

THE WORLD OF THE SENSES AND THE WORLD OF THE SPIRIT



THE COLLECTED WORKS OF RUDOLF STEINER

THE WORLD OF THE SENSES AND THE WORLD OF THE SPIRIT

Six lectures given in Hanover between 27 December 1911 and 1 January 1912

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RUDOLF STEINER

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CONTENTS

Editor's Preface vii

Introduction by Margaret Jonas ix

LECTURE 1

HANOVER, 27 DECEMBER 1911

The difference between materialistic thoughts and ideas and the spiritual way of thinking. The human being in harmony with the gods and the human being estranged from the gods. Educating thinking to encompass amazement, reverence, wisdom-filled harmony with the laws of the universe, and acquiescence to the course of the world

pages 1–15

LECTURE 2

HANOVER, 28 DECEMBER 1911

Acquiescence to the course of the world. All-pervading will in the world of the senses. All-pervading wisdom in the world of coming into being and of dying away. Good as a creative principle and evil as a destructive principle

pages 16–31

LECTURE 3

HANOVER, 29 DECEMBER 1911

The mysteries of life. Disturbance of equilibrium through luciferic interference. The irregular combination of the four members of the human being

pages 32–45

LECTURE 4

HANOVER, 30 DECEMBER 1911

Material experiences in space and soul experiences in time. The non-spatial shaping and movement of the life of soul. Spatial matter arising through the breaking up of non-spatial forms of spirit. The various types of matter in nature and in the human being

pages 46–61

LECTURE 5

HANOVER, 31 DECEMBER 1911

The dual nature of the human being: the shattering of form and the raying of substance. The mystery of incorporation into the cosmos: the practicality of karma. The shining forth of the spiritual caused by the deterioration of matter. Blood 'a juice of rarest quality'

pages 62–76

LECTURE 6

HANOVER, 11 JANUARY 1912

Coming into being and dying away. Metals. The seven plant spheres and their centre. How the environment works on the human being as a whole. The end of philosophy as a science of ideas. The processes of spiritual exhalation and inhalation

pages 77–91

The Invitation to this Course of Lectures (facsimile) 92

Notes 95

Rudolf Steiner's Collected Works 100

Significant Events in the Life of Rudolf Steiner 115

Index 129

EDITOR'S PREFACE

These lectures were given to members of the Theosophical Society in Hanover during the Christmas season of 1911. Rudolf Steiner's visit to Hanover and the programme of events had been announced in the 'Notice to Members of the German Section of the Theosophical Society', XII, November 1911, and in a separate invitation (see page facsimile on p. 92 with translation opposite). Rudolf Steiner formulated the title. The lecture on 26 December was preceded by the Section's Christmas celebration. The lecture on this date is also included in GA 127 (not presently translated as a complete course in English). In the New Year celebration on 1 January 1912, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the Dream Song of Olaf Ásteson. This talk is included in GA 158 (also not presently translated into English). The celebrations in Hanover ended on 2 January with a further lecture by Rudolf Steiner of which only notes remain.

INTRODUCTION

These lectures took place when Rudolf Steiner was still lecturing within the German Section of the Theosophical Society, and they were given to those members in Hanover. However, the term 'theosophy' has been altered to 'anthroposophy', following Steiner's later suggestion. A certain background understanding of theosophy/anthroposophy was thus assumed by him. The lectures have been carefully translated in accordance with a later German edition, rather than the previous English version.

One of Rudolf Steiner's fundamental objectives in all his activity was to endeavour to show in what way the spiritual world could be said to connect to and penetrate the material world, and thus avoid the traditional separating off of physical and spiritual (or religious) manifestation. He also knew too well how easy it is for a materialistic science to claim to have refuted the findings of anthroposophy; so, rather than disregarding the senses and the impressions they give to us—as might be in the case of developing a purely meditative path—his intention was to arrive at a greater understanding and enhancement of their functioning. It would then be by developing the power of thinking as a tool which could penetrate through and beyond them. The best exposition of this thinking capacity is found in his book *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

Steiner was later to explore the human senses more fully, describing twelve and thus going beyond the customary five. In these lectures he is dealing with the sense world as a whole, rather than specific ones, but he does give some unexpected insights into the senses of sight and hearing in particular. We learn for instance how it is that we experience colour. Spiritually, the senses reveal the world of the will, which is also an aspect of our physical bodies—it requires effort on our part to understand will as both a spiritual and a physical phenomenon.

The Gnostic teachers of the second century AD, to whom he alludes in

the first lecture, commonly described the material world as having been created by a god less good and powerful than the highest divine being, a lesser creator which some identified with Yahweh of the Old Testament—but others even perceived it as the work of evil entities. Rudolf Steiner does not go this far, but he indicates that the spiritual divine beings had very different intentions for the formation of physical human beings. The adversary powers, however, especially Lucifer, interfered in the divine plan and the result was a more materialized human being. These descriptions must have come as quite startling when first heard.

We learn the different ways in which the physical, etheric, astral bodies and ego can be connected and the effects of the preponderance of one over the other, from which certain medical conclusions can be drawn. Disorder has been brought into these connections. Now we gain a better understanding of our glandular secretions, and how we have become beings who need to eat and digest—which would not have been the case had Lucifer not intervened. Steiner realized this would disappoint any gourmets in his audience! His listeners were also presented with the difficult concept of how to understand spirit actually becoming something material. What is matter or substance? Can we grasp the idea that spirit bursting into emptiness produces mineral substance? His explanation is carefully built up. Mysteries of space and time and evolutionary processes are also discussed, and how the human being is part of the cosmic whole and relates to the Spirits of Form—the Elohim for instance—a connection which in turn is made with the human ego and the blood. Steiner leads on to the astonishing idea that the human being of the distant future will be able to transform his senses and his organs in a mysterious way, in particular the larynx—which will have a certain reproductive power. The doleful future of a humanity which does not want to know about these things, and refuses to develop a higher consciousness, is brought before us.

But whatever the nature and origins of the senses, the way we should respond to our sensory impressions is to remember to receive the world around us in a mood of amazement and reverence and allow it to speak to us. This is far more important than we realize. To meet it with fixed concepts will, moreover, hinder our judgements; likewise states of excessive sympathy and antipathy. As Goethe before him showed,

phenomena of any kind must first be received in a mood of quiet acceptance before drawing any conclusions. Premature concepts, judgements and opinions simply erect a wall and obstruct, leading to untrue ideas and confusion. Developing the right mood is a moral act and essential for really being able to receive what the senses bring to us. *This* is the truly scientific mode, not the dogmatic one so prevalent today.

In this period Steiner was also presenting a modern form of Rosicrucianism—a development of the attempt during the Renaissance by its founder, Christian Rosenkreutz, to unite science with belief, and in some respects these lectures are more challenging than others given around this time, such as *From Jesus to Christ* or *Wonders of the World*, which deal with religious and mythological themes. But only by trying to grapple with these difficult concepts can we really further the understanding of spiritual knowledge—not just as ideas or beliefs but also as a *science*.

Margaret Jonas, May 2014

LECTURE 1

HANOVER, 27 DECEMBER 1911

IN this cycle of lectures it will be my task to build a bridge between more or less everyday things, between experiences we might encounter in ordinary life and the most lofty affairs of humanity. This may show us one of those paths which lead on from our everyday life towards what anthroposophy or spiritual science can mean for our soul and spirit. We know, if we enter ever more deeply into what it is able to give us, that anthroposophy will flow into our feelings, into our will, and into the powers we need in order to come to grips with the many and varied events of life. And we also know, through the way we can experience the influences which are just now approaching us from the higher worlds, that anthroposophy is in some measure needed by today's humanity. We know that within a relatively brief period of time humanity would lose all certainty, all confidence, all inner quietness, all the tranquillity we need for life, if the revelations we describe as anthroposophy were unable to reach humanity in our present age. We also know that through this spiritual stream of anthroposophy two tendencies of people's thinking and feeling are approaching one another with some violence.

One of these is the tendency of thinking and feeling which has been in preparation for many centuries and has already taken hold of humanity everywhere in the widest circles, or will most certainly do so very soon. This is what we term the materialistic tendency of thinking and feeling; it is materialistic in the widest sense. And it is, as it were, clashing violently with the other way of thinking, the way which comes

through anthroposophy and is the spiritual tendency. The conflict of these two tendencies, of these two ways of thinking and feeling, will become ever more noticeable in the near future. In the way it manifests we shall not always know whether we are dealing with a tendency of thinking and feeling which is undisguised in its materialistic presentation or which is, perhaps, another tendency hiding behind some mask or other. This is because there will be plenty of materialistic tendencies which will disguise themselves as something spiritual, and it will sometimes be difficult to see where materialism is hiding and where a spiritual tendency is truly to be found. In two lectures I gave recently I endeavoured to demonstrate in various ways how difficult it is to make the necessary distinction in this regard. In the first instance I tried to give a sense of how certain thoughts and ideas which can easily dominate us at the present time can make of us perfectly honest and upright opponents of spiritual science. 'How to refute spiritual science' is what I tried to demonstrate in the first of those lectures, which was then followed by another describing 'how to defend spiritual science' or 'how to substantiate spiritual science'.¹

It was not my intention in those lectures to demonstrate everything possible in either direction. My purpose was to provide a sense of how numerous exceedingly plausible ways can be found by means of which the world view of spiritual science can be refuted. Nevertheless, those who cannot help but pour forth such antagonism from their soul should certainly not in every case be counted nowadays among the most dishonest individuals, for they are often in fact the most honest among those wrestling to find the truth. I shall not here present you once again with all the reasons which can be stated in opposition to spiritual science. But I must point out that today's habits of thought and ways of looking at the world do provide very well-founded reasons on the basis of which spiritual science can be thoroughly refuted. If we wish to refute spiritual science, if we want to seek out all possible reasons that can be set against spiritual science, we must ask the question: How can we reach the most thorough, the most fundamental refutation? You see, a person may acknowledge spiritual science from the very bottom of his soul, and yet if he then also familiarizes himself with the essentially materialistic ideas put forward by the sciences he will find it perfectly

possible to refute spiritual science very thoroughly. To do this he must first bring about within himself a certain state of soul. This state of soul in a person who wishes to refute spiritual science involves adopting a completely and utterly intellectualistic point of view. What is meant by this will become clear when we view the matter from the opposite standpoint once we have grasped what I have here presented as my own personal experience. If we are familiar with the results of today's science while relying solely on our intellect, we shall find it possible to refute spiritual science very thoroughly.

But now let us pause while we endeavour to approach our task from an entirely different angle. You see, we human beings are able to view the world from two sides. One view arises when we, let's say, witness a beautiful sunrise where the sun emerges from the golden-red morning sky as though giving birth to itself and then spreads its brilliance across the earth while we immerse ourselves in the thought of how the sun's warmth magically brings forth life from the earth's depths in the ever-recurring round of the seasons. Or, when we observe the going down of the sun as the red sky at night grows dim until total blackness holds sway in which myriads of stars shine out, then we can become absorbed in the wonders of the starry sky at night. This view of nature all around us can fill us with the most profound delight. Such a perception resembles one of Goethe's fundamental ideas. He once expressed it so beautifully: As we look up to the wonders of the starry heavens and watch the circulation of the universe in all its glory, then surely we have a sense of how all these marvels surrounding us in creation only grow meaningful when they are mirrored in the astounded soul of a human being.²

We do indeed play with the idea that just as the air around us forms our being, just as it enters into us when we breathe and through the process it undergoes within us then builds us up, that just as we are an outcome of this air and its laws and its composition so are we in some way an outcome of the whole wide world which surrounds us with all that flows into us through our senses—not only in what we see but also in what we take in through the world of sound and all the other worlds flowing into us through our senses. The fact that we stand there before the external world of the senses and are an outcome of all those senses

flowing together, and are able to tell ourselves that we have within us everything we perceive around us through all our senses, this fact enables us to understand that the meaning of all this is best fulfilled through the crystallizing out of the marvel which is the human being.

How truly are we then overcome by the notion expressed with such primeval passion by the Greek poet: 'Of all that is mighty in the world, the most mighty is the human being!'³ How one-sided do each of the world's external phenomena appear to us! Yet in the human being all these phenomena seem to merge together into a one-ness when we view the world of the senses outside ourselves and then see the human being in its midst as a sensual being into which all else is flowing. The more closely we investigate the world, the more does the human being emerge before us as a confluence of all the one-sided phenomena of the universe. A thought enters into our soul when we cultivate within ourselves this feeling of the great wide world and the way it unites to flow into the human being, a thought filled with profoundly inspiring feelings: the concept of the divinely intended human being who emerges as though the deeds of gods and godly purposes had built up an entire universe whence they everywhere caused influences to flow which in the end combined in the most estimable of works then placed by those gods into the universe, namely the human being—an opus of the divine will!

This is how it was expressed by one who was contemplating the world of the senses with regard to the human being: In relation to the miracle of the human ear all of us are the music maker's instruments as are we also in relation to that other musical instrument, the miracle of the human larynx!⁴ We can marvel at much that is in the world; not to marvel at the human being who stands there in its midst is possible only if we are unfamiliar with the wonders of his configuration. But when in soul we immerse ourselves in such contemplations, then the thought arises: How great are the deeds of those divine spiritual beings who have brought this human being into existence!

This is one angle to be gained from a world view. But there is also another angle. This other angle is revealed to us when we develop a sense for the grandeur and potency of what we term moral ideals, when we look into our own soul and are struck by the significance of moral ideals for the world. A many-sided healthy human nature is called for if

we are to sense fully how sublime are the moral ideals of humanity. In contemplating these moral ideals we can develop in ourselves something which may work within our soul just as powerfully as the wonders and revelations of the universe work on us from the outside. This comes about when we kindle all possible love and enthusiasm in relation to the moral ideals and aims of humanity. It may fill us with immeasurable warmth.

And then this sense of the moral ideals is joined as of necessity by the idea of the aforementioned world view related to the revelation of the universe through the human being. Those who have the strongest sense of the might of those moral ideals will also be most powerfully affected by that other thought and say: O man, as you stand here today, how distant are you from the lofty moral ideals which can blossom within your heart! How small are you in all your capabilities over against the greatness of the moral ideals which you might set yourself!

Only when our soul begins to grow can we assess its inadequacy over against those moral ideals. And the thought then dawns in our soul which helps us endeavour with courage and conviction to make the moral ideals a little more strong within us than they were before. Or else it can happen in some temperaments that the sense of inadequacy of the moral ideals begins to take root in the soul which then feels utterly shattered and alienated from the gods for the very reason that it does in fact have a strong understanding of the divinely willed aspect of the *external* human being's place in the world of the senses. Here I stand, such individuals might say to themselves, with everything I possess externally. Regarding yourself from the outside you cannot help saying: Yes, I am a confluence of the whole divinely created world; I am a being desired by the gods with a countenance resembling the divine! But then you look into yourself and there you see the ideals which the gods have inscribed into your heart and which are intended by them to be powers you can use. So then you feel the experience of your inadequacy gushing forth from your soul.

We have within us these two possibilities for looking at the world. Either we can regard ourselves from outside and be profoundly glad about our divinely desired nature. Or we can regard ourselves from within and be profoundly disappointed about our soul in its estrange-

ment from the divine. With a sound sense of the situation we are bound to say: The forces which have brought forth the human being like a mighty extract of the whole universe are the very same forces which have also brought forth the moral ideals that are inscribed into our hearts.

Why is the one so very different from the other? This surely is the great riddle of human existence. In truth, neither anthroposophy nor philosophy would ever have come about in the world if the dichotomy just described had not arisen in human souls either more consciously in the realm of thinking or less consciously in the realm of feeling. The experience of it is the source of all human questioning and investigation. What has come between the divinely willed human being and the human being who is estranged from the divine? This is the most fundamental question of all philosophy. However varied the formulations and characterizations of this question may have become, nevertheless it underlies all human thinking and all human pondering. How may we gain an idea of how to build a bridge between the indubitably inspiring view of the external human being and the undoubtedly conflicting view of the soul leading to so much doubt?

The path that must be trodden by the human soul in order to rise up in a right and dignified manner to the highest questions of existence will have to be described in more detail. This will then tell us where the errors originate. In the world outside, in so far as it is dominated by external science, people will always say: Yes indeed, knowledge and truth will be the result if one has made the correct judgements. In order to characterize the fundamental error inherent in this presumption, that knowledge and truth will arise out of correct judgements, I recently employed a very simple comparison which I would now like to repeat here to show you that what is right does not necessarily lead to what is real.

There was once a small village boy whose parents always sent him to buy fresh rolls. They would give him ten pennies and he would return with six rolls. One roll cost two pennies, and for ten pennies the boy returned with six rolls. The little lad was not much good at sums, so he didn't bother to work out why he always brought six rolls home with him even though one roll cost two pennies. But then a kind of foster

brother came to live with the family. He was more or less the same age, but better at arithmetic. He noticed that the lad was given ten pennies for the baker and he also knew that one roll cost two pennies. So he said: You should bring five rolls home with you. He was good at arithmetic and thought quite rightly that if one roll cost two pennies, then ten pennies would buy five rolls. And yet the lad came home with six. So the boy who was good at sums said: It's not right; if one roll costs two pennies and you are sent to the baker with ten pennies then, since two goes into ten five times, you can't possibly come back with six rolls. Someone must have made a mistake, or else you pinched a roll. And yet next morning the boy again returned home with six rolls for ten pennies. This was because in that village it was the custom that someone buying five rolls for ten pennies was always given six. It was a very agreeable custom for the people who needed only five rolls for their household.

Well, the boy who was good at sums was quite right; there was no mistake in his thinking, and yet his correct thinking did not agree with the reality. We have to admit that his correct thinking did not conform to reality for the very reason that reality does not always comply with correct thinking. You see, as in this instance, however conscientious and intricate the thought may be, which leads to however logical and correct a conclusion, the result when measured against reality can be completely and utterly wrong. This is always possible. Therefore a proof gained by means of thinking will never, but never, accord in any way with reality.

It is also possible to be mistaken in other ways with regard to the peculiar interrelationship of cause and effect when applied to the outside world. I will give you an example of this, too. Imagine a person walking along beside a large stream. Watching him from a distance you see him suddenly fall over the edge into the water, and rush to save him, but when you pull him out he is dead. So now you have a corpse. Perhaps, mustering all your ability to think logically, you will reason that he has drowned. Maybe there was a stone at the spot where it happened, so he stumbled over it, fell into the water and drowned. The sequence of thoughts is perfectly correct: someone walks along a river bank, stumbles over a stone, falls into the water and is dead when he is pulled

out; so he has drowned. This is the only explanation. But with this particular individual it may not be the explanation. If we don't allow ourselves to be ruled by the links between cause and effect we may discover that at the moment when he fell into the river the man had a heart attack which caused him to fall into the water. He was already dead when he fell and only seemed to react in the way one normally reacts when falling into water alive.

So you see that in this case it is wrong to string together the external events of stumbling, falling into the water and drowning. It does not conform to reality because the individual fell into the water on account of being dead, and was not pulled out dead on account of having fallen. Judgements as wrong as this one about causes and effects, and much more subtle ones as well, are made all over the place in our scientific literature, but they remain unnoticed just as would have been the case if we had not investigated the matter of the man with the heart attack. All I am suggesting is that in fact, with regard to reality, our thinking is utterly incompetent; it is inconclusive and no judge of what is actually true.

So how are we to extricate ourselves from the morass of doubt and not-knowing if we can indeed not rely on our thinking being a reliable guide? When one has had experience in such matters and has concerned oneself a great deal with thinking as such, then one knows that it is possible to prove anything and contradict anything, so one is no longer impressed by the astuteness of philosophy. One can admire astuteness, but to rely on conclusions arrived at on the basis of the reasoning faculty alone is not possible because one knows that equally cogent conclusions proving the opposite can also be arrived at through reasoning. This is true of all things which can be either proven or refuted. Very interesting observations, especially those based on real life, can often be made in relation to this. There is a certain allure—though only a theoretical allure—in making the acquaintance of people who have reached a specific point in their soul development, namely the point where they sense and experience inwardly that everything can be proven or refuted, but who have not yet acquired what one might term a spiritual world view.

In recent weeks I have often been occupied with such thoughts in

remembrance of a man I once met who possessed to a most remarkable degree a constellation of soul of this kind and who was thus unable to press on to a true comprehension of reality through spiritual knowledge. What he had attained was the realization that basically every philosophical statement could be either denied or confirmed. He was a professor at the University of Vienna, a highly intelligent man who died a few weeks ago, Laurenz Müllner.⁵ This highly intelligent man was able to put forward with the utmost clarity every possible proof for all manner of philosophical systems and ideas or, equally, to contradict every argument. He always described himself as a sceptic. I once heard him make what is in some ways a rather terrible statement: Well, all philosophy is, in the end, no more than a very beautiful way of playing with ideas!

Having often watched the sparkling intelligence of Müllner's play with ideas, I found it most interesting to observe how he could never be pinned down on any particular point since he had never admitted anything specific. When someone else expressed disagreement with some world view or other, he would then lovingly put forward every possible argument in favour of that world view, even though, perhaps a few days earlier, he had himself ingeniously condemned it down to the ground. He was an exceedingly interesting thinker, in fact in a sense even one of the most important philosophers of our age. And why he was basically like this is also interesting. Apart from having a thorough knowledge about the philosophical progress of humanity he was also a Catholic priest, and essentially he always wanted to remain a good Catholic priest even though latterly he was a professor at the University of Vienna.

The way in which he immersed himself in the Catholic way of thinking brought it about in some measure that the religious fervour of his immersion in certain trains of thought made everything else in the world appear to him to be a mere playing with ideas. Yet it was his Catholic way of thinking which prevented him from extricating himself from his doubts. He was too great to remain within the merely dogmatic aspect of Catholicism and yet the Catholicism was too strong within him to allow him to rise to a truly spiritual way of scientifically comprehending reality. It is most interesting to observe a soul like this,

a soul that has come to the point where one can study what would be needed to enable such an individual to arrive at reality. For of course this exceedingly perspicacious man was quite aware that he was not capable of grasping reality.

Even in ancient Greece it was possible to state what the point of departure would be for a healthy way of thinking which wants to reach reality. And that statement already put forward in ancient Greece is surely still valid today, namely that: All study undertaken by human beings must come about on the basis of amazement.⁶ Let us, my dear friends, look at this in a positive light! Let us regard as something positive the fact that a soul striving to reach the truth must have within it the condition of being amazed when confronted with the universe. In fully comprehending the power of that Greek statement we are able to say: Regardless of the other reasons leading a person to search and ponder, when his point of departure is amazement about the realities of the world, then it will be akin to sowing a seed in the ground out of which a plant then grows. In a certain sense all knowledge must grow out of the seed of amazement.

The matter is different when someone does not have amazement as his point of departure but rather, perhaps, some sort of principles hammered into him in his youth by well-meaning teachers, principles which have made a philosopher of him; or when the circumstances of his upbringing meant that it was customary to enter into a philosophical way of thinking under the influence of prevailing attitudes. It is also well known that the final examinations in philosophy are the easiest of all. In short, there are hundreds and thousands of paths which lead to philosophy without involving amazement. All such points of departure lead to a way of living with the truth which resembles making a plant out of papier mâché instead of growing one from seed.

This is an entirely valid comparison because all true knowledge with any prospect of comprehending the riddles of the universe must grow out of the seed of amazement. However sagacious a thinker might be, even one who suffers from a kind of exuberance of sagacity will get nowhere if he has never passed through the stage of amazement. He will devise sagacious, clever concatenations of ideas none of which will be incorrect; but that which is correct does not necessarily have to lead to

reality. Before we begin to think, before we even set our thinking in motion, it is essential that we pass through the state of amazement, for a kind of thinking which progresses without the state of amazement will, after all, remain a mere playing with ideas. Thinking simply must originate from amazement.

And this is not all; even this is insufficient. Although thinking must originate in amazement, there may be a person who through his karma has a turn of mind which is quite sagacious, but if he develops this sagacity alone, then any initial amazement is no help. If after some initial amazement he proceeds to develop his thinking merely through thinking, he will be unable to progress to finding reality. Of course I am not saying that a person must become thoughtless or that thinking is harmful. This is a view which is rather prevalent, even in theosophical circles where thinking is regarded as bad and damaging even by people who say that thinking must emanate from amazement. Once one has begun to think and is able to list the seven principles of the human being and so on,⁷ it is not necessary to cease thinking, for thinking must continue.

But after amazement has set in another state of soul must be achieved, and that is the state of reverence for that which is approached by thinking. After the state of amazement the state of reverence, of awe, must be attained. And any thinking which emancipates itself from reverence, from an awed view of what is revealed by thinking, will be unable to penetrate through to reality. Thinking must never be permitted to trip, light-footed, around the world. Once it has moved beyond the state of amazement it must become rooted in the feeling of reverence for the grounds of the universe.

Here the path of knowledge becomes very much the antithesis of what we today speak of as science, for this is where we might say to a person standing with his test tubes in a laboratory analysing substances and synthesizing others: This is not the way to arrive at the truth! You can analyse and synthesize as much as you like, but the results are merely facts! You are approaching the facts of the world without respect, without reverence. You should stand before the reactions in your test tube with the respect and reverence of a priest before the altar.

But what would be that person's reply nowadays? He would most

probably laugh in your face, be full of derision, because from their point of view modern-day scientists are quite unable to see any connection between reverence on the one hand and truth or knowledge on the other. If he did not laugh at you, he would at best concede: I am truly thrilled by what goes on in my test tubes, but you cannot convince a sensible individual that my enthusiasm is anything other than my own private affair and has nothing to do with the discovery of truth. This is the second stage.

But even after attaining some degree of reverence, if a person continued to proceed as before merely with his thinking, he would again reach something unreal and be unable to make progress. His discoveries would be correct and, because he would have taken the first two steps, that correctness would be founded on certain firm principles. But he would nevertheless soon begin to feel uncertain once more. The reason for this is that it is necessary for a third stage to be reached in our soul. Having become sufficiently immersed in amazement and reverence, the third stage might be described as feeling oneself to be in wisdom-filled harmony with the laws of the universe.

You see, feeling oneself to be in wisdom-filled harmony with the laws of the universe can only be attained once one has in some way fully understood how meaningless mere thinking is. One must tell oneself over and over again that a person who relies solely on the correctness of thinking, whether in confirming or denying something, is in the same situation as the small boy who quite correctly calculated the number of rolls. If he had been able to tell himself: What I have worked out may very well be correct, but I must not rely on my correct thinking but should instead search for the truth and enter into reality—then he would have discovered something higher than correctness, namely the village custom of adding a further roll when five are purchased. He would have discovered that one must turn away from oneself and enter fully into the world, and that correct thinking has no bearing on reality.

However, it is not at all easy to enter into wisdom-filled harmony with reality. If it were easy, dear friends, then neither you nor anyone else would ever have experienced being seduced by Lucifer. For in truth it was indeed the intention of the divine guides of the world that human beings should be endowed with the ability to distinguish between good

and evil, to gain knowledge, to eat from the tree of knowledge. But this was to have come about much later. The mistake human beings made was to want to attain such knowledge too soon, to want to distinguish between good and evil too soon. It was Lucifer's seduction which made them want what should only have come about later on. This is how such inadequate knowledge has come about, knowledge for which human beings should have been obliged to strive and which is now like a premature birth by comparison with a child carried to full term.

It was the Gnostics of old—and we can sense how right they were—who said that the knowledge accompanying human beings from one incarnation to the next is a premature birth, an *ektroma*⁸—they used this very word—because humanity could not wait until whatever should have led to genuine knowledge had been properly experienced. In other words, periods of time should have been allowed to elapse during which certain states of soul would have ripened within the human being which would then have enabled true knowledge to arise. Humanity is still committing this original sin today, for if we were to refrain from committing it we would be in less of a hurry to regard one fact or another as the truth but would instead seek to gain in maturity in order to comprehend certain truths.

Again, people today would be puzzled to be told: You think you perfectly understand the theorem of Pythagoras. But if you really wanted to comprehend in all its mysterious significance the theorem that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides . . . or let us take a simpler example: If you want to comprehend the fact that $3 \times 3 = 9$, you will first need to have a variety of experiences in your soul! And a person today would be even more amused to be told: You will only truly comprehend this when you have brought yourself into harmony with the laws of the universe which have ordered things in such a way as to make the laws of mathematics appear to us as they do. People today are still committing the original sin when they believe that they can comprehend everything at every stage while paying no attention to the fact that they first need to have certain experiences in order to comprehend something; they must realize that they have to feel inwardly supported by the understanding that how-

ever many firm judgements they may make they can achieve nothing in matters of reality.

This belongs to the third stage which I want to describe. However much effort we put into making a judgement, errors can always arise. A correct judgement only results if we have attained a certain degree of maturity, if we have waited until the judgement itself leaps towards us. It is not when we make the effort to reach a judgement but when we make the effort to be ready for the judgement that it comes towards us; and then the judgement has something to do with reality. However much effort you devote to forming a correct judgement, you can never be sure that this inner effort will achieve a competent judgement. You can only hope to arrive at a correct judgement if you devote every care to becoming ever more and more mature, by as it were waiting for the correct judgements to come to you through the revelations which enter into you because you have become mature. One can have the most remarkable experiences in this way. A person who is quick and ready with a judgement will, of course, think: If someone has fallen into the water and been pulled out dead, he must have drowned. But a person who has grown wise and mature through the experiences in his life will know that in every individual case a generalized judgement is meaningless. He will know that in every single instance he encounters he must allow the judgement to arise out of the facts he sees played out before his eyes. Life itself can show how true this is.

Suppose a person says something but that you have a different opinion. You can point out that what he is saying is wrong. Your judgement can be entirely different from his. Indeed, what he says and what you say might both be wrong. Both judgements might be right or both might be wrong. At this third stage it will not be relevant to you that one person forms a judgement which differs from that of another. That is not what is relevant. A wise person will always hold back with his judgement in order not to become too involved with it; he will even hold back when he is aware that he might indeed be right—he will hold back as a kind of experiment, as though trying it out. Or if someone tells you something today and then in two months' time says the opposite, there is no need for you to get involved since you have nothing whatever to do with the two facts. If you let the two facts work upon you there is

no need for you to make a contradiction since the two make their own contradiction. Here it is not you but the world around you which forms the judgement. And it is only at this point that the wise person begins to judge.

It is interesting to note that if one lacks the concept about wisdom making judgements one will never know, for instance, how Goethe carried out his scientific studies. That is why Goethe made the interesting statement⁹—you will find it in my introduction to Goethe's scientific works—that one should never form judgements or hypotheses about external phenomena because the phenomena themselves are the theories, they themselves give expression to their ideas if one has made oneself mature enough to allow them to work upon one in the right way. It is not a matter of making an effort to squeeze out of one's soul what one considers to be correct; one must be prepared for the judgement to leap towards one out of the facts themselves. Our relationship with thinking must not be to make thinking the judge of things but to allow it to be an instrument through which the things speak to us. That is what is meant by being in harmony with the things.

Once we have come to grips with this third state it is still not permissible for thinking to stand on its own feet, for we are now reaching what is in a certain way the loftiest state of soul to be attained if we want to reach the truth. This is the state which is well described by the word acquiescence. Amazement, reverence, wisdom-filled harmony with the world's phenomena, acquiescence to the course of the world—these are the stages through which we have to pass, stages which must always run parallel with thinking and which thinking must never be permitted to forsake, for otherwise thinking will only achieve what is correct but not what is true. Let us now pause at the place we have reached thus far, to which we have risen via amazement, reverence and wisdom-filled harmony with the world's phenomena, arriving at what we have described as acquiescence, which we have not yet explained but about which we shall continue to speak tomorrow. Let us retain our hold on acquiescence, but let us also retain our hold on the question already raised: Why is it necessary to be merely intellectual in order to refute spiritual science? We shall proceed with these two questions tomorrow.

LECTURE 2

HANOVER, 28 DECEMBER 1911

IN our considerations yesterday we reached the state of soul which we described as acquiescence. We saw that it is as yet the highest of the soul states to be attained if thinking, what we ordinarily describe as knowledge, is to enter into reality, if thinking is to have any connection with genuine reality—thinking, in other words, that has raised itself through the states of soul firstly of amazement, then of reverence towards the world of reality, and then what we termed a wisdom-filled harmony with the world's phenomena. A thinking incapable of raising itself in addition into the soul-region characterized as acquiescence would not be capable of reaching reality. This acquiescence can only be attained by means of endeavouring energetically to become ever and again aware of the incompetence of mere thinking, and by means also of endeavouring to create a lively and energetic mood which continuously says to us: You should not expect your thinking to provide you with knowledge of what is true, to give you knowledge of the truth; you should initially only expect your thinking to educate you, to bring you up. It is exceedingly important to develop within us this mood of sensing that our thinking educates us. You see, if you really carry this principle through in a practical way you will be able to reach beyond a good deal more than you would normally expect.

I suspect that not very many of you have made a thorough study of the philosopher Kant. But this would not have been necessary anyway. All that needs to be said at present is that in Kant's most important, most pioneering work, *Critique of Pure Reason*, there is always a for and

an against for every proof. For example, let us take the sentence stating that the world had its beginning in time.¹⁰ To this he might add on the next page the statement that the world has existed forever, in all eternity. Kant puts forward valid arguments in favour of each of these statements even though they are obviously contradictory. In other words, he proves that the world had a beginning and that the world did not have a beginning. Kant describes these statements as an antinomy which he is using in order to demonstrate the limitations of the human capacity for knowledge; he wants to show that human beings must of necessity arrive at such contradictory argumentations.

The fact is that as long as we are of the opinion that we can reach the truth by means of thinking, by means of working with concepts, by means of, let's say, thinking about experiences, in other words as long as we hope to arrive at a consensus of objective realities, as long as this is our belief it will be very dreadful for us if we are shown that each of two opposites can be proven to be true. How can such proofs lead us to reality! However, if we have trained ourselves to realize that at the very point where decisiveness should be crucial thinking can have nothing to say about reality, if we have energetically trained ourselves to regard thinking merely as a means towards achieving wisdom, as a means to be taken in hand for the purpose of educating ourselves towards wisdom, then we shall not be disturbed by finding that first one thing and then its opposite can be proven.

Once we have reached this point we will soon notice that, with regard to working on concepts, reality can have no effect on us and thus we can work among the concepts and ideas in utter freedom and in this way educate ourselves. If we were to be constantly corrected by reality then working on the concepts would not be a means towards educating ourselves in freedom. Take good account of the fact that working on our concepts only presents us with an effective and free means of educating ourselves if we do not permit reality to interfere with our work.

What do we mean by saying it will not interfere with our work? How would reality interfere in our free work on the concepts? We can to some extent imagine such interference if we hypothetically confront our human thinking with divine thinking—and we shall see later that this need not remain hypothetical. We can say to ourselves: In the first

instance we cannot conceive of divine thinking having nothing to do with reality; we can only conceive that divine thinking—hypothetically at first—most certainly does have something to do with reality. This indicates something most important, namely that if a human being makes a mistake in his thinking it is merely a mistake, but nothing too dreadful. And if he subsequently realizes that he has made a mistake he can correct it, thus contributing to his own self-knowledge and making himself wiser. But now consider divine thinking: If divine thinking is correct something comes about. But if divine thinking is incorrect, then something is damaged or destroyed.

So if we possessed divine thinking, whenever we formed a false concept we would set in train a destructive process, first in our astral body, then in our ether body and thence also in our physical body. The consequence of a false concept—if we had effective divine thinking, if our thinking were related in some way with reality—would be to set in train something inwardly resembling a slight withering in some part of our body, a process of ossification. Therefore we would certainly have to make as few errors as possible for otherwise we would soon have made so many mistakes that our body would become shrivelled and disintegrate completely; we would soon have worn it down completely by transposing our mistaken thinking into reality. We are in truth able to maintain ourselves within reality only because our thinking is prevented from interfering with this reality. So, as things are, we can make mistake after mistake in our thinking; and if we subsequently correct these mistakes, then we have educated ourselves and grown more wise without immediately causing havoc by our mistakes. If we fill ourselves more and more with the moral power of such a thought, the result will be that we eventually resign ourselves to no longer wanting to apply thinking at decisive points in our lives in order to gain knowledge about external matters.

This sounds strange, does it not! And initially it may seem impossible to put such a thing into practice. And yet although we cannot practise it entirely, we can at least carry it out to some extent. In the way we are as human beings we cannot, in our world, completely break the habit of forming judgements about things. Indeed we do have to form judgements—and in these lectures we shall come to see why. We have to do

something for our life, for the way we live our life, which does not actually penetrate right into the depths of reality. We do have to form judgements, but through wisely educating ourselves we should ensure that in all our judging we practise caution in the matter of considering our judgements to be true. We should constantly endeavour to keep watch on ourselves and realize that wherever we apply our discernment we are in fact feeling our way in the dark so that there is always a possibility of being mistaken.

This is very difficult for those cocksure individuals who imagine that they cannot make any progress at all while being expected to doubt whether any judgement they might form about anything is in fact appropriate. You only have to watch how people conduct their lives and you will see that for many the most important thing is to say in any situation: I believe this, I believe that; or when they see something, they say: I don't approve of this, I do approve of that, and so on. If one does not wish to be one of those cocksure individuals, these are the habits one must break if one wants to approach reality in one's life of soul.

The important thing, then, is to develop an attitude of mind which might be characterized thus: Well, since I have to live my life I also have to form judgements; I will make use of judgements in matters of life's practicalities but not in matters of discovering the truth. In so far as I want to discern the truth I will always keep a careful watch on myself and apply a degree of scepticism with regard to any judgement I might form.

But how can we reach the truth about any kind of thought if we are not supposed to form judgements? In one sense the answer to this question was already hinted at yesterday: We must permit the things to speak to us; we must grow ever more passive towards things and permit them to express their secrets in their own way. Much would be avoided if people refrained from judging and instead let the things express their secrets in their own way. Goethe can teach us in a wonderful way about permitting the things to express their own secrets; whenever he wants to discover the truth about something he forbids himself to form judgements and permits the things to tell him their secrets.

Let us imagine how one person forms judgements while another permits the things themselves to express their secrets. There is an

excellent example which can illustrate this. The one who makes judgements sees, let's say, a wolf and then describes it. He reckons that there are also other animals which resemble this wolf and in this way he reaches a generalization about it. He then says to himself: In actual fact only individual wolves exist. I form the general concept of the wolf in my mind, but 'the wolf as such' does not exist; only individual wolves exist in the world. Such a person will easily form the judgement that we are involved only with individual creatures and that there is no reality in the generalized concept, in the idea of 'the wolf'. A person who comes up with such ideas would be one who is quite conspicuously one of those who form judgements. Someone, however, who allows reality to speak,¹¹ how will he think about the invisible aspect of the wolf, that aspect which is to be found in every wolf and which also characterizes every wolf? Well, such a person would say something like this: I compare a lamb with a wolf, or a number of lambs with a wolf; I shall not make any judgements but will simply allow the facts to speak. Well, let us then suppose that a very obvious fact takes place before this person, namely that the wolf eats the lambs. That person would then say: What formerly skipped about in the form of lambs is now in the wolf and has been subsumed into the wolf.

It is very much worth noting that this way of looking at things demonstrates what wolf-nature actually is. Following the events externally might well lead us to the judgement: If we shut the wolf away from any other food so that it eats only lambs, then surely as time goes on its metabolism will bring it about that the wolf has within it only the substance of lambs. And yet it never turns into a lamb but remains forever a wolf. In reaching the correct judgement we are thus shown quite clearly that the physicality of the wolf cannot be grasped by means of an unrealistic concept. If we learn from the world of external facts it shows us that apart from the physical aspect this wolf also has something entirely real within it which transcends the physical; it shows us that something we do not see is very much a reality, for whatever there is which does not become submerged in the physical is the very factor which causes the wolf to remain a wolf even if it eats only lambs. The purely sense-perceptible aspect of the lambs has been subsumed into the wolf.

It is difficult to be entirely clear about the difference between forming a judgement and allowing oneself to be taught by reality. But when we understand this properly, so that we use judgement solely for matters of practical life on the one hand and permit the things themselves to teach us about reality on the other, then we shall gradually enter into the mood which can tell us what is meant by acquiescence. Acquiescence is the condition of soul which does not wish to explore the truth on its own initiative but instead looks forward to the truth which will emanate from things; it is the condition which can wait until the soul is mature enough to receive one revelation or another. Judgement wants to arrive at the truth at every step. Acquiescence does not work at penetrating one truth or another by force. Acquiescence of soul works to develop itself, to educate itself; it waits calmly until a level of maturity is reached where truth streams into us through the revelations given by the things, pervading us entirely. Working patiently in order to progress in wise self-education—that is the mood of acquiescence.

Let us now place the fruits of this acquiescence before our souls. What do we achieve through proceeding with our thinking from amazement, reverence and feeling oneself in wisdom-filled harmony with reality until we arrive at the soul condition of acquiescence? What we achieve is this: When we consider the plant world in all its greenery, or the stars with their golden glory, when we look at all this without forming any judgement from within ourselves but instead permit the things to reveal themselves to us—if we have reached this mood of acquiescence, then all things are transformed for us from what they were in the world of the senses into something entirely different, something for which no word exists other than one which is taken from our very life of soul.

All things reveal themselves, and especially the world of the senses characterized here by this line (a–b); (see drawing on page 27). Imagine you are standing here (c) before the world of the senses which spreads out before you like a veil. What is characterized here in this line (a–b) represents the sounds of the sense world as they impinge on our ears, the colours and shapes which impinge on our eyes, the fragrances and tastes affecting our other organs, also with hardness and softness and so on—all this is characterized by this line. This line is the world of the senses.

And it is in this world of the senses that we apply our ability to form judgements. So how do the external sciences come about? They come about because they, the sciences, make contact with the world of the senses and because they research by various methods the laws and so on that are at work in this sense-perceptible world.

Through the whole essence of our discussions thus far we have seen that, since judgement is not a guide, this is not the way forward into the world of reality. We can approach the world of reality solely by educating our thinking through amazement, through reverence and so on. For then the world of the senses is transformed; it becomes something utterly new. And to make any progress in our approach to the essence of the sense-perceptible world it is important to make contact with this new element.

Let us assume that we have made good progress in developing this feeling, this soul condition of acquiescence, and are now approaching, let's say, the fresh, clear greenness of a meadow. Since there are no other plant colours in evidence, it is its fresh green which the meadow is showing us. If we have indeed progressed to a higher level of acquiescence in our soul we shall, when observing this meadow, have a feeling somehow akin to equilibrium—but a vibrant equilibrium resembling a gently harmonious rippling gush of water. We cannot help but bring up this picture as if by magic before our soul. And this feeling of inner liveliness will occur whenever we experience in our soul a taste, a fragrance or any other sensation. No colour, no sound exists without expressing something. Everything gives expression to something, and everything says something which urges us to react with a feeling of inner liveliness—not with a judgement but with inner liveliness. In short, we have to conclude that the entire world of the senses rises into our view as something which we can only describe as will. When we meet the world of the senses everything is streaming, all-pervading will. Please do take hold of this: Whoever has achieved acquiescence to a higher degree will discover all-pervading will in the world of the senses.

That is why a person who has developed this acquiescence within himself, even only to a lesser degree, becomes irritated when he encounters some incongruously modish colour in the street, for he cannot help but be inwardly aroused by whatever he sees around him.

He is forever linked to the whole world by a will-force which he feels within everything. He draws near to reality through being linked by will to everything represented in the world of sense. And in this way the world of sense comes to resemble an ocean of will differentiated in the most multifarious of ways. What we otherwise feel to be diffuse and scattered attains a kind of density because of this. We as it were peer behind the surface of things, we hear beyond the things and we hear streaming will all around us. For those who have read Schopenhauer¹² I might mention that he sensed this all-pervading will one-sidedly, in the world of sound only, and that is why he describes music as what one might call a differentiated effect of the will. In actual fact, though, everything in the world of the senses is all-pervading will for one who has attained acquiescence.

Once a person has learnt to perceive how will holds sway everywhere in the world of the senses he can then also press on further. He can, as it were, move beyond the world of the senses and enter into the secrets which lie behind the sense world and are otherwise out of reach for him.

In order to comprehend what is to be described next, we must first ask: By what means do we know anything at all about the world of the senses? The answer is simple: By means of our senses; by means of our ears the world of sound; by means of our eyes the world of colours and shapes, and so on. We know about the sense world through our sense organs. A person confronting the sense world in an everyday manner lets it work upon him, and forms judgements. The person who has attained acquiescence first of all lets the sense world work upon him; but then he feels how the all-pervading will at work in the things flows out towards him so that he floats in a communal ocean in which the will holds sway.

When such a person feels himself confronted by this all-pervading will, his development then drives him onward, so to speak as though of its own accord, to the next stage. Having first passed through the previous stages of feeling himself in harmony with the world's wisdom, of reverence, and of amazement, he then learns, as these previous stages work into the finally attained stage of acquiescence, how it is possible to become united with the things also with his ether body, which is in the background of his physical body.