

Doors of Death, the Elements, the Sun ~ Rudolf Steiner

Dear friends, you know very well already that in the spiritual world the human soul is really and truly able to learn and observe only in a way that does not make use of the body as an instrument. Everything we are able to gain by using the body as our instrument can only provide knowledge and experience relating to the physical world. To experience the spiritual worlds we must find a way of doing so outside the physical body. That way is indeed open to modern man, though it is not easy to achieve observation of the spiritual world by going outside the body. Another point is that anyone not able to make such observations himself will be able to evaluate observations achieved in the spiritual world, once they have been achieved, on the basis of genuinely sound common sense, that is not just the common sense generally called sound, but a genuinely sound common sense. Today, however, our subject will be the path as such, the way the human soul on the one hand comes out of the physical body, as we might put it, and on the other enters into the spiritual world. As I said, I want to use the approach of imaginative perception today. Last week we took another approach. Many things will have to be presented in the form of images and it will be up to you to pursue these further in meditation. In doing so you will find this path is one of the very special significance.

It is possible to enter into the spiritual world through three doors, as it were. The first may be called the Door of Death, the second the Door of the Elements and the third the Door of the Sun. Anyone wishing to follow the path of knowledge in its entirety will have to take the road to knowledge through all three doors.

The Door of Death has always been very fully considered wherever the mysteries were taught. This Door of Death cannot be reached unless we seek to reach it through meditation, a term by now thoroughly familiar, which means by giving ourselves up to certain thoughts or feelings that are exactly the right ones at the time for our individual personality. We make them the absolute centre of our conscious minds, identifying with them completely. It is very easy for human efforts to flag when this path is taken, for lack of ease and the overcoming of obstacles are part of this and are essential. So it will be necessary again and again to make those quiet, deeply personal efforts, endeavoring to give ourselves up to those thought contents, those feelings, in such a way that we forget the whole world and live only in those thoughts, those feelings. When we learn to achieve this over and over again we shall finally be in a position where we perceive something that is like a kind of independent life within the thought on which

our conscious mind is focused. We shall get the feeling that until then we had merely been thinking that thought, making it the focus of our conscious mind; now, however, this thought will be felt to be developing a life of its own, an inner activity of its own. It is as though we found ourselves in a position where we are truly able to produce a distinct entity within us. The thought begins to take shape as an inner structure. That is an important moment, for we realize that this thought, this feeling, has a life of its own and we feel ourselves to be the enveloping form holding this thought, this feeling. We are then able to say to ourselves that our efforts have made us the arena where something has been able to develop that is now achieving a life of its own through us.

It is an important moment in the life of a person practicing meditation when he awakens to himself and the thought held in meditation comes to life. He will then realize that spiritual objectivity has come to him, that the spiritual world is paying attention to him, that it has drawn close. Of course, it is not easy to reach this level of experience, for before it is reached we have to live through feelings and sensations for which the human being has a natural aversion. A certain feeling of isolation has to be experienced for example, a feeling of loneliness, an experience of being abandoned by the physical world as it were, the feeling that this physical world does many things that wear us down, threatening to crush us. It is through this feeling of isolation that we finally reach the point where we are able to bear the strong inner life to which our thought awakens, into which it is born, as I should like to put it. There is much indeed that goes against the grain. There is much in man that goes against him and this can lead to a real experience of thought coming to life within him. There is one particular feeling that comes up, an inner experience that comes up, which is one we really do not want to have. At the same time we will not admit it to ourselves that we do not want to have it, saying instead: 'Oh, I'll never do it! I'll go to sleep in the process. My ability to think will go, for this goes beyond my inner strength.' In short, we will automatically come up with all kinds of excuses, for the experience to be gone through is that thought, in thus becoming enlivened, really becomes a distinct entity. It assumes reality, taking on a form of identity. Then the vision arises, and not merely the feeling, that the thought is like a small seed to begin with, a round seed one might say, and that it then grows and develops into something that has definite form, extending into the head from the outside. Then a challenge is presented: 'You have identified with the thought, and now you are inside the thought and growing into your own head with the thought. Essentially, however, you are still outside.' The thought assumes the form of a winged human head that continues into indefiniteness and then extends into one's own body through the head. The thought thus develops into something like a winged angel's head. That is what we must actually achieve. It is difficult to have this experience, and you will really believe you are losing all ability to think at the moment when the thought grows to assume that form. One feels one will be taken from oneself at that moment. And what so far has been the body we have known, into which the thought is now reaching, will feel like an automaton that has been left behind.

There are also a great many obstacles in the objective spiritual world to prevent this becoming visible to us. The winged angel's head truly becomes an inner vision but there are all kinds of obstacles against it becoming visible. Above all, the point reached is the actual threshold of the spiritual world. If we succeed in standing firm within ourselves the way I have described, we are then on the threshold of the spiritual world, truly on the threshold of the spiritual world. There, however, stands the potentate we have always been calling Ahriman, though at first he will be quite invisible to man. We do not see him. And it is Ahriman who makes sure we do not see the thought entity taking the form I have described to you. He does not want us to see it. He wants to prevent that. The best way of reaching that point is by the path of meditation, of course, and this always makes it easy for Ahriman to bring to naught, as it were, what we want to achieve, as long as we cling to the prejudices of the physical world. And it really has to be said that people have no idea how much they cling to prejudice with regard to the physical world. They cannot image that there is another world with different laws from those of the physical world. It is not possible for me today to discuss all the prejudices we carry with us when we come to the threshold of the spiritual world, but let me present one very major prejudice, one of a fairly subtle nature.

You see, speaking of the physical world people speak of monist philosophy, of there being only one ultimate substance or principle, saying to themselves: 'I can only understand the world if I see the whole of it as a unity.' We have had some strange experiences particularly in this respect. When we started our spiritual movement here in Berlin with just a few members – that is quite a few years ago now – people found their way to us who then discovered that after all they could not feel they belonged to us in every fiber of their being. There was a lady, for instance, who after a few months came and told us that what spiritual science had to offer was not really the right thing for her, for it meant one had to do a great deal of thinking and thinking wiped out exactly the things that were important to her. She said she always sort of went to sleep when thinking. She also felt that really there was only thing that counted, and that was unity! It became evident that in her case the unity of the world which monists look for in all kinds of spheres – and not only the materialists among monists – had become a fixed idea: Unity, unity, unity! She wanted to look only for unity. In the intellectual life of Germany, one particular philosopher, Leibniz, was very much a monadologist. He sought not unity, but the many monads, which for him were ensouled entities. He therefore knew quite clearly that as soon as one enters into the spiritual world it can be a matter only of plurality, not of unity. And so there are monists and pluralists. These views are considered philosophies. The monists fight the pluralists who are speaking in terms of plurality; they themselves only speak of unity.

For you see, it is like this: Unity and plurality are concepts that only apply to the physical world. And now people are thinking things must also apply to the spiritual world. But there they do not need apply. There we have to be prepared to see a unity at one moment and then having to overcome this unity the next moment, and that it will show itself to be a plurality. It is unity

and plurality at one and the same time. Nor is it possible to transfer ordinary arithmetic, physical mathematics, to the spiritual world. It is one of the most powerful, and at the same time also most profound, Ahrimanic prejudices – wanting to apply concepts we have acquired in the physical world just as they are to the spiritual world. We really must arrive on its threshold without bag and baggage, unencumbered with all we have learned in the physical world. We have to be prepared to leave things behind on the threshold. All concepts, and ideas, and indeed, especially the concepts we have made great effort to achieve, have to be left behind. We have to be prepared to accept that in the spiritual world something quite new is given. Man has an enormous tendency to cling to what is given in the physical world. He wants to take his achievements from the physical world into the spiritual world. Yet it must be possible for him to face a clean slate, face utter emptiness, where his only guide will be the thought that is beginning to assume life. This entry into the spiritual world has been called Door of Death because it is really much more of a death even than physical death. In physical death people are convinced they put aside their physical body. On entry into the spiritual world we must resolve really to put aside our concepts and ideas and to allow our essential nature to be rebuilt.

Now we come to stand before the winged thought entity that I have spoken of. We shall come to stand before it if we really make every effort to live within a thought. All we need to know then is that when the moment that lies ahead makes different demands on us from those we have envisaged we must truly stand fast, we must not turn back as it were. The turning back tends to be an unconscious reaction. We flag, but our flagging merely indicates that we are not willing to leave behind bag and baggage. We are not prepared to do this because it means that the soul has to die in a way, with all it has acquired on the physical plane, before it can enter into the spiritual world. This door therefore has to be called the Door of Death, such being its nature. Then we shall be able to use the winged thought as a spiritual eye we have acquired, or also a spiritual ear, for it is exactly through this thought entity that we hear, sense, perceive what is there in the spiritual world.

Dear Friends, it is possible to speak of specific experiences we may gain that allow us the enter into the spiritual world. Nothing else is required if we wish to gain these experiences but to persist in meditation using the prescribed method. Above all, it must be clearly understood that certain feelings with which we approach the threshold of the spiritual world will have to be put aside beforehand. These feelings arise because we usually want the spiritual world to be different from the way it presents itself to us.

This, then, is the first door, the Door of Death.

The second is the Door of the Elements. It is the second door to be gone through by all who practice meditation with true devotion. It is, of course, also possible for people to have the benefit of a constitution that lets them reach the second door without having gone through the first. This is not a good thing from the point of view of true insight, but it is possible to get to that

point without having gone through the first door. Full and proper insight will be gained only by going through the first door and then approaching the second in conscious awareness. This second door comes about in the following way. You see, having gone through the Door of Death one first of all finds oneself in specific conditions which one can see are really similar to sleep if looked at externally, considering their effect on man and the way they are apparent in the life of man. Inwardly, however, they are quite different. Externally, man is as though in a sleep state when in these conditions. It is exactly at the point when his thought has begun to live, when it begins to stir, to grow, that external man is in a sleep – like state. He need not be lying down – he may be sitting on a chair – but he is in a kind of sleep state. Outwardly this state cannot really be distinguished from the ordinary sleep state, inwardly, however, it is very different. Returning to the normal state we have in life we then realize that we were not asleep but within the life of thought, just as we are now in a condition where we have woken to the physical world, as usual, and are looking through our own eyes at things which are luminous. Yet we also know that now when we are awake we are thinking, producing thoughts, putting them together. Just before, however, when we were in that other state, the thoughts were just producing themselves out of themselves. One thought approached another; they illumined one another; one thought moved away from the another – and what we usually do ourselves when thinking has there been doing itself. We know that whilst we are normally an ego that attaches one thought to another, we float first to the one thought and then to the another, when in this other state we are united with them; then we are off and within a third thought and afterwards come floating back again. We get the feeling that space has ceased to exist.

I think you will agree that in physical space the position is that if we feel drawn to a point and look back on it, then move away from it and finally want to approach it again, we would first have to make our way back again; we would have to make our way there and back. This does not apply in the other state. Space is not like the space we know then, and we jump through space, as it were. One moment we are at one point, the next we have gone. We do not pass through space. The laws of space have ceased to exist. Here we are alive and active within through itself. We know that the ego has not died. It is active within the life of thought, but we are not immediately masters of the thoughts within which we now live. The thoughts produce themselves – we are drawn along. We are not actively swimming in the currents of thoughts; instead the thoughts are taking us on their shoulders as it were, carrying us along. This state has to come to an end. It does so when we go through the Door of the Elements. Then we gain control of it all and are able to create a particular line of thought quite deliberately. Then our will is alive within the whole of thought life. This again is a tremendously important moment. I have even spoken of it exoterically in my public lectures. The second goal is reached by identifying with our own destiny. This will enable us to bring the will into the world of living through.

When we have first gone through the Door of Death we come to a point where various things are done with us in the spiritual world. We come to do things ourselves in the spiritual

world by identifying with our destiny. This is only achieved gradually. Then our thoughts assume a character identical with our own essential character. The deeds of our essential nature enter into the spiritual world. To do this properly it will be necessary to go through the second door. When we begin to use the power we derive from identifying with our destiny to take active control in our thoughts – not merely going along with a thought as though it were a dream picture but able to erase one thought or another as occasion arises and call up another – when we come to a point where we begin to be able to use our will in handling things, then we shall indeed have to go through an experience that may be referred to as going through the second door. It will be found that the will – power we shall now require presents itself to us as a fearsome beast. In the mystical tradition this has for many thousands of years been known as ‘meeting the lion’. This encounter with the lion has to be gone through. It consists in a feeling of abject terror concerning what has to be done in the thought world, great fear of entering into a living union with the thought world. This terror must be overcome, just as the sense of isolation has to be overcome at the gate of death. We feel terror. This terror may present itself in the all kinds of ways, as a sensation that is not at all like the fear or terror, yet it is essentially fear of what one is getting into there. It is important that we genuinely find a way of controlling the lion. The Imagination paints a very vivid picture of the beast opening its huge jaws ready to devour us. The will – power we want to use in the spiritual world is threatening to devour us. All the time the overriding sensation is that we must use our will, we must do something, we need to take hold of one thing or another, and at the same time another feeling arises in connection with all these elements of will activity into which we are entering. It is the feeling that they will devour us if we take hold of them, extinguish us in the world. That is the lion devouring us. What we literally must do – if we are to stay with the metaphor – is not give in to fears that the will elements may take hold of us there in the spiritual world, devour us and strangle us; no, we must mount the lion and take hold of those will elements, using them to affect our deeds. That is the crux of the matter.

You can see, of course, what this is all about. Having first of all gone through the gate of death we are then outside the body, and out there we can only use the forces of the will. We must fit into the cosmic harmonies. The forces to be used out there are also within us, it is only that they function at an unconscious level – the forces that make the blood move, make our hearts beat, derive from the spiritual entities. And we become immersed in these when we immerse ourselves in the element of will. These forces are within us. If someone is taken hold of by the element of will without having followed the regular esoteric path, without having gone through the gate of death, he is taken hold of by the forces that normally circulate in this blood, beat in his heart. He is then not using the forces that exist outside his body but the forces present within his body. This would be ‘grey magic’. It would induce a person to intervene in the spiritual world of his own accord with forces we should not use to intervene in the spiritual world. So it is important that we see the lion at this point, that we truly have this beast before us and know: That is what it looks like, that is how the forces of will want to take hold of us, and we must lay hold

of it out there outside the body. If we do not go up to the second door we shall not see the lion and shall then be in permanent danger of wanting to rule the world out of human egoism. The right path to knowledge is the one that leads first of all out of the physical body and existence as a human being, after which we approach the relationship we will need to form with the entities of the spiritual world.

Now, of course, most people are inclined to look for an easier way to the spiritual world than through genuine meditation. It is possible, for instance, to avoid the Door of Death and approach the second door if one's inner constitution permits this. This is achieved by giving oneself up to specific mental pictures, particularly of the fervent type, that are supposed to suggest general surrender to the whole universe. Mental pictures suggested by some mystic or other with only partial knowledge, suggested in good faith. But they mean we pass over thought effort as though in a dream, with feelings being stimulated directly. Feelings are whipped up, the emotions are enthusiastified. It will indeed be possible to reach the second door by this method, and one will also be given over to the will forces, but instead of controlling the lion the person is devoured by it and the lion will do as it likes with him. This means that things will occur that fundamentally speaking are occult, but in the main are egotistical. Despite a certain inherent risk it is therefore necessary from the point of view of the true esoteric teaching of today again and again not to draw attention to any kind of mysticism that merely whips up feelings and emotions. such an appeal to elements that whip up the inner life of man, cracking the whip to drive him out of his physical body whilst keeping him in the content of his blood and heart forces, the physical forces active in the blood and the heart, will lead him to perceive the spiritual world in a way; this cannot be denied and may indeed have much to be said for it that is good. But it makes man feel his way about in uncertainty in the spiritual world, so that he is not the least able to differentiate between egotism and altruism.

One finds oneself in a difficult situation having to stress this, for present – day minds are still very apt to go to sleep during proper meditation and anything relating to it. They prefer not to tighten up their thinking process. they much prefer to be told: give yourself up to all loving devotion, to the universal spirit, or something like that. The result is that thinking is avoided and the emotions are whipped up. People are indeed guided to spiritual perception in that way but they are not in full conscious awareness and are unable to tell if the things they experience there, things they experience for themselves, arise from egotism or do not arise from egotism. Yes, parallel to selfless mediation there has to be enthusiasm brought in to all our feelings, but the point is that this must run parallel to thought. Thought must not be excluded. Certain mystics are, however, seeking to achieve something exactly by the method of suppressing thought and giving themselves up entirely to the glow of whipped up emotions.

This is a difficult point, for it does work and people who whip up their feelings like that do progress much faster. They do enter the spiritual world and they have all kinds of experiences there, and that is what most people want. For most people it is not a question of entering the

spiritual world in the right way but rather of getting there altogether. The uncertainty arises because if we do not first go through the Door of Death and instead approach the Door of the Elements directly, Lucifer will prevent us from actually perceiving the lion. We are then devoured by it before we see it, as it were. The problem is that we are no longer able to tell what relates to us and what is part of the world out there. We come to know spiritual entities, elemental spirits. It is possible to get to know quite an extensive spiritual world without going through the Door of Death, but on the whole these are spiritual entities whose function it is to maintain the human circulation and human heart action. Such entities are of course always present in the spiritual, the elemental, world around us. There are spirits whose sphere of life is the air, the warmth flowing around us, and also light.

Their sphere of life also lies in the music of the spheres our organs are unable to hear. They are spiritual entities active and present in all that lives. That is the world we would then enter. It all gets very seductive because it really is possible to make the most marvelous spiritual discoveries in this world. You know, when someone who has not gone through the Door of Death but has marched straight up to the lion gate, failing to see the lion, perceives an elemental spirit whose function it is to maintain heart activity, such an elemental spirit – which also has to maintain the hearts of other people = may on occasion give news of other people, even of people from the past; or it may offer prophetic tidings relating to the future. So the business may bring great successes but it still is not the right path, for it does not give us free mobility in the spiritual world.

The third door to be passed is the Door of the Sun. Again there will be a specific experience as we approach this door. At the Door of Death we must perceive a winged angel's head, at the Door of the Elements, a lion. At the Door of the Sun we must perceive a dragon, a wild dragon. And we must take a proper look at this wild dragon. But now Lucifer and Ahriman will together make every effort to make the dragon invisible, to hide it from our spiritual vision. If we do perceive it we shall find that, fundamentally speaking, this wild dragon has above all to do with ourselves. It is the issue of the instincts and feelings fundamentally relating to what in ordinary life we call our lowest nature. The dragon has within it all the forces we need for the process of digestion and many other things – if you'll forgive my reference to such base functions. The principle within us that enables us to digest food and perform a number of other functions linked to what strictly is our lowest nature appears to us in the form of a dragon. We must look at it as it emerges from us coil upon coil. It is far from beautiful, that dragon, and this makes it easy for Lucifer and Ahriman to influence our unconscious soul life and get us to a point where unconsciously we do not want to know about seeing the dragon. It is an issue also of all our idiocies, all our vanities, our pride and self-seeking and also of our basest instincts.

The Door of the Sun is given that name because it is the forces dwelling in the sun that also weaves the very issue of which the dragon is composed. Sun forces make it possible for us to digest our food and perform those other organic functions. This truly comes about through

living with the sun. If we do not perceive the dragon at the Door of the Sun the dragon will devour us and we shall become one with it in the spiritual world. We shall then no longer be different from the dragon; we shall actually be the dragon going through experiences in the spiritual world. And the dragon can experience things of great significance, it can learn magnificent things as it were. Those are experiences more enticing, I'd say, than those made at the Door of Death or after passing the Door of Death. The experiences made at the Door of Death are colorless to begin with, shadowy and subtle, so slight and subtle that they easily escape us and we are not much inclined to develop the degree of attention needed to take hold of them. And again a certain pitch must be reached in order that something so delicately coming to life in our thought may be able to expand. In the end it will expand into a world. But it calls for long-term active effort and endeavor to reach the point where it shows itself as a reality full of color, sound and life. We must let those forms that are without sound or color take on life from all corners of infinity, as it were.

If for example we want to use what may be called 'head clairvoyance' – meaning the type of clairvoyance that arise when thought is enlivened – to detect the simplest spirit of the air or of water, this spirit of the air or the water will initially be something so slight and shadowy as it flits across the horizon that it will not catch our interest. If it is to assume color or to sound forth, color has to come to it from the whole periphery of the cosmos. This however will only happen after a long period of inner effort. It will only happen if we wait for this to be given to us. Just think, if you have such a small spirit of the air, metaphorically speaking, and it is to come out in color, to appear in color, then the color has to radiate in from a mighty part of the cosmos. It will be necessary to have the strength to make it radiate in. Such strength however can only be achieved through devotion. If we are all of a kind with the dragon, if we are one with it, and we see a spirit of the air or the water, the inclination will be to let the powers radiate out that are within us, specifically in the organs which in ordinary life are called lower organs. That is much more easily done. The head is in itself a perfect organ, but the astral body and the ether body of the head do not have much color to them. The colors have been used to form the brain, for instance, and particularly the cranium, the bony skull cap. If therefore you used head clairvoyance, to lift the astral body and ether body out of the stomach, the liver, the gallbladder and other organs, the colors have not been used in the same way to form perfect organs. These organs are only on the way to perfection. What comes from the astral body and ether body of the belly is beautifully colored; it glitters and glistens in all kinds of sun colors. Lifting your astral body and ether body out of that region you will bestow the most marvelous colors and hues upon the forms you are seeing. It is therefore possible for someone to see marvelous colors and paint pictures in gorgeous colors.

It is of course interesting to study the spleen, the liver and the gut. Anatomists find this interesting and for science it is indeed necessary. Yet if someone with knowledge goes into this, the beautiful colorful pictures which appear represent what lies at the back of the digestive

process two hours after a meal. There can be no objection to this being investigated. Today anatomists find it necessary to study these organs; one day science will gain a great deal from investigating them and knowing what the ether body is doing with the stomach is digesting food. One thing has to be clearly understood however – if we do not have conscious awareness as we go through the Door of the Sun, we will not know that we are offloading everything there is in the ether and astral bodies of our bellies onto the dragon, separating it out. Letting this radiate out into the forms seen clairvoyantly we do indeed perceive a marvelous world. The most beautiful result is also the one most easily achieved, but it does not in the first place arise through higher powers, out of head clairvoyance, but through belly clairvoyance. It is very important that we know this. For the cosmos nothing is ‘low’ in the absolute sense, only relatively speaking. The cosmos needs to work with tremendously significant forces to bring about what is needed for the digestive system. The point, however, is that we must not fall into error, not deceive ourselves, but know things as they are. To know that something presenting itself from a truly marvelous aspect is nothing but the digestive process, that is something really important. If on the other hand we believe, say, that a special angelic sphere is revealing itself to us in such a picture, then we are indeed in error. A reasonable man will therefore not be against a science being nurtured on the basis of such knowledge but merely against such things being put in a false light. That is the real point. It may happen, for instance, that some process in the course of digestion results in someone always lifting out a specific party of his ether body at a specific stage in the digestive process; he may then be a natural clairvoyant. It is however important to know what is going on there.

Man will find it difficult therefore to use head clairvoyance – i.e. a sphere where all color present in the ether and astral bodies has been used to bring about the marvelous structure of the brain – and make forms that are without color or sound assume full color and to resound. With ‘belly clairvoyance’ on the other hand he will find it relatively easy to see the most marvelous things in the world. This belly clairvoyance does of course also involve powers which man must learn to use. The powers used there for the digestive process are after all merely transformed power. We will experience them in their right form if we get better and better at identifying with our destiny. In this field, too, it will teach us to draw up not just the winged angel’s head that came up first but the other part that follows, and it is important to draw up not just the powers that serve digestion but also those of a higher kind. Those are the powers that lie in our karma, in our destiny. Identifying ourselves with these we shall be able to send forth the spiritual entities we see around us, entities whose tendency is such that sounds and colors flow inward from the universe. Then, of course, the spiritual world will have its full content, it will be concrete, so real and concrete that we find ourselves within it the same way we find ourselves in the physical world.

A particular problem arises at the Door of Death. We really have the feeling – and this too, has to be overcome – that we will lose ourselves there. Having made a real effort, however,

to identify with the thought element we can also be aware that we may have lost ourselves but will find ourselves again. This is an experience one has there. We lose ourselves on entering into the spiritual world, but we also know that we shall find ourselves again. The step has to be taken of reaching the abyss, losing ourselves in the abyss, but trust that we shall find ourselves again over there. That is an experience to be gone through. Everything I have described refers to inner experiences that have to be gone through. It is important to know what really happens to the soul there. It is just the same when we are supposed to see something; it is easier if a friend points it out than if we try and work it out for ourselves. But everything I have described can be achieved if you practice true devotion in giving yourself up again and again to your inner work and to inner overcoming through meditation. This has been described in my book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, and in the second part of *Occult Science*.

This is especially important – that such different kinds of experience are met with beyond the threshold of the spiritual world. If we desire – and this is only natural – to see a continuation of the physical world in the spiritual world, a duplicate of it; if we think everything is bound to look the same in the spiritual world as it does here in the physical world, we cannot enter that world. It will indeed be necessary to go through something that feels like a reversal of everything we have known here in the physical world. Here in the physical world we are used to open our eyes, for example, and see light, to gain the impression of light. If we expect to be able to open a spiritual eye in the spiritual world and gain an impression of light, we cannot enter that world for we will have the wrong expectations.

Something like a mist will be woven which veils the spiritual senses, hiding the spiritual world from us the way a sea of mist hides the mountain view. It is not possible to, for instance to see objects illumined by light in the spiritual world. It must be understood that in the spiritual world we ourselves shine forth with the light. When light falls on an object in the physical world the object becomes visible to us. In the spiritual world we ourselves are inside the ray of light, touching the object with the light. One therefore knows on swimming with the ray of light in the spiritual world; one knows oneself to be within the radiant light. This serves to indicate how we can acquire ideas that can help us get on in the spiritual world. It is extremely useful, for instance, to visualize the following: What would it be like if you were inside the sun now? Not being inside the sun you are seeing objects when they are illumined by the sun's rays, because they reflect the light. Imagine now you are inside the sun's rays and touching the objects with them. This contact is an experience we have in the spiritual world; in fact, experience in the spiritual world consists of our knowing ourselves to be alive within it. We know ourselves to be alive within the weaving of thoughts. It is just when this stage begins, where we consciously know ourselves to be within the weaving of the thoughts, that there is an immediate transition to the state of knowing oneself to be within the bright radiance of light. For thought arises from light. Thought weaves in the light. But it will only be at that point that we experience ourselves as becoming immersed in light when we are within the weaving of thoughts.

Mankind is now at a stage where such concepts have to be acquired. Otherwise men will find themselves in completely unfamiliar worlds when they go through the gate of death and enter the spiritual world. The capital resources men were given by the gods at the very beginning of earth evolution have gradually been used up. Men now no longer take with them through the gate of death the remnants of past inheritance. They now need to acquire ideas bit by bit here in the physical world that will enable them to pass through the gate of death and see the entities that come to meet them there offering the dangers of temptation and seduction. It is because of these great cosmic schemes that spiritual science has to be made known to man now, that spiritual science may come among men. And today in particular, in these fateful days, we can observe transitions really being made. People are presently going through the gate of death at a young age, as the great destiny of age demands. They may be said to have consciously allowed death to approach them whilst still young. I am not so much speaking of the moment just before death occurs, say on the battlefield. In that situation many elements of enthusiasm and so on may be present and these make the moment of death far less elevated or far less a moment of utter concentration than we are inclined to think. But when death has occurred it leaves an ether body in our time. The dead individual can look at this and he will perceive this phenomenon, this fact of death, with much greater clarity than he would see it when death has ensued due to illness or old age.

Death on the field of battle is an event of much greater intensity and has much more powerful effects than death occurring in another way. It therefore has an effect on the soul that has gone through the gate of death, for it is instructive. Death is terrible – or at least can be terrible – to man whilst he is within his body! However, once he has gone through the gate of death and looks back to his death, death will be the most wonderful experience ever possible in the human cosmos. Looking back to his entry into the spiritual world through death is the most marvelous, the most glorious, magnificent and beautiful event on which the dead individual can ever look back during the time between death and rebirth. Birth has left little real trace in our physical awareness, for one not equipped with ordinary, undeveloped faculties will recall his physical birth. But death is certainly always there for a soul which has gone through the gate of death, from the moment consciousness develops. Death will always be present and present as the most beautiful, the one who brings resurrection into the spiritual world. And death is the most marvelous kind of teacher, a teacher truly able to prove to a receptive soul that there is a spiritual world, because by its own very nature death destroys the physical and only lets the spiritual come forth. This resurrection of the spiritual element, with the physical completely cast aside, is an event that is always present between death and new birth. It lends strength, a marvelous, great event, and the soul gradually grows into understanding of this. It grows into this in a completely unique way if the event is to some degree one we have chosen, one might say; not a death we have sought, of course, but nevertheless found of one's own free will by joining the ranks of one's own free will. This again brings greater clarity to that moment. Someone who otherwise has not thought much about death, who has concerned himself little or only to some extent with

the spiritual world, can now find death a marvelous teacher once he has died, particularly in our time. This particular war can reveal something of tremendous significance for the relationship between the physical and the spiritual world. I have already drawn attention to this in a number of lectures given in these difficult times: What we are able to do teaching merely by the word is not enough; but in future people will receive tremendous instructions because so many deaths have occurred. These deaths have an effect on the dead and the dead in turn intervene in the process of the future civilization of mankind.

I am able to give you the words of one who has gone through the gate of death as a young man now in the present time. His words have come through to me and they really come as a surprise, one might say, because they show how this dead individual who is experiencing death with great clarity as something he went through on the field of battle is now finding his way into the different kind of experience one has after death. They show him working his way out of earthly ideas and into spiritual ideas. Let me communicate these words to you. They were picked up, if I may call it this, when one of those who died on the field of battle tried to let them reach those he left behind.

Here is light
And I feel
Power of life.
Death has woken
Me from sleep,
From spirit slumber.
I shall abide,
And power of light
Arising in me
Will become deed.

That, as it were, is what the dead individual learned by looking on the death he went through, as if his essential nature was taking in all it must learn to live after death; and it also wants to make this known, wants to reveal it.

Here all is light and I feel power of life.

He feels that he is more alive now where his comprehension of the spiritual world is concerned than he was before his death. He experiences death as one who awakens us, as a teacher:

Death has awoken me from sleep,
From spirit slumber.

And he feels that he will be one who does things in the spiritual world. But he feels that it is the radiant powers within him that do the doing, he feels light coming to life within him:

I shall abide,

And power of light
 Arising in me
 Will become deed.

It really is possible to see everywhere, and to see rightly, that anything perceived in the spiritual world will again and again provide absolute confirmation of the things that can also become generally known out of the spiritual world through what is called imaginative perception. And it is this one so much wants to see come to life through our spiritual movement: that we do not merely have knowledge of the spiritual world but that this knowledge really comes to life in us so strongly that we learn new ways of feeling with the world, share in the experience of the world as the ideas of spiritual science come to life within us. As I have said so often, fundamentally we are asked to bring inward life into the thoughts of spiritual science; this is the contribution we are asked to make to the further development of the world, that the spiritual thoughts born out of spiritual science may stream together and soar up into the spiritual world as powers of illumination that are given back to the radiant universe; that the universe may unite with the element which those who have gone through the gate of death in these fateful times are making part of the movement of spiritual culture for mankind. Then the words will come true which again shall conclude our talk today:

Out of courage shown in battle,
 Out of the blood shed in war,
 Out of the grief of those who are left,
 Out of the people's deeds of sacrifice
 Spirit fruits will come to grow
 If souls with knowledge of the spirit
 Turn their mind to spirit realms.