

LECTURE 4  
MORALITY AS A  
GERMINATING FORCE

*Berlin, February 27, 1917*

In our previous lecture, I spoke to you about the human soul's three meetings with the regions related to the spiritual world. I will have to say a few more things about these, which will give me an opportunity to answer a question following the previous public lecture in the Architectural Hall regarding the forces that bring one's karma, or outer destiny, from a former incarnation. I have been told that this is very difficult to understand. In these lectures, I will return to this subject, but it is preferable to do so after having discussed a few points that may perhaps help make the question better understood. Today, however, to make the question of the three meetings with the spiritual world even clearer, by way of episode, I plan to insert something that it seems to me important to discuss just now.

When we consider the ideas and concepts that have found their way into human souls of all educational levels as a result of the spiritual development during the last century, we see how strongly its influence tended to lead people to consider world evolution and the human being's place in it—solely according to the standard of natural science and its ideas. There are, of course, plenty of people still living today who do not believe their attitude of mind and soul has been formed by natural-scientific concepts. Such people do not, however, see the deeper bases upon which their minds were formed; they do not know that

the ideas of natural science have just slipped in a one-sided way, not only determining their thoughts but even their feelings in a certain way. People today who reflect along the lines laid down for everyone in conventional centers of education, whose mind and disposition have been formed according to them, and whose ideas are based on what is taught there, cannot possibly feel the true connection between what we call the world of morality, or moral feeling, and the world of outer phenomena. If we ponder, according to the ideas of our times, the way the Earth, and indeed the whole firmament, is supposed to have developed and may come to its final end, we think along the lines of purely outer, sensory perceptible facts. Just consider the deep significance to human souls concerning the existence of the so-called Kant-Laplace theory of world creation, according to which the Earth and the whole heavens arose from a purely material cosmic mist (it is in fact represented as purely material), and were then formed according to purely earthly physical and chemical laws, developed further according to these laws, and, so it is believed, will also end through those same laws. A condition will some day come about in which the whole world will mechanically end, just as it came into being.

Of course, as I have said before, there are those today who do not allow themselves to think of it in this way. That, however, is not the point; it is not the ideas we form that signify, but the attitude of mind that gives rise to those ideas. The concept to which I have just alluded is purely materialistic—one about which Hermann Grimm says a piece of carrion that a hungry dog circles around is a more attractive sight than the construction of the world according to the Kant-Laplace theory. Yet it arose and developed. One may even say that, to the great majority of those who study it, the idea even seems illuminating. There are few who, like Hermann Grimm, ask how future generations will be able to account for the arising of this mad idea in our age; they will wonder how such a delusion could ever have seemed illuminating to so many.

There are only a few who have the soundness of mind to put the question this way, and those who do are simply considered more or less wrongheaded. But, as I said, the point is not so much the ideas themselves as the impulse and frame of mind that made them possible. Such concepts arose because of certain mental attitudes. Yet, though they came from educated people and were given out by them, most still believe that the world did not originate in any such mechanical impulse, but that divine impulses must have played a part in its creation. Nonetheless, it remains a fact that such concepts were possible. It was possible for human mental attitudes and soul dispositions to form in such a way that a purely mechanical idea about the origin of the world was conceived.

This shows that, at the bottom of human souls, there is a tendency to form concepts of a materialistic nature. This tendency is not found only among the uneducated and others who believe in this idea; it exists in the broadest circles among all kinds of people, yet most people today are still rather shy about following Haeckel, picturing everything spiritual in a material form. They lack the necessary courage for this. They still acknowledge something spiritual, but do not give the matter further thought. If the mentioned concept holds, there can then be room only for the spiritual, and especially for the moral, in a certain sense.

Just consider; if the world really came into being as the Kant-Laplace theory proposes, and comes to its end only through physical forces, dragging all humankind to the grave with it, along with all their ideas, feelings, and will impulses, what then, apart from all else, would become of the whole moral order of the world? Suppose for a moment that the condition of the burial of all things came to pass. What good would it have been ever to have pronounced some things good and others evil? What would it avail to say this is right and that is wrong? These would be only forgotten ethical concepts, swept away as something that, if this idea of the world order were correct, might not survive in even a single soul. In fact, the matter would stand thus: from purely

mechanical causes, by physical and possibly chemical forces, the world came into being, and by like means it will come to an end. By means of these forces phenomena appear like bubbles, produced by humankind. Among human beings themselves the moral ideas of right and wrong, good and evil arise; but the whole world passes into the stillness of the grave. All right and wrong, good and evil, is merely a human illusion, forgotten and vanishing when the world becomes "the grave." Thus, the only thing that stands for the moral world order is the feeling people have as long as the episode lasts, which extends from the first state to the last—that people require such ideas for their common life; that people must form these moral ideals, though they can never take root in a purely mechanical world order.

The forces of nature (heat, electricity, and so on) intervene in the plan of nature, where they make themselves felt. However, if the mechanical plan of the world were correct, the force of morality would exist only in the human mind; it would not intervene in the natural order. It would not be like heat that expands bodies, or like light that illumines them, makes them visible, and permeates the realm of space. This moral force is present and soars as a great illusion over the mechanical world order. And it vanishes, dissolves away, when the world is transformed into the grave.

People do not carry these thoughts sufficiently to their logical conclusion; hence, they are not on guard against a mechanical world order, but allow it to remain—not from kindness of heart, but from laziness. If they have a certain want in their hearts, they simply say that science does not require us to think deeply about this mechanical world order; faith demands something else of us, so we put our faith side-by-side with science and simply believe in something more than mechanical nature; we just believe what a certain inner demand of our hearts compels. That is very convenient! There is no need, therefore, to rebel against what Herman Grimm, for instance, felt to be a mad idea of modern science. No rebellion is needed. But those who really

wish to think their thoughts through to their conclusion cannot justify this attitude.

One may ask: Why do people today live blindly in such an impossible position, making it impossible to think logically? Why do people accept such a position? As strange as this may sound to one who is unfamiliar with such thought and hears it for the first time, the reason is that people have more or less forgotten during the course of the last century how to think truly of the Christ Mystery, which must take its place at the very center of the life of the age. People have forgotten how to think of it in its actual, true sense. The way that people think of the Christ Mystery in recent times should be such that it radiates into their entire thinking and feeling. The position human beings have assumed toward the Christ since the Mystery of Golgotha represents the standard of their collective ideas and sentiments. I may have more to say about this in the near future. If people cannot view the Mystery of Christ as a true reality, they are also unable to develop ideas and concepts by which to gauge the worldviews of others, ideas permeated by reality and actually capable of penetrating the truth.

This is what I wanted above all to make clear to you today. If people really think as I have just illustrated, as most people of the present day do, whether consciously or not, the world is then divided into a *mechanical* natural order on the one hand, and on the other into a *moral* world order. Now, to timid souls, who often believe themselves to be very courageous, the Christ Mystery forms part of the purely moral world order. This applies mainly to those who see no more in the Christ Mystery than the fact that at a particular time a great, perhaps even the greatest, teacher of the Earth appeared, and that his teaching is the most important thing. Now, if Christ is considered only to be the greatest teacher of humanity, this view is quite compatible in a sense with the twofold division of the world into a natural order and a moral order. Of course, even if the Earth had formed itself into the mechanical world order as represented, eventually

becoming the common grave of all things, it might still be possible for a great teacher to arise who might accomplish much to make human beings better and to convert them. His teachings might have been sublime, but they would avail nothing when, at the end of all things, everything becomes a grave and even Christ's teachings would have disappeared, leaving not even a remembrance of him in any living being. People do not like to think this, but their dislike would not alter the fact. If it is desired to believe absolutely in a merely mechanical world order, it would be impossible to avoid such thoughts as these.

Everything depends on realizing the fact that something was accomplished in the Mystery of Golgotha that does not belong merely to the moral world order, but also to the whole collective cosmic order; something that belongs not only to the moral reality—which according to the mechanical world order must be nonexistent—but also to the whole intensive reality. We will be able to grasp what is really in question by turning our thoughts again to the three meetings I mentioned in the previous lecture, taking them in a different sense from that to which I then referred.

I do not wish to leave a vague impression in your minds about this, so I will say at once that in the sleeping state, the next incarnation is as the knowledge of the next day. We know from experience that when tomorrow comes the Sun will rise, and we know more or less how it will run its course, although we may not know tomorrow's weather or what separate events may affect our lives. Likewise, the soul is a prophet during our sleep, but a prophet who knows only of what is great and cosmic; not about the weather. If we suppose that, during sleep, the soul becomes aware of the details of the next incarnation, we would be making the same mistake as those who think that because they know that next Sunday the Sun will surely rise and set, as well as certain universal facts, they could therefore predict the weather. This does not change the fact that while we are asleep we do have to concern ourselves with the future. We are met during time of

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sleep by those forces whose nature is like our spirit self and work on forming our future.

I told you that every time we sleep, in the intermediate state between going to sleep and waking, we meet beings of the spiritual world, beings of a like nature to our spirit self (as we are accustomed to call it), beings of the same substance and kind. This means that when we awake from sleep, we have had a meeting with a spiritual being, and though we may be quite unaware of having had this experience, we nevertheless carry the effects into our outer physical lives. What takes place in our soul during this daily meeting is in a certain way connected with the future of humankind. People of today, unless they occupy themselves with spiritual science, know very little as yet of what takes place in the depth of their souls during sleep. Dreams, which in ordinary life betray something of this, do indeed reveal something, but they reveal it in such a way that the truth does not come easily to light. When we awake in a dream or out of a dream, or remember a dream, this is connected mostly with ideas we already acquired in life, or reminiscences. These are, however, only the garments of what really lives in the dream or during sleep. When our dreams clothe themselves in pictures from our daily life, they are merely the garments; dreams reveal what actually takes place in the soul during sleep, and that is related neither to the past nor to the present, but to the future.

In sleep the forces are found that, in a human being, can be compared to the germinal forces that develop in the plant for the production of a new one. As the plant grows it always develops the germinal forces for the new plant in the following year. Those forces reach their peak in forming the seed, in which they become visible. However, as a plant grows, while it is growing, the seed forces for the next plant are already present. Likewise, the germinal forces—whether for the next incarnation or even for the Jupiter period—are present in human beings, and we form these mainly during sleep. The forces then formed, my dear friends, are not related immediately to individual experiences,

but to the basic forces of the next incarnation: they relate to the forces of the next incarnation. In sleep, we work on our seeds for our next incarnation into the future. So that while we are asleep, we already live in the future.

Another, further meeting (if I leave out the second) is the third meeting, which I said in the last lecture takes place only once during a person's lifetime, in midlife. I said that when people are in their thirties, they encounter what might be called the Father Principle, whereas we meet the Spirit Principle every night. This meeting with the Father Principle is of very great significance, because it must happen. You will recall that I explained, even those who die before the age of thirty have this experience, but if they live through their thirties it comes in the course of life, whereas in the case of premature death it occurs sooner. You know that, as the result of that meeting, people become able to impress the experiences of the present life so deeply into themselves that those experiences can work into the next incarnation. Thus, the meeting with the Father Principle is connected with the earthly life of the next incarnation, while our meeting with the Spirit Principle is for the whole future; it radiates over the whole of our future life, as well as over the life experienced between birth and a new birth.

The laws with which this meeting (which we experience only once in a life) are interwoven do not pertain to the Earth. They are laws that have remained in the Earth's evolution, just as they were at the time of the Moon evolution. On the physical side, they are connected with our physical descent and everything that physical heredity signifies. This physical heredity is indeed only one side of the matter; there are spiritual laws behind it, as I have explained. Thus, everything that happens regarding the meeting with the Father Principle points back to the past; it is the legacy of the past. It points back to the Moon evolution and to earlier incarnations, while what takes place during sleep points toward the future. Just as what takes place during sleep forms the seed for the future, what comes about as a result of people being born

as the descendants of their ancestors—carrying from former incarnations what is necessary should be brought over—all that has remained from the past.

Both what relates to the future and to the past are, in a sense, striving outside the natural order. The peasant still goes to sleep at sunset and rises at dawn; but people progress in so-called civilization, they break away from the natural order. One meets people in cities (though they may not be very numerous) who go to bed in the morning and arise at night. Human beings are freeing themselves from the mere order of nature; the development of their free will makes it possible to do so.

In a sense, therefore, because we are preparing for a future that is not yet here, we are torn away from the natural order. When we carry the past into the present, especially the past connected with the Moon, we are also torn loose from the order of nature. No one can prove, according to the universal laws of nature, the necessity that John Smith should be born in 1914; such an event is not ruled by necessity, as is the rising of the Sun or other natural occurrences, but by the natural order of the Moon. During the Moon period, everything was like the order of our birth on Earth.

Human beings, however, are subject entirely to the natural order in regard to what has immediate significance to the present, our earthly existence. In the case of the Father Principle, we bear the past within us; with regard to the Spirit Principle, the future—in terms of the meeting, which I said occurs in the course of the year and is now connected with meeting Christ—we are connected with the natural order. If we were not, Christmas might be celebrated by one person in December and by another in March, and so on. However, although different nations have different designations for the festival of Christmas, there is some kind of festivity everywhere in late December that always bears some relation to the meeting I discussed. Thus, with this meeting that is inserted into the course of the year, people (for the very reason that this is their present) are in direct connection with the

order of nature. However, with respect to the past and the future, we have become free from it, and, indeed, have been free from it for thousands of years.

In ancient times, humankind joined in the natural order in terms of both past and future. Germanic countries in antiquity, for instance, regulated birth according to the natural order. Birth, which was regulated by the mysteries, might take place only at a set time of the year. Thus, it was inserted into the natural order. In antiquity, long before the Christian era, conception and birth were regulated in the Germanic countries by what is only faintly preserved in the myth of worshipping Hertha [the Mother Earth Goddess]. In those days, her worship was no less than this: when Hertha descended in her chariot and approached humanity, it was the time of conception. After she withdrew, this might no longer take place. This was strictly obeyed, to the degree that anyone not born within the appointed season was thought to lack honor, because that person's human existence was not in harmony with the natural order. In ancient times, birth and conception were adapted to the course of nature just as much as sleeping and waking were. In those days, people slept when the Sun had set and woke at dawn. These practices have become displaced, but the central event adapted to the course of the year cannot be displaced. By means of this, through its harmony with the order of nature, something is retained and must be so retained in the human soul.

What then is the whole purpose of humanity's earthly evolution? That human beings should adapt to the Earth and take the Earth conditions into themselves; that they should carry into their future evolution what the Earth has been able to give to them, not in just a single incarnation, but in the whole of their incarnations on Earth.

This then is the purpose of the Earth evolution. This purpose, however, can be fulfilled only if, during their sojourn on Earth, human beings forget to some degree their connection to cosmic and heavenly powers. And human beings have learned to do this.

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We know, in fact, that in antiquity human beings possessed atavistic clairvoyance, and could work into that heavenly powers. Human beings were still connected with them; the kingdom of heaven in a sense extended into the human heart. This had to change so that human beings could develop free will. To become connected to Earth, human beings could no longer retain the kingdom of heaven in their vision, or direct perception.

However, this is why (at the time of humanity's closest connection to the Earth, during the fifth epoch in which we now live) humankind has become materialistic. Materialism is only the most complete, the most extreme expression of humankind's relation to the Earth, and if nothing else had happened this would have brought about our complete and utter subjection to the Earth. We would have had to become related to it and gradually share in its destiny; we would have had to follow the same path as the Earth herself pursues; we would have dovetailed entirely into the Earth's evolution—unless something else occurred. Human beings, together with the Earth, would have had to tear themselves away, as it were, from the cosmos, uniting their destiny completely with that of the Earth. However, that was not the plan for humanity; something else was intended. Human beings had to unite in the proper way with the Earth, on the one hand; on the other, although they had to become related to the Earth through their nature, nonetheless messages would descend to them from the spiritual world that would lift them above the Earth again. This descent of the heavenly message came about through the Mystery of Golgotha. Therefore the being who went through the Mystery of Golgotha had to assume human nature as well as the nature of a heavenly being.

This means that we must think of Jesus Christ not only as one who, although the highest, entered human evolution and developed within it, but also as one who possessed a heavenly nature, who not only taught and propagated doctrine but also brought to the Earth something from Heaven. This is why it is important to understand the true nature of the Baptism in Jordan. It is not

merely a moral action. I am not saying that it is not a moral action, but that it is more than that; it is also an actual deed. Something took place then that is just as real as natural events. If I warm something by some means of heating, the warmth passes into the thing that is warmed. Likewise, the Christ being passed into Jesus of Nazareth at the Baptism by John. That is certainly a moral act in the highest degree, but it is also a reality in the course of nature, just as real as natural phenomena. The important thing is that we should understand that this is not something that originates in rationalistic concepts, which always accord only with mechanical, physical, or chemical nature; rather, it is something that, as idea, is just as much an actual fact as are the laws of nature, or indeed the forces of nature. Once this is grasped, other ideas will become more real than they are now.

We will not now go into a discussion on alchemy, but remember that what ancient alchemists had in view was that their concepts should not remain mere ideas but should lead to something. Whether they were justified is not the point for now (this may become the subject of another lecture). When they burned incense while holding their concept in mind or giving it voice, they tried to give it enough force to make the incense smoke assume form. They sought ideas that have the power to affect external realities of nature, ideas that do not remain merely within the egoistic part of human beings but can intervene in natural realities.

Why did ancient alchemists do this? They still had the idea that whatever occurred at the Mystery of Golgotha intervened in the course of nature; it was just as real and factual to them as a fact of nature. You see, this is the basis of a very significant difference that began in the second half of the Middle Ages, toward our own fifth age, which followed the Greco-Roman epoch. At the time of the crusades, during the twelfth to fifteenth and even the sixteenth centuries, there were some special natures—mainly women—who devoted themselves deeply to mysticism, to the degree that they experienced the inner results as a spiritual marriage, whether with Christ or another. Many ascetic nuns celebrated mystical

marriages. I will not go into the nature of those inner mystical unions today, but something happened within them that could later be expressed only in words. In a sense, it subsisted in the ideas and feelings and in the words that clothed them.

In contrast to this, Valentine Andrea, as the result of certain concepts and spiritual connections, wrote his *Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosenkreutz*. This *chymical* (or, as we would say today, “chemical”) marriage is also a human experience. However, when you go into the matter you find that this does not apply only to a soul experience but also to something not expressed merely in words but also grips the whole individual. It is not merely put into the world as a soul experience, since it was a real occurrence, or event of nature, in which a man accomplishes something like a natural process. In *The Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosenkreutz*, Valentine Andrea tried to express something more permeated with reality than merely the mystical marriage of Mechthild of Magdeburg, who was a mystic.

The mystical marriage of the nuns accomplished something only for the subjective nature of the human being; through the chymical marriage, a person would give oneself to the world. Through this, something was accomplished for the whole world, just as something is accomplished for the whole world through the processes of nature. This again is meant to be taken in a truly Christian sense. Those who thought more real thoughts also longed for concepts through which to understand reality better, even if only in the one-sided way of the old alchemists, concepts through which they could better grasp reality—ideas, in fact, that were actually connected with reality. Today, the age of materialism has veiled such concepts; and those today who believe they think correctly about reality are living in greater illusion than those despised individuals during the time of the ancient alchemists who strove for concepts that should help them to master it.

What can people today accomplish through their concepts? In our age in particular we have some experience of what they

can attain through these empty illusions. Today the husks of ideas are worshipped idols; they have nothing to do with reality. We reach reality only by plunging down into it, not by forming any sort of idea at will; yet the difference between unreal concepts and those permeated with reality can be perceived in the ordinary things of the day, though most people do not recognize this. People are completely satisfied with the mere shadow of ideas that have no reality.

Suppose, for instance, someone today gets up and makes a speech in which one may say that a new age must come and is already manifesting—a completely new age in which all human beings will be measured only according to their own worth, valued according to what they can do. People today would admit that such words are in complete accord with the times. However, my dear friends, as long as ideas are mere husks, no matter how beautiful, they are not permeated by reality. It is not the point whether a man who is convinced that his own nephew happens to be the best man for the job should acknowledge the principle that all people should be put in the places to which their powers are best adapted. It is not the ideas and concepts one may have that are important; what is needed is to penetrate reality with those ideas and recognize it.

It is nice to have ideals and fine principles, and often even nicer to express them. But what we really need is to plunge into reality, recognize it, and penetrate it. We are plunging more and more deeply into what has brought about these sad times by continuing to worship the idols of the husks and shadows of ideas, by not learning to see that “such beautiful ideas and concepts” have not the slightest value, and by talking about them without the will to get right down to the realities and recognize them. If we do this, we shall not only find the substance, but also the spirit therein. It is the worship of idols, the mere shadows and husks of ideas, that leads us away from the spirit. It is the great misfortune of our time that people are intoxicated with fine words. It is also unchristian; the true basic principle of Christianity is

that the Christ did not pour his teaching into Jesus of Nazareth, but poured himself in, which means that he united himself with earthly reality, was drawn into the reality of the Earth, so that he became the living message from the cosmos.

The New Testament, my dear friends, if read correctly, is the most wonderful means of education about reality. The New Testament, however, must gradually be rendered into our own language. The current translations do not give the complete original meaning. But once the old meaning is put into the direct language of our day, the Gospels will be the very best means of bringing “that power of thinking that is permeated with reality” to people. Nowhere can thought forms be found in them that lead to the husks and shadows of ideas. We need only grasp these things today in their deeper reality.

It may sound trivial almost to speak of the “intoxication of ideas,” but this is so prevalent today that the ideas and concepts themselves, however beautiful they sound, are no longer the actual point. The important thing is that those who voice them should stand on reality. People find this difficult to understand today. Everything that emerges into the open today is judged by its content, and in fact by what is understood about that content. If this were not true, such documents—for instance, as the so-called Peace Program of President Wilson, which is entirely void of ideas, a husk, a mere conglomeration of the shadows of ideas—would never be taken as based on reality. Anyone having the power of discerning the reflections of ideas would know that this combination could at most work only by means of a certain absurdity, which might become a sort of reality. What is really needed is for people to try to find ideas and concepts truly permeated with reality; this, however, presupposes that the seekers themselves should be profoundly imbued with reality and be selfless enough to connect themselves with what lives and moves in reality. Much today is well-calculated to lead people entirely away from the search for reality, but such things go unobserved.

Yes, outer reality hangs together entirely with what people are continually developing. If they develop concepts void of reality, reality itself becomes confused and then follows conditions such as we have today. It is no longer possible to judge things by what we encounter externally today; we must form our opinions by studying what has been developing in human minds for years, decades, and even longer. That is what must be investigated. The whole thing depends on our not accepting the Christ from only his teaching, but that we should look at the Mystery of Golgotha in its actuality, or its reality; we should see that it was a fact that something SUPRAEARTHLY united with the Earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We will then come to realize that morality is not merely something that fades and dies away when the Earth and even the fabric of the heavens become a grave; but even though present Earth and the present heavens become a grave, yet, just as today's plants will become mere dust while in the present plant, there is the seed of the next one; likewise, there is the seed of the next world in our world, and humankind is connected with this seed. However, this seed requires the connection with Christ so that it does not fall into the grave with the Earth, as a plant seed that has not been fructified falls into dust with the plant.

The most real thought possible is that the present moral order of the world is the germinal force for the future natural order. Morality is not merely a constructed thought; when permeated with reality, it exists in the present as a seed for future outer realities. A concept of the world such as that of Kant-Laplace, however—about which Hermann Grimm says that a piece of carrion that attracts a hungry dog is more appetizing—does not belong to that level of thought. A mechanical plan of the world can never penetrate to the thought that morality contains a force that is the seed of the natural, the nature of the future. Why can it not do this? Because it must live in illusion.

Just imagine, my dear friends, if the Mystery of Golgotha had not taken place, all would have been as the Kant-Laplace

theory says. If you think away the Mystery of Golgotha from Earth, that theory would be correct. The Earth had to reach a condition so that, left to itself, it must inevitably lead the human race into the desolation of the grave. Things had to take place as they have, so that human beings might attain freedom through their relation to the Earth. They will not sink into the grave, because at the critical moment the Earth was fructified by Christ, because Christ descended, and because in Christ lies the opposing force to what leads to the grave—that is, the seed force whereby humankind can be born up once more into the spiritual world. This means that, when Earth becomes a grave, once it fulfils its destiny according to the Kant-Laplace theory, the seed concealed within it must not be allowed to fall into decay, but must be carried on into the future. Thus, the Christian moral plan of the world presupposes what Goethe calls “the higher nature in nature.”

We might say that those who are able to think in the right way about the Mystery of Golgotha as a reality can also think thoughts and form concepts permeated by reality. This is necessary and what people must learn before anything else. In this fifth post-Atlantean age, people have either wanted to form concepts that intoxicate them or those that blind them. Intoxicating concepts are formed mainly in the areas of religion; those that blind are formed mainly in the domain of natural science. A concept like that of Kant (which, while admitting the purely natural ordering, placing the two worlds of knowledge and faith side by side, has yet only the moral in view) must lead to intoxication. Concepts based on moral grounds are able to intoxicate, preventing people from seeing that in this way they simply succumb to the stillness of the grave, into which all the world’s moral plans have fallen and perished.

Or, again, such concepts as those of today’s natural science, national economics, and (forgive the expression, which may be rather hard to swallow) even current politics may create blindness; they are not formed in connection with a spiritual concept

of the world, but from the shreds of what people call actual reality (that is, in the physical sense). Thus, people see only as far as the end of their own nose, and blindly form opinions based on what they can see with their eyes and comprehend with mechanically acquired ideas between birth and death—without having formed any concepts permeated with reality by being imbued with the spiritual or having grasped spiritual reality.

Those who know see many sad things happening. For instance, it is absolutely appalling to someone who is not guided by mere words but by realities that it is possible today for people to be impressed simply by an assemblage of words, by a number of speeches that have indeed been printed. A highly honored person of our day has delivered speeches, and in his very first speech he immediately assumes the attitude that human beings in one aspect of their nature are completely related to the natural order, and that theologians are not acting correctly when they do not leave the order of nature to the scientists who investigate it. Those speeches go on to say that in regard to the natural order, the human being is simply a piece of machinery; however, the functions of the soul depend on this machinery; nearly everything then specified as functions belong to the soul. All these are then to be left to the investigators of nature. They leave nothing to comfort theology but the thought that all this has now been left to natural science, and all we have to do is to make speeches, to talk. After that, of course one can live only on the husks of words. Moreover, those speeches are composed so that they lack continuity. (I will return to this subject in coming lectures and go into it more fully.)

If you look closely into the thought that is supposed to be connected with the one immediately preceding it, you will find that it cannot possibly be thought of as connected. However, the whole thing sounds very good. In the preface to certain lectures “On the Molding of Life,” it is stated that lately they have been attended by thousands of people, and that certainly many thousands more feel the need to comfort their souls at

this serious time by perusing them. The lectures were given by the celebrated theologian Hunzinger, and I believe are in the Quelle & Meyer series “Knowledge and Education.”<sup>1</sup> They are among the most dangerous literature of the day, because, though they sound enchanting, one’s thinking simply becomes confused; the thoughts are disconnected and, if one strips away the fascinating words, nothing but nonsense. Yet these lectures were highly praised, and no one noticed the confused thoughts in them or stopped to test them; everyone was charmed by the shadow words.

It is continually necessary to point out what our age so desperately needs. Even history itself in our time is frequently no more than a mere shadow of ideas. How often what Fichte said to the German people is proclaimed abroad today. What he really said, however, cannot be understood unless one studies his whole life, a life so profoundly rooted in reality. This is why in my book *The Riddle of Man*<sup>2</sup> I tried to represent the personality of Fichte as he later became, showing how closely he was connected with reality from his childhood onward. I would indeed be glad if such words (as to the need for our thoughts and concepts to be permeated with reality) were not merely heard superficially but grasped profoundly—taken in and truly absorbed. Only then will a free and open vision, a psychic vision, be acquired for what our age needs so much. Every one of us should have this open soul vision. If we do not each make it a duty to consider the facts touched on here, we are not paying enough attention to the traffic today going on in the shadows and husks of words, nor to the fact that everything tends to lead people either into intoxicating concepts or to what blinds them.

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1 A. W. (August Wilhelm) Hunzinger (1871–1920), Protestant theologian. His books include *Das Wunder: Eine dogmatisch-apologetische Studie* (The Wonder: A Dogmatic Anthropological Study; Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1912); and *Hauptfragen der Lebensgestaltung* (Main questions of the Life Organization; Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1916).

2 First published in 1916, *The Riddle of Man: From the Thinking, Observations and Contemplations of a Series of German and Austrian Personalities*.

I hope you will not take what has been said today as some sort of propaganda, but view it as an expression of actual facts. People certainly must and should live within their time, and when something is described they should not see it as everything that can be said on the subject. People should learn to strike a balance. It is quite natural that the world today should be confronted with impulses leading entirely to materialism. This cannot be prevented and is connected with the deep needs of the age. But a balance must be established.

One very prominent means of driving human beings into materialism is the cinematograph.<sup>3</sup> It has not been observed from this perspective, but there is no better school for materialism than the cinema. What we see there is not reality as people see it. Only an age that knows so little of reality as ours does, one that worships reality in a material sense as an idol, could believe that the cinema represents reality. Any other age would ask whether people actually walk along the street as seen at the cinema; people would ask themselves whether what they saw at such a performance really corresponds to reality.

Ask yourselves frankly and honorably: What is really most like what you see in the street? A picture painted by an artist, an immobile picture, or the dreadful, sparkling pictures of the cinematograph. If you ask yourselves quite honorably, you will admit that what the artist reproduces in a state of rest is much more like what you see. Hence, while people are sitting at the cinema, what they see there does not make its way into the ordinary faculty of perception; it enters a deeper, more material stratum than we usually employ for our perception. Etherically, people stare wide-eyed at the cinema; they develop eyes like those of a seal, though much larger—that is, etherically larger. This works in a materializing way, not only on what people have in their consciousness, but on their deepest subconsciousness.

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3 A film camera that also serves as a projector and developer. It was invented in the 1890s by Léon Bouly (1872–1932).

*Morality as a Germinating Force*

Do not think I am abusing the cinematograph. I would like to say once more that it is quite natural it should exist, and it will attain far greater perfection as time goes on. This will be the road leading to materialism. But a balance must be established, and that can be created only as follows. With the search for reality being developed in the cinema, with this descent below sensory perception, people must also develop an ascent above it, an ascent into spiritual reality. Then the cinema will not harm people, and they can see it as often as they like. However, unless the balance is present, people will be led by such things not to a proper relationship to the Earth, but to becoming more and more closely connected to it, until finally they are entirely closed off from the spiritual world.