live one step nearer than the Exousiai to man. Somebody who begins to acquire super-sensible vision will receive the following impression. He will say: Certainly this is the same world which I know as the world of the senses.

Ordinary consciousness knows nothing at all about the conditions under consideration here. But with super-sensible consciousness there is definitely the feeling that Angeloi, Archangeloi and Archai are present between man and his sense impressions. The feeling is that they are present here in the sense-world. They are not seen with the ordinary eye but they are actually present between man and the whole fabric of sense impressions. It is the Exousiai, Dynamis and Kyriotetes who are beyond this world; they are concealed by the fabric of the senses.

Thus an individual possessing super-sensible consciousness feels that thoughts, after they have been handed over to the Archai, come nearer to him. He feels them now to be more in his own world, whereas previously they were behind the colours on things, behind the red or the blue; we might say they approached him through the red or the blue or through a C sharp or a G. He feels that his communication with the thought-world has become freer since the transfer. Of course this also brings about the illusion that man makes the thoughts himself.

It took a long time for man to evolve to the point of being able to take into himself, as it were, what had formerly presented itself to him as the objective external world. This only came about by degrees during the course of human evolution. Looking back a very long way in evolution, right back beyond the Atlantean catastrophe and into the time of ancient Atlantis, I must ask you to imagine man at that time as I have described him in my books *Occult Science: an Outline and Cosmic Memory*. As you know, human beings at that time were formed quite differently. Their bodily substance was much more delicate than it became later on during the post-Atlantean age. Because of this the soul element was related differently to the world and the Atlanteans experienced the world quite differently. Let me give you just one instance of this particular way of experiencing the world. The Atlanteans could not experience the interval of a third, or even of a fifth. Their musical experience began with the experience of the seventh. They were also aware of greater intervals, but the seventh was the smallest. Thirds and fifths escaped their hearing; no such intervals existed for them.

As a result their experience of tone-structures was quite different; the soul had a quite different relationship with the tone-structures. For if, without the smaller intervals, we were to live only in the music of sevenths, if we were to live as naturally in these sevenths as did the Atlanteans, we would not perceive music as something taking place within us or in connection with us; we would find ourselves outside our bodies the moment musical perception began. We would live outside in the cosmos as was the case with the Atlanteans. For them a musical experience was a direct religious experience. In experiencing sevenths they could not say that they themselves had anything to do with the creation of these intervals; they felt that the Gods, weaving and flowing through the world, revealed themselves in sevenths. To say: 'I am making music' was senseless to them. But it meant something when they said: 'I live in the music made by the Gods.'

In a much weakened form this musical experience was still present in the post-Atlantean age, when mainly the interval of the fifth was experienced. This must not be compared with our present experience of the fifth. Today the fifth gives us the impression of an empty shell. In the best sense of the word we feel the fifth to be empty. It has become empty because the Gods have withdrawn from mankind.

But in post-Atlantean times man felt that the Gods still lived in the fifths. It was not until later, when the third, both major and minor, made its appearance in music, that music as it were submerged itself in man's inner nature, so that in musical experience he was no longer outside himself. In the real age of the fifth man was still definitely outside himself in the experience of music. In the age of the third, which as you know is comparatively recent, man remains within himself when he experiences music. He embraces music with his body. He interweaves musical and bodily nature. That is why the experience of the third is accompanied by the differentiation between major and minor, so that we have the experience of the major mood on the one hand and the experience of the minor mood on the other. With the arrival of the third, with the entry into music of the major and minor moods, musical experience links itself with the elevated and joyful moods and also with the depressed, painful and sad moods experienced by man because he bears a physical and an etheric body. We might say that man removes his experience of the world from the cosmos; instead he unites himself with his experience of the world. In olden times, in the age of the fifth, and even more so in the age of the seventh, if I may be permitted to use these expressions, man's most important experience of the world was such that it took him immediately outside himself. He could thus say: The world of tones draws my ego and my astral body out of my physical and etheric bodies; I interweave my earthly existence with the divine-spiritual world; the tone structures resound as something in whose wings the Gods flow through the world; and I experience this flowing of the Gods by perceiving the tones.

You see therefore in this particular field how cosmic experience in a certain sense makes its way towards the human being, how the cosmos penetrates into the human being. You see how if we look back into ancient times it is in the super-sensible world that we must seek man's most important experiences. And you see how later the time

comes when man as an Earth-being endowed with physical senses must be included when the most important world events are being described.

This becomes necessary when the thoughts are given by the Spirits of Form to the Principalities, the Archai. Another expression of this may be found in the transition from the ancient period of the fifth to the period of the third and the experience of major and minor.

Now it is of particular interest, in connection with this experience, to go back into an age even earlier than the Atlantean, an age of human evolution upon Earth which fades away into the dim and far-distant past but which can be recalled with the aid of super-sensible vision. You will find this distant age described in my book *Occult Science: an Outline* as the Lemurian age. At that time man's perception of music was such that he could not even be conscious of intervals contained within an octave; at that time man could perceive an interval only if it extended beyond an octave, for instance: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, where the interval C, D, is experienced only if the D lies in the next octave.

Thus in the Lemurian age there could be no musical experience in listening to intervals smaller than an octave; the interval experienced goes beyond the octave to the first tone of the following octave and then to the next tone of the next octave. Thus man experiences something which is difficult to describe, but you may be able to imagine it if I say the following: man experiences the second in the next higher octave and the third in the next octave after that. He experiences a kind of objective third, indeed the two thirds, both major and minor. But of course it is not a third as we know it today, since for us the third only comes about if we take the tonic and the next note but one within the same octave. Because man in ancient times was able to have a direct experience of intervals which we describe today as the tonic in one octave, the second in the next octave and the third in the third octave, he was able to perceive a sort of objective major and minor; not a major and minor mood experienced within himself but a major and minor expressing a feeling of what the Gods experienced in their souls.

We cannot describe what man in the Lemurian age experienced by any such names as joy and sorrow, exultation and depression; we must say that through this particular musical perception in Lemurian times, when he was quite outside himself in perceiving these intervals, he experienced the cosmic jubilation of the Gods and the cosmic lamentation of the Gods. We are able to look back to a time an Earth really experienced by man when what is experienced today as major and minor was, as it were, projected out into the universe. What man experiences inwardly today was then projected out into the universe. What today flows through his emotion and feeling was then perceived by him outside his physical body as the experience of the Gods in the cosmos. What must be characterized as our present inner experience of the major mood was experienced by him outside his body as the cosmic jubilation, the cosmic music of the Gods rejoicing in their creation of the world. And what we know today as the minor mood was experienced in Lemurian times as the vast lamentation of the Gods over the possibility of what is described in the Bible as the Fall of man, the falling away of mankind from the divine spiritual powers, the powers of good.

This is something which echoes down to us out of that wonderful knowledge of the ancient Mysteries which of itself passes over into the realm of art; we not only perceive in a more abstract way how mankind once upon a time succumbed to Luciferic and Ahrimanic seduction and temptation and experienced this or that, but we also perceive how human beings heard in ancient times the music of the Gods rejoicing in the cosmos about their creation of the world and also the cosmic lamentation of the Gods whose prophetic vision showed them that man would fall away from the divine-spiritual powers.

This artistic understanding of something which later became more abstract in form is given to us out of ancient Mysteries; from it we may win the deep conviction that knowledge, art and religion have flowed from a single source. This must lead us to the conviction that we must seek to return to that state of soul which will appear once

again when the soul has knowledge because religion streams and art flows through it, that state of soul which brings a deep and living understanding of what Goethe meant so many years ago when he said: 'Beauty is a manifestation of secret natural laws which would have lain concealed forever had beauty not appeared.'

The secret of human evolution within the Earth's existence, within the Earth's evolution, itself reveals to us this inner unity of everything man must experience together with the world knowingly, religiously and artistically in order that he may experience his complete potentiality together with the world.

It is a fact that now the time has come when these things must once again enter human consciousness, for otherwise man's soul-nature would simply begin to decay. Now and in the near future man's soul would shrivel up as a result of increasingly intellectual and one-sided knowledge; his soul would be dulled by the one-sidedness of art and he would lose his soul altogether through the one-sidedness of religion if he could not find the way which leads to the inner harmony and unity of these three, the way which helps him to leave his body in a more conscious manner than of old and once more see and hear the super-sensible world together with the world of the senses.

Through Spiritual Science we can look at the more ancient and profound personalities of the developing Greek culture, personalities whose successors were such people as Aeschylus and Heraclitus. We find that these personalities, in so far as they were initiated into the Mysteries, all had similar feelings as a result of their knowledge and their artistic, creative powers. Like Homer, who said: 'Sing me, O Muse, of the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus,' they still felt their knowledge and their creative powers not as something working in them personally but as something they carried out in their religious feeling together with the spiritual world. Thus they could say: In most ancient times man experienced himself as man when, in carrying out the most important human activities, he passed out of himself and shared his experiences with the Gods (as I have shown you in connection with music, but it was also true in the forming of thoughts). But man has now lost what he was thus able to experience.

This feeling of having lost an ancient knowledge and an ancient artistic and religious possession of mankind most certainly weighed upon the more profound Greek souls.

Something different must come to mankind today. By developing the proper powers of his soul-experience, man must come to the point where he is able to rediscover what was lost long ago. What I want to say is that man must develop a consciousness — after all, we are living in the age of consciousness — of how what has become inward must find its way outwards again towards the divine-spiritual world. And it will be possible to accomplish this — as I have indicated in answer to a question put to me during a lecture-course at the Goetheanum — in one field for instance, when the inner wealth of feeling experienced in melody is transferred to the single tone, when man discovers the secret of the single tone, in other words when man experiences not only intervals but is also able to experience with inner richness and variety the single tone as if it were a melody. This is something which today can scarcely be imagined.

But you see how things progress: from the seventh to the fifth, from the fifth to the third, from the third to the prime and so down to the single tone and onward still further. So what once represented the loss of the divine world must be transformed in human evolution into the rediscovery of the divine by man on Earth, if humanity is to go on developing on Earth instead of perishing.

We only understand the past aright when we are able to see in contrast the true image of our development in the future, when we feel with an emotion which affects us deeply what was also felt by the more profound human beings in ancient Greece, namely that we have lost the presence of the Gods, and when we can contrast this by saying with deeply moved but intensely striving souls:

We will bring to blossom and fruition the spirit whose germ exists within us, so that we may once more find the Gods.