



Is There Life After Death?

RUDOLF STEINER'S BOOK OF THE DEAD
BIRTH, DEATH & REBIRTH

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My Anthroposophical teachers always recommended reading Rudolf Steiner's lectures, *Life Between Death and Rebirth* to those who had passed the threshold of death. This practice continued the loving connection between the reader and the person who has passed over the threshold. Generally, this practice went on for the first three days after the passing.

In a quiet and reverent mood, the reader transmits to the loved one the contents of the book which describes the realms the person will be traversing from death to another birth. These spiritual spheres that the person is traveling through need a roadmap to help understand the new atmosphere and the topology of the spiritual world. These spheres are the interpenetrating realms of hierarchical beings who inhabit these realms that are so beautifully described in the cosmology of spiritual science. They are often referred to as the realms of the "harmony of the spheres." Reading descriptions of these realms to the deceased helps them orient themselves in these spheres which they have been "born" into so recently.

The spiritual spheres have been referred to as a seven-storied mountain, Jacob's ladder, the gradual path of awakening, the search for the Holy Grail, the steps of initiation, the stages of enlightenment, the Tibetan Seven Limb Practice, the mansions of heaven, and many other names. No matter what religion you may be, if you believe in the after-life, you need to prepare for the spiritual world you will be "born" into through the process of death.

Most of spiritual training in this life is done to prepare for what we will experience on the other side of the threshold, either through death, sleep, or the processes of initiation.

The goal is to meet and communicate with the spiritual hierarchies, saints, and ascended beings who live in the spiritual world. It requires moral development and the interest to learn the spiritual language that is being spoken in the realm of the spheres. It requires wakefulness, moral development, diligence, renunciation of the material world, preparation, concentration, contemplation, meditation and spiritual dialogue between the soul and spirit of the initiate to be awake in the spiritual world beyond the threshold of death. Spiritual training is a way to begin to see the eternal as it manifests in this world as a product of the unseen world.

Modern thinkers are often not aware of the path the individual eternal spirit travels between death and rebirth. This type of spiritual scientific training is rare in our day and the lack of awareness needs to be remedied on this side of the threshold before death comes and it is too late to gain what is needed in the after-life. After death, the individual is not free to learn and love as they were in the earth realm. Humans are individualized and seemingly “alone” in a body that has limitations and constrictions in the material world. This loneliness is the price we pay for the personal freedom. We may accept or reject the gifts of the spiritual world from the unseen realms.

It takes faith to develop the capacities to believe that there is a spiritual world or that there is life after death, let alone the belief in repeated human earth incarnations, or what is generally called reincarnation. It takes a willingness to believe that human karma and reincarnation exist. The modern materialistic thinker has no proof that an after-life exists or that spiritual beings populate a realm where human beings can live after death.

Sleep is a little death, the sister of the after-life. Each night we go to a magical sleep realm that restores our physical body and refreshes us for a new day. Sleep is a little death followed by another birth into a material world that often feels as if it is not our home. Many might prefer to stay in the warm and comfortable realm of sleep, dreams, dreamless sleep, and night visions. The oppressive weight of the world is alleviated by the grace and mercy of sleep. The quiet darkness of the night is the mother of our birth into the new day.

Immoral and guilty souls have trouble crossing into the realm of sleep as their own evil hounds them like the Furies of the Greeks. But the pure and noble soul uses sleep as a repast of refreshment, nourishment, and inspiration, often accompanied by waking intuitions in the morning that smooth the path ahead with pre-cognitive dreams, visions, and guidance. It seems that the realm of sleep is the 'great panacea' that heals all wounds for those moral souls who use it as an oasis of life.

The knowledge that the realm of sleep and death are the same is shocking to most modern thinkers. To find out that the "harmony of the spheres" is the interpenetrating music created by the Sun and the six planets that replicate themselves in our heart and organs, comes as a revelation to most. The thought is simple, but the ramifications are awesome and cosmic. It is immediately understood by a sharp mind that if the realm of sleep and death are the same, and the realm of sleep is the cosmic healer, then it is a small step to understand that death is a temporary sleep wherein the human soul and spirit are healed and renewed for another day (incarnation) that continues to build upon the work of the last day (incarnation).

Rudolf Steiner pointed out that a healthy mind will automatically understand that reincarnation is a spiritual reality. Closely examining sleep will lead a clear thinker to the simple reality of reincarnation. Birth is followed by death, which is then followed by rebirth – and the cycle goes on.

It is imperative to realize that humans can only evolve spiritually while they are in the material world where freedom is obtained with suffering, and only fulfilled through love. Humans cannot come to understand the love of Christ while in the realm of death, only in the realm of the earth. Each person must come to know Christ (higher self) in the earth realm through freedom and love. Cognizing the cosmic gifts and sacrifices that Christ has given to human evolution is the central task of human development at this time.

Knowing Christ is to know our own higher self, which is a necessity of current human spiritual development in the Consciousness Soul epoch. This is not a "religious" or "church oriented" Christ, this is the higher self of all spiritually

evolving people, who cannot be understood with Christian doctrine or dogma. Knowing Christ is a direct experience of your higher self.

Each human body is a temple that can be dedicated to Christ while in the material plane of existence. Once your higher self, Christ, has come to be the ruler of your morally centered human heart, each person can then begin to learn the language of the spirit, a moral language that pervades the spiritual realms beyond the threshold. It is incumbent upon the striving aspirant of the spirit to take the first steps toward Christ in this realm so that Christ might accompany the aspirant through the seven realms of the spiritual world, the mansions of heaven that Jesus Christ said he had gone ahead and prepared for each of us.

Learning about the mansions of heaven is the point of Steiner's lectures on the life between death and rebirth. Nowhere else in Western esoteric tradition can you find a better description of the life after death. What Steiner has done for us is to create a "Western Book of the Dead" based upon spiritual science. This new *Rudolf Steiner's Book of the Dead* is similar to the previous writings that were used to "cross the threshold", like the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* or the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Rudolf Steiner's Book of the Dead is not only a book to study before you die, but a book to be read to those who have died and passed over the threshold between the physical and spiritual worlds. It is with the comfort of this wisdom that the striving aspirant can consciously cross the threshold through spiritual practices, at night through moral wakefulness, or at the moment of death. If this guidance is wed with the eternal wisdom that is gleaned from beholding the spirit manifest in the material world, then the awakened aspirant can become a conscious and loving participant in the after-life world of the spirit.

The Background to Life Between Death and Rebirth

To understand the background to the series of lectures *Life Between Death and Rebirth*, it is helpful to look at what Rudolf Steiner's personal secretary, Guenther Wachsmuth, had to say about what was going on in Steiner's life at the time of

the lectures. Wachsmuth gives us many details that illuminate the history of each lecture series and its place in Steiner's overall work. Wachsmuth's book *Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner*, is seen by many people as a completion of Steiner's unfinished autobiography. We will draw from this book a selection that highlights the history behind *Life Between Death and Rebirth*.

Guenther Wachsmuth (1893-1963) was a jurist, economist, member of the Executive Council of the Anthroposophic Society and leader of the Science Section at the Goetheanum, as well as Rudolf Steiner's personal secretary. It is thanks to his energetic coordinating activity that the second Goetheanum would open in 1928. Wachsmuth was a gifted student of Steiner who composed his richly detailed narrative of the culminating quarter century of Steiner's biography (*Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner*).

The following extract is taken from: *The Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner From the Turn of the Century to His Death*, by Guenther Wachsmuth and Translated by Olin D. Wannamaker & Reginald E. Raab, from Whittier Books, New York, 1955 (pages 181-185).

From Wachsmuth's, The Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner

In his lectures in Milan on October 26 and 27, 1912, Dr. Steiner developed the theme, prominent during the following months, *The Life of the Soul after Death*. On the journey to Austria, this was supplemented on November 3 by a lecture in Vienna on *The Latest Results of Occult Research Regarding Life Between Death and a New Birth* and he summarized this in a comprehensive course of lectures commencing on November 5 in Berlin under the title *Life Between Death and a New Birth in Relation to Cosmic Facts*.

The historical importance of this lecture cycle must be truly realized. Never before in the history of mankind had these questions been expounded in such a way as to include the details of actual events between death and reincarnation. In past centuries the existence of such a life had only been affirmed or denied in general. Rudolf Steiner had often, in the previous decade, referred to these facts

as such and to certain aspects of that spiritual existence between a death and a new birth. But, just as in other realms of knowledge, he had displayed tireless patience as always in research while awaiting the hour when the fruits of his work could be presented as a higher unity.

The first experience Rudolf Steiner had of spiritual vision and conscious contact with the personalities of the dead occurred in his childhood. In his autobiography, *The Course of My Life* (chapter 3) he refers especially to the year 1879, a period of life now thirty-three years in the past, to the fact that, during his philosophical and scientific studies, he had before him a spiritual vision of life after death:

“I felt at that time in duty bound to seek for the truth through philosophy. I had to study mathematics and natural science. I was convinced that I should find no relation with them unless I could place their findings upon a solid foundation of philosophy. But I beheld a spiritual world as reality. In perfectly clear vision the spiritual individuality of everyone was manifest to me. This had in the physical body and in action in the physical world merely its expression. It united itself with that which came as a physical germ from the parents. The dead human being I followed on his way into the spiritual world...”

What had been known and confirmed through so many years in spiritual vision, research, and constantly repeated experience, that for which he had systematically developed the foundations in knowledge, had now in its clarity and maturity to be placed in a comprehensive form before humanity as a treasure of knowledge and as help in the mastering of the problems of life. So, he said in the first lecture of the cycle referred to that in the year 1912 the moment had arrived for him to speak about these spiritual facts in a new manner “because just in the course of the summer and autumn the task confronted me of subjecting this realm to renewed spiritual research and of also setting forth a point of view which could not be touched upon earlier.”

Since Rudolf Steiner very rarely interpolated allusions of so personal a kind in presenting the content of knowledge, this reference to the spiritual-karmic

significance of recent months is of particular importance. We have already referred to certain events coming to completion in the course of his life during these months. The manner in which the inner evolution of such a personality is connected with the karmic events in the earthly world flashes up here for a moment in its own special significance. The universally valid situation in evolutionary history out of which this now became possible, and a matter of duty, he characterized as follows:

“Only now is it possible to envision much of what exhibits to us the deep moral significance of the supersensible truths relevant to this realm. Besides all other prerequisites which have now only been hinted at, there is indeed another prerequisite—at least within our Movement—a prerequisite, one might say, which wounds the hearts of many persons in this proud and vain age of ours. Since one cannot permit oneself, however, to be deterred by such a consideration from the earnestness and truthfulness which we owe to our Movement, this prerequisite must continue to be held. This prerequisite consists in the fact that, in intimate and earnest work, really learning and devoting ourselves to the matter, we shall enter into what is obtained out of the spiritual worlds. We may affirm that for a number of years the relation of human beings on the physical plane to the spiritual world has changed from what it was, for example, during almost the whole of the nineteenth century.

Until the last third of the nineteenth century, there was little access to the spiritual worlds. In proportion to the necessities in human evolution, very little content flowed into human souls out of the spiritual worlds. But now we are living in an age in which the soul needs only to be receptive, needs only to surrender itself and to be prepared for the revelations out of the spiritual worlds to flow into it. And more and more receptive are certain individual souls becoming for whom, through the fact that they are conscious of the mission of their age, the streaming in of spiritual knowledge is a fact. An additional requirement, therefore, for spiritual science is that it shall not shut itself off from what can flow at the present time in any manner whatever out of the spiritual worlds into the souls.”

The cosmic hour now rendered possible and also demanded openness for what desired to enter into the consciousness of the human being, and it has always been the task of the spiritual leader to arouse human beings in such a cosmic hour in order that at least some of them may confront the spiritual occurrence in wakefulness.

“The human being passes through the events of the spiritual world between death and a new birth in a very special manner. He experiences them, however, also upon earth through initiation; he experiences them also - if he has prepared his soul - already even during existence in the physical body, in that he becomes in this way a participant in the spiritual worlds. One may assert, therefore, that what happens between death and a new birth and what is, indeed, a living through of the spiritual world, - this can be beheld through initiation.”

One of the fundamental evolutionary truths of our age, to which Rudolf Steiner most impressively called the attention of human beings was that it might for a time have sufficed in a past epoch to believe in these things and find consolation in the belief that these truths would be experienced only after death, but that a stage in evolution had arrived when man has to become familiar with these forms of knowledge even during the sensible physical existence, because spiritual and earthly events interpenetrate each other ever more intensively, and disharmony and even illness must occur if man does not bring about consciously within himself a synthesis of both worlds even while on earth.

At the end of the lecture cycle, after having described the facts of spiritual existence, Dr. Steiner once more called attention to the inherent laws in spiritual research which led to these findings, and pointed out how at the beginning of the anthroposophical work his book *Theosophy* presented these phenomena rather in the psychic aspect, whereas now in the course of time the cosmographic aspect, so to speak - the position of the human soul in the great facts of cosmic evolution - could be added as an element of knowledge:

“These are considerations which may show us how, within the presentation of the book *Theosophy* - only, in different words and in a

different aspect there is already contained what has been described from a cosmic point of view, cosmographically as it were, during this winter. You have only to imagine that in one instance the subject is dealt with from the point of view of the soul, and in another from the point of view of the great cosmic relations, and you can reconcile the two descriptions and find a complete agreement, a complete parallelism. The conclusion I wish to draw from this is that you can see how far-reaching spiritual science is, and its methods must be such that, from all possible directions, there is brought together whatever can throw light on the Spirit world. Even though something is added years later to what has been said in previous years, there need be no contradiction, for these things are not derived from philosophic systems or human speculation, but from spiritual research.”

Together with the content of research, the path and the method were always set forth by Rudolf Steiner which led to these findings, and we are consequently able not only to receive a new world picture but to share in the experience of its genesis and development. The spiritual world, since the beginning of the twentieth century, bestows upon man the knowledge of his supersensible spheres of existence; it extends the view for him beyond birth and death and unveils for him the laws of evolution in future development. He may accept or reject this, but he has been given a free choice between inner healing and strengthening on the one hand and lethargy and pessimism on the other.

The threshold can be crossed by man and the responsibility is handed over to him in accordance with his stage of maturity. The cosmic age has entrusted him alike with a new burden and a new dignity, and the development of the present century will show whether the question addressed to him will find its answer.

Sleep – Death’s Little Sister

As an introduction to forming a living Imagination of the heavenly spheres that a person traverses after death, Rudolf Steiner’s remarks on sleep are most instructive. Sleep is death’s little sister and is a small taste of what happens to the soul after death. Each night, the soul and spirit rise up from the etheric and

physical bodies. The ego (I am) and the soul traverse the realms of Moon, Venus, Mercury and the Sun. For those whose consciousness is developed enough to stay “awake” in these realms, the dreams, visions, and heavenly ‘harmonies of the spheres’, can inspire the soul with spiritual strength, courage, and love. The realms of sleep and afterlife are the same interpenetrating planetary spheres that are inscribed by the sun and the six planets. Understanding the spheres of the unseen world through sleep, can help prepare for journey through those same spheres after death.

Rudolf Steiner gives us a beautiful and comprehensive living Imagination of the realm of sleep and the spheres we transverse with our soul and spirit each night. In Lecture I of *Man’s Life on Earth and in the Spiritual Worlds*, Rudolf Steiner give a most profound indication about sleep that might help set the stage to understand the realms of spirit that the human being lives into after death.

Steiner’s Life Between Death and Rebirth

The selections below are taken from: *Life Between Death and Rebirth, The active connection between the living and the dead, Sixteen Lectures*, by Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophic Press, New York, 1968. (Translated from shorthand reports unrevised by the lecturer, from the German edition published with the title, *Okkulte Untersuchungen über das Leben zwischen Tod und neuer Geburt. Die lebendige Wechselwirkung zwischen Lebenden und Toten*. Volume 140 in the Bibliographic Survey, 1961. Translated by R. M. Querido, GA 140)

The sixteen lectures compiled in this volume were given by Rudolf Steiner in different European cities throughout the years 1912 and 1913. They deal with the experiences of the human soul during and after death. He describes the states of consciousness experienced by our deceased loved ones and how we, taking into account their new consciousness, can communicate with them and even help them. Reading these descriptions, it becomes clear that ex-carnated souls need the spiritual support of those presently incarnated, and that those still on earth in turn derive enlightenment and support from their former earth companions.

Selections from

Man's Life on Earth and in the Spiritual Worlds by Rudolf Steiner

Just as here on Earth we are connected with the plants, with the minerals, with air, so are we connected in the night with the movements of the planets, and with the constellations of the fixed stars. From the moment we fall asleep, the starry heavens become our world, even as the Earth is our world when we are awake. Coming now to describe rather more in detail how we take our way after falling asleep, we find we can distinguish different spheres through which we pass. First comes the sphere where the I and the astral body — that is to say, the soul of man as it finds itself in sleep — feel united with the movements of the World of the planets.

When we wake up in the morning and slip into our physical body, we have in us, as we know, our lungs, our heart, our liver, our brain. In the first sphere with which we come in contact after falling asleep — and it will also be again the last sphere we enter before awaking — we have in us the forces of the movements of the planets. This does not mean of course that we receive into us every night the entire planetary movements; we carry within us a little picture, as it were, wherein the movements of the planets are reproduced. And this picture is different for each single human being. That, then, is the first experience every one of us encounters after falling asleep. We follow, as it were, with our astral body all that happens with the planets, as they move out there in the wide spaces of the Universe; we experience it all in our astral body in a sort of planetary globe.

Very soon after you have fallen asleep, the heart-eye begins also to look back at what has been left lying in bed. Your ego and astral body look back with the heart-eye upon your physical and etheric bodies. And the picture of planetary movements that you are now experiencing in your astral body, rays back to you from your etheric body; you behold a reflection of it in your etheric body.

Here it is that the Christ appears before us as a spiritual Sun and becomes our guide; and then all the confusion resolves itself into a kind of harmony that we hear and understand. That this should be so, that we should have in the time of sleep the Christ for our guide, is a matter of the very greatest importance for us. For, the moment we enter this sphere and begin to have all around us the living interplay of constellations of the Zodiac and movements of the planets — at this moment we encounter also our karma. With our Sun-eye we behold our karma. Yes, it is indeed so, every human being has sight of his karma — in sleep. All that is left of the perception in waking life, is a kind of faint echo vibrating in the feelings.

Such then is the experience man undergoes every night between falling asleep and awaking, — an experience he owes to the fact that his soul and spirit have kinship with the cosmos. For, even as he is related to the Earth with his physical and etheric bodies, so with his soul and spirit, with his astral body and ego, is man related to the cosmos. And when he has come away from his physical and etheric bodies and has grown out into the cosmic world, and the experiences he undergoes there shine back to him, in a kind of inner picture, from the part of him that remains in bed, he feels very deeply connected with the cosmos and would, in fact, be strongly drawn to go still further out, to go out beyond the Zodiac, — were it not for the presence of another force that draws him back.

All other forces — the forces of the planets and of the fixed stars — tend to draw us out into the distant cosmos, the Moon wants to place us once more into the world of men. The Moon draws us away from the cosmos. The Moon has forces that are directly opposed to the forces both of Sun and of stars; it ensures for us our kinship with the Earth. It is accordingly the Moon that brings us back every night, — drawing us away from the Zodiac experiences into the experiences of the planets, and thence into the experiences of Earth, taking us back once again into our physical body.

When man goes to sleep, he remains still in close connection with the forces of the Moon. The forces of the Moon point out to him every night afresh the significance of his life on Earth. This is made possible by the fact that he can see in his etheric body the reflection of all his experiences of the night. At death,

however, man withdraws his etheric body from the physical body. Then begins, as you know, the memory that looks back over the last Earth life. The etheric body expands and fills for a few days a cosmic cloud. Every night we live our way as cloud, as mist, into the 'Mist of the Worlds.' In the night, this cloud of mist which we are, is there without the ether-body; but when we die, our etheric body is present with it for the first few days. Then the etheric body gradually dissolves away into the cosmos, memory fades and disappears, and we have — instead of a reflection of star experiences thrown back from the part of us we left lying in bed — we have now, after death, an immediate inner experience of the movements of the planets and of the constellations of the fixed stars.

Man has however, even after death, something left in him of the force which he inherits from the Moon, enough to enable him to remain for a season in the soul world, with gaze still fixed upon the Earth. Then, he passes on to spiritland and here he feels and knows that he is undergoing an experience where he is beyond the Zodiac, beyond the heavens and the fixed stars. Such is the course of man's life in the time between death and new birth.

Kamaloca, a Place of Desire

The first stage that a person goes through after death is called, kamaloca, or "place of desire", that realm where desire and passion binds a soul to earthly vices until the attachment dissolves and frees the soul from its addictions and uncontrolled astral impulses. Steiner describes this realm in succinct terms in Lecture VI of his lecture series entitled, *Man's Life on Earth and in the Spiritual Worlds*. We present a selection from that lecture which describes in detail the nature of kamaloca. In his lectures *Life Between Birth and Death*, there is a description of kamaloca that needs further indications to understand this realm more fully. We offer the selections below as a more detailed picture of the stage after death called kamaloca and place it here before the selections from *Life Between Death and Rebirth*.

You are already aware what awaits the human being immediately after death. His physical body being laid aside, within and about him he has his I, his astral body

and his etheric body. From birth till death, as you know, the etheric body remains united with the physical body. Even in sleep, it is only with the I and astral body that the human being is outside the physical, — and thus outside the etheric body too. Then for a short while after death (only a matter of days), man still inhabits his etheric body — his body of formative forces — and he is thereby enabled to look back on the whole course of his past earthly life, which is in fact always contained in the etheric body.

Yet, it is not for long that we can retain the etheric body after death. Belonging as it does to the entire cosmos, the etheric body is always wanting to expand. Only the physical body, in which it stays throughout our life, holds it together. And then, when the physical body's coherent power is no longer ours, straightway the etheric body begins to expand, so much so that in a few days' time it is there for us no longer. It is as when you take a little drop of water; the drop is there before you; warm it and it evaporates and expands in all directions; then it is there no more — you can no longer see it. So does the ether-body expand into the cosmos after death; after a very few days it is there no more.

Yet at the same time, we see glistening and shining forth in our etheric body a reflection of the great universe. The entire starry heavens are there in the etheric body. Indeed, you cannot ever see the etheric body apart from the physical without its showing you at once the starry world on every hand — the planets and the fixed stars too. It is the planets and the fixed stars which at long last receive our etheric body. Initiation-science shows that we can hold the pictures in our etheric body only for three or four days at the most; then they vanish, and to avoid being disconnected altogether we must return into our physical body before this happens, otherwise the etheric body will no longer hold together. And thus indeed, a few days after death the etheric body vanishes, we have it no longer. Yet we ourselves are thereby progressively received into the world of stars.

At first, when divested of our etheric body, we feel like strangers amid the world of stars. Only the Moon, only the lunar forces seem, as it were, familiar to us there. The Moon emerges on the one hand as in an after-image of its physical appearance. Yet at the same time we now begin to discover what kind of spiritual forces are connected with it. For the soul who has passed through the gate of

death, the Moon is transformed, as it were, into a colony of spiritual Beings, and Jahve is their leader. Yes, it is through the Moon — through the Jahve powers — that we learn the significance of death.

Through his ethereal and subsequent astral experiences, the man himself goes on into the spiritual world, yet something of importance happens also here on Earth. From the physical body a spiritual apparition is released, emerging, as it were, out of the human body. While the real human being goes upon his way, here on the other hand, we might say, another being issues from the human body.

Truly it is so when a human being dies. There lies his physical body as the man himself is departing from it, and simultaneously another being leaves it. What is this other being? It is the forces of the Moon, living as they do also here on Earth. Concentrated though they be in the cosmic entity we call the Moon, the range of these forces extends far and wide, and on the Earth they are made manifest in the powers of death. Moreover, the powers of death are at the same time those of birth. They lead the human being into earthly life and are made manifest when he leaves it. We thus begin to realize the deep connection between birth and death.

Take all the human beings who die in successive times. From each of them in turn the apparition of death, as it were, comes forth and joins a spiritual atmosphere which is there around the Earth no less than is the air we breathe. This spiritual atmosphere contains what death gives up and birth receives. From the very forces that soar upward, as it were, from human corpses, human beings in their turn, are born. Spiritually, our powers of growth are intimately connected with this sphere of death-force — or forces made manifest in death — which surrounds the Earth.

These spiritual forces — at once of death and birth, as we have seen — are forces of the Moon, and into them is mingled all that the dead human being, all along the way from birth till death, accumulated by way of moral powers, moral values. Have you been good in any way, — in the sphere of these death-Moon-forces you will find, as it were, a specific being, imbued with inner force deriving from your

goodness. Yet the same being is imbued with all that derives from your badness. It is a being we ourselves engender, all the time, while living on the Earth.

Unaware of it as we are in our normal consciousness, we bear it in us. We leave it every night when we are sleeping, for in effect this entity remains in the physical body when we go out of it in sleep. There also is left behind this real being which we ourselves give birth to during earthly life — the bearer of our karma.

This being now remains with us after death so long as we are in the realm of the Moon forces. Indeed, just because this being keeps us amid the Moon-forces, that is, in the near neighborhood of Earth, during the first period after death we are obliged to remain connected with these lunar forces and with our own karma, so much so that we live again through all the deeds we did on Earth from birth till death. We have to live them through again in a spiritual form of being, three times as fast as we did on Earth. We live them through again in backward order.

So do we spend a period of time after death, obliged to do things intimately connected with our earthly deeds. We are united, it is true, no longer through the physical body with the Moon-forces of death (for we have laid the physical body aside), and yet as beings of soul and spirit we are obliged to carry out deeds intimately connected with our deeds on Earth. And as we thus go through our life again in backward order, our karma is ever more convincingly brought home to us.

If I have been responsible for any deed which makes me appear a morally imperfect man, and if I were not to go through it all again deeply and inwardly as I am doing now, I should not feel the strong impulse to make it good. I should not want to free myself from my failing. Precisely by experiencing the deed all over again in soul and spirit, the urge is born in me to overcome it by a better action. Not for anything in the world would the dead forgo this opportunity to make 'good again', for this alone will give him power to achieve his full humanity, — will give him strength to be made whole. In this respect you may be sure, even as a landscape looks very different seen from the valley or from a mountain-top, so life itself looks different seen from this physical world where we are now and

from yonder side. Only too often the relationships of earthly life to the life after death, which after all transcends the physical, are misjudged for this reason.

Staying Connected with Loved Ones

The first period after death is such that we can only establish a good connection with souls who have remained on the earth or with those who have died about the same time as ourselves. Here, the closest connections continue to be effective beyond death. Much can be done by the so-called living who have remained on the earth. Because one has a connection with the departed soul he can inform him of his own knowledge of the spiritual world acquired on the earth. This is possible above all by reading to the dead.

We can perform the greatest service to a person who has died by forming a picture of that person in our soul and softly reading a work of spiritual science to him, instructing him as it were. We can also convey to the departed thoughts we have made our own, always vividly picturing the one who has passed on as we do so. We should be generous in this respect. This enables us to bridge the abyss that separates us from the dead. It is not only in extreme cases that we can help the dead in this way. No, it is true in every case. It provides a comforting feeling that can alleviate the sorrow that is experienced when a person whom one has loved passes on.

The outcome of reading to the dead has proved itself to be particularly beautiful. It has shown itself to be a special service and one of the greatest deeds of love that can be performed.

The Path to the Spheres

The first condition necessary for ascending into the spiritual world and for understanding the experiences gained in that realm is complete inner rest and steadiness of soul. All anxiety, all excitement and worry must cease in order to

obtain inner calmness. During the time that we wish to lift ourselves into higher worlds, all interests in outer life must be extinguished.

One learns to know the period between death and rebirth either by initiation or by going through the portal of death. In the super-sensible world, we must allow things to approach us for everything is reversed in the spiritual world. We must develop inner silence and then things will come to us.

As we approach initiation, our soul undergoes the same experiences as those during the period between death and a new birth. But just as on earth we receive our perceptions by means of the senses, so after death we receive them by way of visions. The world of visions presents at first only a reflection of ourselves. The whole of our life after death consists of visions that are mirror-images of reality. Just as we perceive the physical world by means of colors that the eye conjures forth for us, and sounds mediated by the ear, we experience the spiritual world after death by means of visions in which we are enveloped.

Beings of the Hierarchies are working on the visions that surrounds us; they shine upon this mist as the sun's rays irradiate the clouds. They surround us like a cloud and on the basis of them we must develop the faculty to receive the light of the hierarchies. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we cross the threshold of death with moral strength that will keep our soul open to the light of the hierarchies.

There is no greater fear after death than darkening of consciousness. It is simply an unquestionable fact that souls deficient in religious thoughts experience a dimming of consciousness as a result of this deficiency. Shortly after death the consciousness of a materialist is dimmed, even extinguished.

To the eyes of the spirit it is disclosed that the human being on the earth between birth and death, contracted as he is into the smallest possible space, emerges from it when he lays aside his physical body and expands farther and farther out into the universe. Having passed through the gate of death, he grows stage by stage out into the planetary spheres. First of all, he expands as far as the area marked by the orbit of the Moon; the sphere indicated by the position of the

Moon then becomes his outermost boundary. When that point has been reached, kamaloca is at an end.

Continuing to expand, he grows into the sphere formed by the orbit of Venus, later the orbit of Mercury. Then as his magnitude increases, his outermost boundary is marked by the apparent course of the Sun. Thus, as the human being ascends into the spiritual worlds he expands into the planetary system, first into the sphere of the Moon, and ultimately into the outermost sphere, that of Saturn.

All this is necessary in order that he shall come into contact with those forces needed for his astral body, which can be received only from the planetary system. A soul with a moral disposition, a soul whose ideas are the outcome of purified will, becomes a sociable spirit and invariably finds the bridges and connections with the spiritual beings in whose sphere he is living. Whether we are isolated or sociable spirits is determined by our moral or immoral disposition of soul.

Spiritual science shows that during life between death and rebirth the human being encounters certain other beings. Just as here he meets the many beings of the various kingdoms of nature, so after death he meets the beings of higher hierarchies and certain elemental beings. If a person goes through life without any sense of judgment, this is due to the fact that between death and rebirth he was unable to meet those beings who could have given him the appropriate forces to enable him to be morally and intellectually effective in this life. But the possibility and the ability to meet certain beings between death and rebirth depends on the last life.

If during earthly life we do not occupy ourselves with thoughts relating to the super-sensible, if during our life we have been completely immersed in the external sense world, if we only lived in our intellect inasmuch as it was directed to the physical world, then we make it impossible for ourselves between death and a new birth to encounter certain beings and to receive abilities from them for a subsequent life. The realm beyond remains dim and dark for us, and we are unable to find the forces of higher hierarchies in the darkness. Man then, between death and a new birth, passes by those beings from whom he should receive forces for his next earthly life.

The beings are there and we can only reach them providing we have kindled the light in our last earthly life by means of our interest in the spiritual world. After death, we are unable to penetrate the darkness unless we have taken the light with us through the gate of death. The light for the life beyond must be carried upward from the earth.

Traveling Through the Cosmic Realms

We travel through the cosmic universe after death through seven realms. To begin with, we go through the planets of our planetary system. We experience a Moon period, a Venus period, a Mercury period, a Sun period, a Mars period, a Jupiter period, and a Saturn period. Following these we go into the surroundings of our planetary system and then later commence our return journey. Now we encounter those forces and the beings from whom we must receive what we need to build up our next earthly life.

When we cross the gate of death we are, to begin with, occupied with the remains, the memories and the connections of our last earthly embodiment. For a period of decades during the first stages after death, an individual looks back in retrospect in a sense on his last incarnation. He is still involved with what remains in the astral body as forces from the last earthly life but increasingly he enters into the sphere of the planets and the cosmos. He gradually enters a realm where he comes into contact with the beings of the higher hierarchies. Man must encounter these beings because this enables him to gather the forces he needs when later on, through birth, he again enters physical existence.

The human soul can journey through the realm between death and a new birth in a twofold way. It is possible for the soul to wander through the realm of the higher hierarchies as if stumbling in the darkness without being able to receive the corresponding gifts from the higher hierarchies because of inner tendencies. In order to receive the gifts from the higher hierarchies between death and rebirth, one must be able to behold and confront these beings consciously. Pictorially speaking, one can wander in darkness, without light (spiritual light)

through this realm, through the experiences one should have in the presence of the beings of the higher hierarchies.

The interaction with the hierarchies can also be accomplished in such a way that, according to the necessities of our karma, their gifts to us are illuminated so that we receive them in the right manner. This light can shine forth only from ourselves — the light that enables us to pass the beings of the higher hierarchies so that they can rightly hand their gifts to us, so that we do not fail to grasp what we should receive.

Souls who have unfolded only few feelings and sentiments transcending the affairs of earthly life remain bound to the earth sphere by their own cravings for a considerable time. Even outwardly it is easy to understand that a person who for a whole lifetime has cultivated only such feelings as can be satisfied by means of bodily organs and earthly conditions can but remain bound to the earth sphere for a certain time.

What is experienced after death is that one is emerging from the body and one's whole soul-being is expanding. The human being grows, in a spiritual sense, to gigantic dimensions. He grows out into the spheres. The spheres of the dead are not separate from each other but are spatially intermingled. A sense of separateness arises because consciousness is separate. Beings may be completely intermingled without knowing anything of one another.

First it must be emphasized that as the person expands into other spheres, all his imperfections are there inscribed. He expands from the Moon sphere into the Venus sphere and something is inscribed by him in all the spheres, in the Mercury sphere, the Sun sphere, the Mars sphere, the Jupiter sphere, the Saturn sphere and even beyond.

Thus, after having cast away more or less completely what still draws him to the earth, the human being journeys through the planetary spheres and even beyond them. The contact thus established with the corresponding forces provides what he needs in his evolution between death and a new birth. He comes into contact with the higher hierarchies and receives the gifts they bestow. When the

expansion has been completed, he contracts again until he has become minute enough to unite as a spirit-seed with what comes from the parents. This is indeed a wonderful mystery. When the human being passes through the gate of death, he himself becomes an ever-expanding sphere. His potentialities of soul and spirit expand. He becomes a gigantic being and then again contracts. What we have within us has in fact contracted from the planetary universe. Quite literally we bear within us what we have lived through in a planetary world.

Between death and rebirth our perfections and imperfections are faithfully recorded in the Akasha Chronicle. Certain attributes are inscribed in the Moon sphere, others in the Venus sphere, others in the Mercury sphere, others in the Mars sphere, others in the Jupiter sphere, and others in the Saturn sphere. When we are returning to an incarnation in a physical body and our being is slowly contracting, we encounter everything that was inscribed on the outward journey.

In this way our karma is prepared. On the path of return we can inscribe into our own being the record of an imperfection we ourselves first inscribed into the Akasha Chronicle. Then we arrive on the earth. Because there is within us everything we inscribed into our being on the return journey, our karma unfolds. Up above, however, everything still remains inscribed.

These inscriptions that remain in the heavenly spheres work together in a remarkable way. They are engraved into the spheres, into the Moon sphere, Venus sphere, and so on. These spheres are involved in certain movements so that the following may happen. Let us say that a person has inscribed one of his imperfections into the Moon sphere. While passing through the Mars sphere he has inscribed there a quality of his character through the fact that he acquired in that sphere a certain element of aggressiveness that was not previously in him.

Now on the return journey he passes through the Mars sphere again and comes back to the earth. He lives on the earth and has received into his karma what he has inscribed in the Mars sphere but at the same time it stands recorded above him. Up there is Mars, in a certain relationship to the Moon. Because Mars stands in a certain relationship to the Moon, the inscription of the aggressive element and the person's imperfections are, as it were, in the same constellation. The

consequence is that when the one planet stands behind the other they work in conjunction. This is the time when the individual in question will tackle his imperfections with the aggressive quality acquired from Mars. The position of the planets really does indicate what the man himself has first inscribed into these spheres.

So, it is really the moral inheritance deposited by us between death and rebirth that appears again in a new life as a stellar constellation in our karma. That is the deeper basis of the connection between the stellar constellation and man's karma. During the life of a person between death and a new birth we perceive how significantly he is connected with the whole cosmos.

The Akasha Chronicle

What is inscribed in the Akasha Chronicle between the earth and the moon is of special importance because it is there that imperfections are recorded. The inscribing of these imperfections is governed by the view that every record there is of significance for the individual's own evolution, either furthering or hindering his progress. Because it is there inscribed in the Akasha Chronicle between earth and moon, it also becomes significant for the evolution of the earth as a whole.

When human souls go through the gate of death they enter a realm where the connection with life on earth is maintained by the recollection of what has happened there. For a long period after death man re-experiences what has happened on earth and has to rid himself of the longing for his physical body. During this time, he learns to live as a soul-spirit being. One sees one's own inner life that has run its course in thoughts, in mental representations. One recalls the relationships one has had with his fellow men.

If one seeks to look down upon it, the earth offers a special aspect. One has the urge to look down. The urge to remember the earth accompanies one throughout the whole of life between death and a new birth. As long as man is called to journey from life to life, the consciousness remains that he is destined for the earth, that he must return again and again to the earth if he would develop

himself rightly. We can see this with the dead because if he were to lose completely the thoughts that link him to the earth, he would also lose the thought of his own ego. Then, he would no longer be aware that he “is”, and this would result in the most dreadful feeling of anguish. Man must not lose his connection with the earth.

It is important for the dead that those with whom they were connected on earth carry every evening thoughts of the spiritual world with them into sleep. The more thoughts about the spiritual world we carry with us into sleep, the greater the service we perform for those we have known on earth who have died before us. One who died and has no one on earth who carries spiritual thoughts with him in sleep is famished and may be compared to one banished to a barren island on earth. The dead person who cannot find a soul in whom spiritual feelings dwell experiences himself as if in a desert void of everything that is needed to sustain life. Such insight should lead to the practice, proven to be effective by many of our friends, that I would like to term, the “reading to the dead.” To read to the dead is of untold significance.

Now it is literally true that man, when he has crossed the portal of death, lives in that super-sensible world in which there is no death. He can enter these realms but he cannot annihilate himself because he is received into worlds where there can be no destruction. There is something of a similar nature to death in the super-sensible world, yet it is quite different from death as we know it. One would have to call it in human language, loneliness. Death can never mean the annihilation of something that takes place in the super-sensible worlds, but loneliness does arise. Loneliness in the super-sensible world is comparable to death here. It is not destruction but it is far more intense than loneliness as we know it on earth. It takes the form of looking back upon one’s own being. One only knows what this fully means when it happens, that is, to know nothing except to know about oneself.

After death, we expand in such a way that we become the Moon, just as on Earth we are our brain. We expand into Saturn so that we become Saturn, just as we are now our spleen. Man becomes a macrocosmic being. When the soul has departed

from the body, it expands into the entirety of the planetary system so that all souls simultaneously dwell within the same spatial area.

The deeper we enter into the super-sensible world, the less do particular relationships obtain. We still find individual relationships in the astral world but the higher we ascend, the more we find that what weaves between separate beings no longer continues. Now, there are beings everywhere. The relationships among them are of a soul nature. We need these also in order not to be lonely. It is the mission of the earth that we make contacts from person to person because otherwise we remain solitary in the spiritual world.

Phases and Vicinities Following Death

For the first phases after death, our world consists of the relationships, the friendships that we formed with fellow human beings on earth, and that now continues. For instance, if the matter is investigated with super-sensible perception, one finds the departed souls in the vicinity of a person whom it can follow on Earth. Many people in our time live with those who have died recently or at some earlier period. One also sees how many come together with a number of their ancestors to whom they were related by blood. The seer often comes upon the fact that the departed soul links itself to ancestors that have died centuries ago, but this only lasts for a certain period of time. The person would again feel exceedingly lonely if other connections did not exist which, though far off, yet prepare the person to be sociable in the spiritual world.

A phase approaches when souls who have gone through the gate of death without any moral soul qualities feel very lonely. People who are endowed with a moral soul disposition are simply of greater value here than people lacking in morality. Between death and rebirth people also group themselves according to the moral concepts and soul dispositions they have in common.

This is followed by a phase of development that even those who are endowed with a moral disposition of soul feel lonely if they lack religious concepts. A religious turn of mind is the preparation for sociability at a particular stage of life between

death and rebirth. Here we also discover that those people who are unable to enter into religious feelings and connections are condemned to loneliness. We find people of like religious confessions grouped together.

This is followed by a period when it is no longer sufficient to have lived within a religious community. A phase draws near when one can again feel loneliness. This period is a particularly important one between death and rebirth. Either we feel alone, even though we experienced togetherness with those of like religious confession, or we are able to bring understanding to every human soul in its essential character. For this communion we can only prepare by gaining an understanding of all religious confessions.

Prior to the Mystery of Golgotha this was not necessary because the experiences in the spiritual world were different then. Christianity rightly understood bears within it the impulse to grasp all religious creeds and tendencies. One has gained an understanding of the Christ impulse only if one is able to grasp that the Christ is the only 'god' who descended to the earth and gone through death.

For one who has gained an understanding of the Christ down here on the Earth, the throne in the Sun will not be empty. This also enables him to recognize the nature of a particular encounter that occurs at this stage. The human being meets Lucifer, not as the 'tempter' but as a legitimate power who has to travel by his side if he is to progress in his journey. Qualities of the same nature in the wrong sphere have a destructive effect. The workings of Lucifer in the physical world are evil, but after death, from the Sun sphere onwards, man needs Lucifer as a companion. He must meet Lucifer and Christ. Christ preserves his soul nature with the total assets that his soul has accumulated in previous incarnations. It is the task of the luciferic power to assist man so that he may also learn to apply the forces of the other hierarchical beings in the right manner for his next incarnation.

Kamaloca Period

Imagine the space between the earth and the moon, the spherical space described when the orbit of the moon is taken as the outermost path away from the earth. Then you have the realm in which man, loosened from the Earth, dwells during the kamaloca period. When the kamaloca period has been completed, a human being leaves this sphere and enters the actual celestial world. Things are reversed in relation to the physical plane. Here we are bound outwardly to the Earth, surrounded by the physical world and separated from the heavenly spheres. After death, the Earth is separated from us and we are united with the heavenly spheres. As long as we dwell within the Moon sphere, we are in kamaloca, which means that we are still longing to be connected with the earth. We proceed beyond it when we have learned through life in kamaloca to forego passions and longings.

In the first period of kamaloca, the soul is clothed as in a cloud by its Imaginations. At first, the cloud is dark. When some time has elapsed after death, Imaginative vision gradually perceives that this cloud begins to light up as if irradiated by the rays of the morning Sun. When Inspiration is added to Imaginative cognition we realize that we live, to begin with, in the cloud of our earthly experiences. We are enveloped by them. We are able to relate ourselves only to those who have died and with whom we were together on the Earth, or to those still on Earth capable of ascending with their consciousness into the spiritual world. What we have characterized for Imaginative cognition as the illumination of the cloud of our visions from one side by a glimmering light points to the approach of the hierarchies into our own being. We now begin to live into the realm of higher spirituality. Previously, we were only connected to the world we brought with us. Now the life of the higher hierarchies begins to shine towards us, to penetrate us.

In later phases when kamaloca has come to an end, we penetrate into still vaster realms. We expand ever more. When the kamaloca phase draws to a close, man leaves behind him, as if removed, everything that during his physical existence was the expression of his propensities, longings, and desires for earthly life. Man

must experience all this but he must also relinquish it in the Moon sphere of kamaloca. As man lives on after death, and later recalls the experiences in the Moon sphere, he will find all his earthly emotions and passions inscribed there, that is, everything that developed in his soul life as a result of his positive attraction to the bodily nature. This is left behind in the Moon sphere and there it remains. It cannot be erased so easily. We carry it with us as an impulse but it remains inscribed in the Moon sphere. The account of the debts, as it were, owing by every person is recorded in the Moon sphere.

Venus Sphere

After kamaloca, we grow farther out into cosmic space into the whole planetary system, though first into what is called the Venus sphere. After the kamaloca period, we become Venus dwellers. We are not now enclosed in such a small fraction of space as during our earthly existence, but the wide sphere bounded by the orbit of Venus is within our being.

People who lack a moral disposition of soul on earth become hermits in the Venus sphere. The morally inclined person, however, becomes what one might call a sociable being. There he will find above all the people with whom he had a close inner connection on earth. This determines whether one is together with someone. It depends not on spatial relations, for we all fill the same space, but on our soul inclinations. We become hermits when we bring an unmoral disposition with us, and sociable beings, if we possess a moral inclination.

In the Venus sphere a man has, above all, understanding for those with whom he was connected on earth. If he had a moral attitude of soul, he will have real intercourse in the Venus sphere with those to whom he was related during his earthly life.

A person who has developed qualities of compassion and love — qualities that are usually termed moral — lives into the next sphere so that he becomes acquainted with the beings of that sphere. A man who brings a lack of morality into this realm dwells in it like a hermit. It may be best characterized by saying that

morality prepared for us living socially together in the spiritual world. We are condemned to a fearful loneliness, filled with a continual longing to get to know others without being able to do so, as a result of a lack of morality in the physical world of the heart, as well as of the mind and will. Either as a hermit or as a sociable being who is a blessing in the spiritual world, do we dwell in this second sphere known as that of Venus.

Now, man's being expands up to the orbits of Venus and Mercury, whereas previously it expanded only to the Moon. Something strange happens at this point. Until the Moon sphere, our involvement in earthly matters is not entirely severed. We still know what we have done on the Earth, what we have thought. But recollection may be painful! On Earth, if we have done a person some injustice or have not loved him as much as we should, we can make up for these feelings. We can go to him and put things right. This is no longer possible from the Venus sphere onward. We behold the relationships in recollection. They remain but we cannot alter them.

One lives in the Venus sphere in former relationships with people, and they cannot be altered. One looks back and unfolds what one has already developed. Through an immoral conception of life, we deprive ourselves of forces of attraction in the Venus sphere. Through an irreligious disposition of soul, we deprive ourselves of forces of attraction in the Mercury sphere. We cannot draw from this sphere the forces we need; which means that in the next incarnation we shall have an astral body that, in a certain respect, is imperfect.

Thus, for a period after death man is still directly connected with the earth. Then, he has to grow into and become a citizen of the spiritual world. This requires preparation. He first must possess a sensitivity and understanding for the spiritual world. Spiritual investigation observes a considerable difference after death between souls who have cultivated moral feelings and inclinations on earth and those who have failed to do so. A person who has not developed moral feelings on earth becomes a hermit after death. He will be unable to find his way both to other human beings and to the higher hierarchies.

Consciousness is not extinguished then, and what awaits man is a sense of utter loneliness. From a certain period called the Venus period onward, man gains the possibility of living together with other beings by virtue of his moral life. We may say therefore that the way a person lives on earth determines his existence in the Venus sphere, determines whether he experiences a dreadful hermit-like existence or establishes contact with other human souls or the beings of the higher hierarchies.

Mercury Sphere

At a later period, after having passed through the Venus sphere, we feel ourselves as Mercury dwellers. There between Venus and Mercury, where our 'cloud of visions' is irradiated from without, the Beings of the higher hierarchies are able to approach the human being. Now again it depends on whether we have prepared ourselves in the right manner to be received as social spirits into the ranks of the hierarchies and to have communion with them, or whether we are compelled to pass them by as hermits. Whether we are social or lonely spirits depends upon still another factor. Whereas in the previous sphere we can be sociable only if this has been prepared on Earth as a result of morality, in the Mercury sphere the power that leads us into community, into a kind of social life, is due to our religious attitude on earth. We most certainly condemn ourselves to become hermits in the Mercury sphere if we have failed to develop religious feelings during earthly life, feelings of union with the Infinite, with the Divine.

Definite feelings for the spiritual that are colored by this or that religious creed bring it about that in the Mercury sphere a man has community only with those of like feelings who shared the same creed during earthly life. In the Mercury sphere, individuals are separated according to their particular creeds.

The ideas and conceptions are of a religious character. If religion has been a link between the transitory and the eternal, the life of soul in the Mercury sphere after death is different from what it is if there has been no such link. Again, whether we are sociable or isolated, hermit-like spirits depends upon whether we were or were not of a religious turn of mind during life on earth. After death, an

irreligious soul feels as though enclosed in a capsule, a prison. True, such a soul is aware that there are beings around him, but he feels as though he were in a prison and unable to reach them.

In the Mercury sphere we become hermits if on Earth we have had an irreligious disposition. We become sociable spirits if we bring a religious inclination with us. Inasmuch as in the physical world we are able to feel our devotion to the Holy Spirit, so in the Mercury sphere shall we find all those of a like inclination towards the divine spiritual. Men are grouped according to religious and philosophic trends in the Mercury sphere. On earth it is so that both religious striving and religious experience still play a dominant part. In the Mercury sphere the grouping is purely according to religious confession and philosophic outlook. Those who share the same world-conception are together in large, powerful communities in the Mercury sphere. They are not hermits. Only those are hermits who have not been able to develop any religious feeling and experience. A person who has failed to develop religious feelings experiences himself as blind and dead in relation to everything that surrounds him.

He who has something to bring becomes a social being, and he who has nothing to give is condemned to loneliness. A lack of religious inclination is dreadfully painful. The more religious the disposition of soul we have acquired, the more social we become in this sphere. People who lack religious inclination cut themselves off. They cannot move beyond a sheath or shell that surrounds them. Nevertheless, we get to know friends who are hermits, but we cannot reach them. We continually feel as if we have to break through a shell but are incapable of doing so. In the Mercury sphere, if we have no religious inwardness, it is as if we were to freeze up.

Sun - Mystery of Golgotha

After the Mercury sphere, this is followed by a sphere which expands up to the Sun. We are connected with the Sun. There is a period between death and rebirth when we become Sun beings. But now something further is necessary. In the first sphere, Venus, we need moral inclination and in the Mercury sphere, a religious

life. In the Sun sphere it is essential that we truly know the nature and being of the Sun spirits and above all, the ruling Sun Spirit, the Christ, and that we made a connection with Him on earth.

Since the Mystery of Golgotha, humanity has naively endeavored to draw towards the Christ. In our time, spiritual science must bring an understanding of the Sun Being to the world. Through the understanding given by means of spiritual science, what was brought by the lofty Sun Spirit, by the Christ, the Christ Who came down and through the Mystery of Golgotha has become the Spirit of the Earth will be retrieved.

If we understand the Mystery of Golgotha and realize what happened there, then in the Sun sphere we become sociable spirits. As soon as we have gone beyond the Moon sphere, we are spiritually surrounded by visions. Now the spiritual beings of the higher hierarchies illumine us. It is as if the Sun rose and irradiated the clouds in the Sun sphere. Just as we only learn to know the spiritual hierarchies in the Mercury sphere if we have a religious inclination, so in the Sun sphere we must be permeated by a Christian mood of soul.

In the Venus sphere we are, more or less, limited to the circle of those with whom we were related on earth. In the Mercury sphere we feel at home with those who had similar religious experiences to ours on Earth and we still find satisfaction only among these communities. But the soul is conscious of deep loneliness in the Sun sphere if it has no understanding for the souls entering this sphere.

In ancient times, conditions were such that in the Mercury sphere souls were to be found in the provinces of the several religions, finding and giving understanding in them. Because all religions have sprung from a common source, when the human being entered the Sun sphere he had in him so much of the old common inheritance that he could come near to all the other souls in the Sun sphere and be together with them, to understand them, to be a social spirit among them. The Christ impulse affords the possibility of understanding every human experience. Christianity is a general religion, valid for all people.

In the Sun period, we have gradually entered a realm in which we are dependent on spiritual light. Previously, before the Sun period, we still experienced the after-effects of the Earth, the after-effects of what we have been personally, including our moral and religious feelings. Now we require more than these. Now we require the faculty to see what is in the spiritual world, but this cannot be prepared for on Earth. We have to journey through realms of forces of which we cannot know anything here on Earth.

The Mystery of Golgotha signifies the re-enlivening of man's consciousness precisely during the middle period between death and rebirth. If we have experienced on Earth an understanding of Christ and the Mystery of Golgotha and have established a relationship to them, this will implant into us thoughts and forces that maintain our consciousness during this period after death.

Naturally, every man returns through a new birth to Earth, but it is of importance whether the consciousness has been extinguished or whether it has remained intact across the abyss. If we reach the Sun sphere after death with a knowledge of the Mystery of Golgotha, we are able to look backward and remember that with all that is essentially human in us, we have come from God. We also experience that we have been able to save our consciousness because of our understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha, and that we can develop our consciousness further as we behold this Spirit now drawing near to us.

On reaching the stage where the recollections of the Mystery of Golgotha is needed in order to maintain consciousness, however, a great transformation begins. We are then no longer able to hold the previous visions. For example, until this phase we can speak in terms of astral color phenomena in this realm and of the visionary images of beings surrounding us. Midway between death and a new birth visions and recollections fall away, we lose our connection with them, and they separate themselves off from our being. Only what bridges the differences between the various religious confessions can help us in the Sun sphere. What is needed is an understanding that enables us not only to come together with those of a like confession, but also to form a relationship with humanity as a whole.

In the Sun sphere, a thorough understanding of the Christ impulse is essential. We must bring this understanding along with us from the Earth, for Christ once did dwell in the Sun but, as we know, He descended from the Sun and united Himself with the Earth. We have to carry Him up to the Sun period, and then we can become sociable beings through the Christ impulse and learn to understand Him in the sphere of the Sun.

Christ and Lucifer

The understanding of Christ that we bring with us from the Earth leads us as far as the Sun sphere. There it acts as a guide, so to speak, irrespective of creed or confession. But we encounter another being in the Sun sphere who utters words that have virtually the same content. That being is Lucifer. We must have acquired on Earth an understanding of the difference between Christ and Lucifer, for Lucifer is now to accompany us through the further spheres between death and rebirth.

At this stage, one feels oneself drawing away from the Earth. The Earth is far away below one, and journeying into the spirit world one feels that one has reached the Sun. Just as during earthly life we feel ourselves linked to the Earth, so now we feel at one with the Sun with its whole planetary system.

We must now confront, and need to understand, the being known as Lucifer. The sensation in the Sun is not one of being surrounded by streaming physical light, but of dwelling in the pure light of the spirit. From this moment onward, one experiences Lucifer no longer as an antagonistic being. On the contrary, he appears more and more to be fully justified in the world. One now senses the urge, in the further course of the life after death, to recognize Christ and Lucifer side by side as equally justifiable powers. However strange the equal importance of Christ and Lucifer may appear, this insight is reached from this stage onward and one comes to see these two powers more or less as brothers.

Our interest in people with whom we have been connected wanes, and we lose interest in things. We realize that the recollections we still have at this point are

carried forward only by the Christ. Christ accompanies us, and as a result we are capable of remembering. If Christ were not to accompany us, our recollection of earthly life would vanish because it is the experience of uniting ourselves with Christ that beyond this point connects us with the Earth.

Through a further stage in the spiritual world we gain a totally new interest in Lucifer and his realm. Severed from earthly interests, we can now experience the confrontation of Lucifer absolutely without danger. We make the remarkable discovery that Lucifer's influence is harmful to us only when we are entangled in earthly affairs. He now appears as the being who illumines what we have to undergo later in the world of the spirit. For a long span of time we feel that we must acquire what Lucifer can bestow upon us in these realms of the spirit world. As Christ-filled beings, we live into the Sun sphere. As we proceed further we enter into a realm where the Sun is now below us, as previously was the Earth. We look back towards the Sun, and this is the beginning of something strange. We become aware that we have to recognize yet another being, the spirit of Lucifer.

It is only when we arrive beyond the Sun sphere that we recognize him as he was before he became Lucifer, when he was still a brother of Christ. Lucifer changed only in the course of time because he remained behind and severed himself from the stream of cosmic progress. His harmful influence does not extend beyond the Sun sphere. Above this there is still another sphere where Lucifer can unfold his activity as it was before the severance. He does not unfold anything harmful there, and if we have united ourselves rightly with the Mystery of Golgotha, we journey onward led by Christ and are rightly received by Lucifer into yet further spheres of the universe. The Sun is below us and so is the light of the Sun. Now we need a new light-bearer who illumines our path into the universe.

So you see, we go through the Moon, Mercury, Venus, and Sun spheres and in each sphere we meet, to begin with, what corresponds to the inner forces that we bring with us. Our emotions, urges, passions, sensual love, unite us to the Moon sphere. In the Venus sphere we meet everything that is due to our moral imperfections; in the Mercury sphere all our religious shortcomings; in the Sun sphere, everything that severs us from the purely human.

Now we proceed to the spheres of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Here Lucifer is our guide and we enter into a realm that bestows new forces upon us. Now, we have the Sun below us. We grow into the divine-spiritual world, and as we do so we must hold fast in memory what we have brought with us of the Christ impulse. We can only acquire this on Earth and the more deeply we have done so, the farther we can carry it into the cosmos. Now Lucifer draws near to us. He leads us out into a realm we must cross in order to be prepared for a new incarnation. There is one thing we cannot dispense with unless Lucifer is to become a threat to us, and that is the understanding of the Christ impulse, of what we have heard about Christ during our life on Earth. Lucifer approaches us out of his own accord during the period between birth and death, but Christ must be received during earthly life.

We then grow into the other spheres beyond the Sun. We become ever larger, so to speak. Below us we have the Sun and above, the mighty, vast expanse of the Starry heavens. We grow into the great cosmic realm up to a certain boundary, and as we grow outward cosmic forces work upon us from all directions. We receive forces from the mighty world of the stars into our widespread being. We would wander in darkness if Lucifer were not to approach us. However, we can only walk beside him if we are guided by the Christ. Together they lead man after the Sun period in subsequent forms of life, that is, through the Mars, Jupiter and Saturn periods. During the times following the Sun period, man is brought together with forces that he requires for his next incarnation.

It is in the Sun sphere between death and the new birth that again and again we hear the words spoken to our soul with all their force: Thou art a God, be as a God! We know with all certainty when we arrive in the Sun sphere that Lucifer meets us again and impresses the meaning of this utterance forcibly upon us. From then onwards we can understand Lucifer very well, but Christ only if on Earth we have prepared ourselves to understand Him. Christ's utterance will have no meaning for us in the Sun sphere if by our relationship on Earth to the mystery of Golgotha we have not gained some understanding of it.

Trivial as the following words may be, let me say this: In the Sun sphere we find two thrones. From the throne of Lucifer — which is always occupied — there

sound the words of temptation, asserting our divinity. The second throne seems to us — or rather to many human beings — to be still empty, for on this other throne in the Sun sphere between death and the new birth, we have to discover what can be called the Akashic picture of Christ. If we can find the Akashic picture of Christ it will be for us a blessing. But it has become possible to find that picture only because Christ came down from the Sun and has united Himself with the Earth and because we have been able to open our eyes of spirit here on Earth through understanding in some measure the Mystery of Golgotha. This will ensure that the throne of Christ in the Sun sphere does not appear empty to us but that the deeds He performed while His dwelling-place was still the Sun sphere become visible.

As I said, I have to use trivial words in speaking of these two thrones; this sublime fact can only be spoken of figuratively. But anyone who acquires more and more understanding will realize that words coined on Earth are inadequate and that one is obliged to resort to imagery in order to be intelligible.

Mars Sphere

After we have felt ourselves to be Sun dwellers, having left the Earth behind us, we now leave the Sun sphere and experience ourselves in our cosmic reality as inhabitants of Mars. In fact, for this phase it appears as if Christ had given us everything relating to the past and that Lucifer prepares us for our future incarnation. If this Mars sphere is experienced consciously, we discover that Lucifer bestows on us all experiences not originating in the earthly sphere that we carry within us through the width of the cosmos. Lucifer gives us everything unrelated to the Earth. Our former human interest becomes more and more cosmic.

Whereas previously we absorbed on Earth what the mineral, the plant, the animal, air and water, mountain and valley gave us, we gather from this point onward the experiences that reach us from the cosmos. It is a form of perception that has always been known, but little understood, as the 'harmony of the

spheres.' We perceive everything as harmonies rather than the separate sounds of the physical world.

Without exception, all materialistically inclined people become hermits once they have gone beyond the Sun into the Mars sphere.

Spiritually, man lives in the Mars sphere as indicated. Then he proceeds further and lives into the Jupiter sphere. His connection with the Earth, which up until now still continued slightly, has become quite meaningless. The Sun still has a limited influence on him, but now the cosmos begins to work powerfully upon him. Everything is now working from outside, and man receives cosmic influences. The entire cosmos works through the harmony of the spheres, which assumes even other forms the further we investigate life between death and rebirth. It is not easy to characterize the change that occurs in the harmony of the spheres as it cannot be expressed in words.

Jupiter Sphere

We now leave the realm of Mars, and the seer denotes the next sphere as Jupiter. At a certain point we experience ourselves at the center of the universe. From all sides we perceive the cosmic facts through the harmony of the spheres. As we proceed, the harmony of the spheres increases in volume. Finally, it is so powerful that we are numbed by it. Stupefied, we lift into the harmony of the spheres.

The harmony of the spheres transforms itself in the passage from Mars to Jupiter as orchestral music would change into choral music. Jupiter transforms into choral music. It becomes increasingly tone, filled with meaning, expressive of its actual being. The harmony of the spheres receives content as we ascend into the sphere of Jupiter, and in the Saturn sphere full content is bestowed upon it as the expression of the Cosmic Word out of which everything has been created and which is found in the Gospel of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word." In this Word, cosmic order and cosmic wisdom sound forth.

Saturn Sphere

After we have gone through the Jupiter sphere our existence reaches Saturn, the outermost limit of the solar system. At this juncture we undergo an important experience of a moral nature. If Christ has preserved our memory of earlier conditions on Earth and protected us from the states of fear arising out of a waning consciousness, we realize, particularly in our present soul configuration, how little our life on Earth was attuned to higher moral demands, to the majesty of the entire cosmic existence. Our past earthly life rises up reproachfully out of an undifferentiated darkness, the sum total of the last incarnation as it formed itself karmically during that life appears before the soul.

In fact, the overall picture of your present incarnation corresponds to what now arises in your soul at this state after death, but everything you have to object to in your own last incarnation is poignantly experienced. We behold our last earthly life from a cosmic viewpoint.

From this time onward, neither the Christ principle nor Lucifer can maintain our consciousness. Unless an initiation took place in a previous earth life, consciousness is definitely dimmed. It marks a necessary spiritual sleep-like condition following the consciousness that prevailed until then. This spiritual sleep is connected with another factor. Because all feelings and the capacity to form ideas have ceased, the total cosmic forces, with the exception of those emanating from the solar system, can now act directly upon the person. Imagine the whole of the solar system out of action and only the forces outside it working. This will give you a picture of the influences that now begin to be operative.

The Return to Another Birth

Beyond Saturn a spiritual-sleep begins, whereas during the previous stages one was spiritually awake. From now onward consciousness is dimmed, the human being dwells in a benumbed condition that makes it possible for him to undergo still other experiences. Just as in sleep we do away with tiredness and gather new

forces, so as a result of the dimming of consciousness, when we have become a fully expanded spatial sphere, spiritual forces stream in from the cosmos.

First we have sensed it, then we have heard it as a universal orchestra. Then it has sung forth and we have perceived it as the Word. Then we fall asleep and it penetrates us. During this period, we again travel through all the spheres, but with a dimmed consciousness. Our consciousness becomes ever dimmer. We now contract, quickly or slowly according to our karma, and during this process of contraction we come once more under the influence of the forces emanating from the Sun system. We journey back from sphere to sphere through the cosmos. Now we are not sensitive to influences from the Moon sphere. We proceed, unaffected, unhampered, as it were, and continue to contract until we unite ourselves with the small human germ that goes through its development before birth.

Unless physiology and embryology receive their facts from spiritual scientific investigation, they cannot contain the truth, for the embryo is a reflection of the vast cosmos. The whole cosmos is carried within it. The human being carries as a potential power within him what happens physically between conception and birth, and also what he undergoes during the period of cosmic sleep.

Life between death and rebirth falls into two parts. To begin with it is unalterable. We ascend, the beings approach us. We enter into a condition of sleep and then change can occur. The forces now enter with which we are born. Considering the evolution of man in this way, we see that the human being after death first lives in a world of visions. He only learns to recognize later what he really is as a soul-spiritual being. Beings approach us from outside and they illumine us as the golden light of the morning illuminates the things of the outer world. Thus, we ascend and the spiritual world penetrates into us. We do not live into the spiritual world from outside until we have become mature enough to experience what we are in our visionary world, until we encounter the beings of the spiritual world who approach us from all sides like rays.

It is when the human being ascends into the spiritual world that the light of spiritual beings draws near to him. But there is one moment when he is clearly

visible, illumined by the light of the hierarchies so that he reflects back the whole of the outer world. The entire cosmos now appears as if reflected by man. You can imagine the process. First you live on as a cloud that is not sufficiently illumined, then you ray back the light of the cosmos and then you dissolve. There is a moment when man reflects back the cosmic light. Up to this point he can ascend. We reach a boundary, then we begin to contract and enter again into the realms through which we have traveled previously. We go through the Sun, Mercury, Venus and Moon spheres until we come again into the neighborhood of the Earth and everything that has been carried out in the cosmic expanse has concentrated itself again in an embryo borne by an earthly mother.

This is the mystery of man's nature between death and a new birth. After he has gone through the gate of death he expands ever more from the small space of the earth to the realms of Moon, Venus, Mercury, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. We have then grown into cosmic space, like giant spheres. After we, as souls, have received the forces of the universe, of the stars, we contract again and carry the forces of the starry world within us. This explains how in the concentrated brain structure an imprint of the total starry heavens may be found.

Why do I use the terms Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn for the periods after death? When man has gone through the gate of death he expands more and more. In fact, life after death is such that one knows oneself to be spread out over a vast space. This expansion goes so far that one finally occupies the space bounded by the orbit of the moon. Then one grows out to the orbit of Mercury in the occult sense, then out to the orbits of Venus, Sun and Mars. One grows out into the vast celestial spaces. But the spatial togetherness of the many human souls is not significant. When you permeate the whole of the Venus sphere this is also the case for the others, but it does not mean that because of this you are aware of them. Even if one knows that one is not alone, one can still feel lonely.

Finally, one expands into the universe in a sphere circumscribed by the orbit of Saturn and beyond. As one grows in this way one gathers the forces needed to build up the next incarnation. Then one returns. One becomes ever smaller until one unites oneself again with the earth.

Between death and rebirth, man expands into the whole cosmos and however strange it may appear, when we return to the Earth we bring all the forces of the solar system with us into life and unite them with what is inherited out of the physical substances. By means of the cosmic forces we build up our physical body and our brain. Here, between birth and death we dwell within the narrow confines of our physical body. After death, we live expanded into the entire solar macrocosm.

The one person has a deep moral sense, the other less so. The one who on earth had a deep moral sense goes through the spiritual world in such a way that he can experience everything as a sociable being. The power for this flows from the starry realms. Another who is not thus prepared is unable to make any connections and because he did not bring any spiritualized forces with him, he also is unable to receive any moral predispositions. He will journey alone through the various spheres.

Preparing for the Next Incarnation

Let us now consider the important relationship between the second phase of life after death and the embryonic period. You know that embryonic life begins with a small spherical germ. We can make the remarkable observation that in its earliest stages the embryo represents a mirror-picture of all the human being experiences out of the cosmos. At the outset, the human germ carries a mirror-picture of cosmic existence from which its life in the solar system is excluded. It is remarkable that during the further stages of embryonic development all cosmic influences are rejected except those emanating from the solar system. These are absorbed by the embryo. Hereditary forces commence their activity on the embryo at a comparatively later stage when, during life after death, we have retraced our steps via Saturn, Jupiter and Mars.

Therefore, it may be said that the germ is already prepared by man during cosmic existence in a condition of universal sleep and before the embryonic period.

Then, the later embryonic conditions find their mirror-image in the early phase of prenatal life, and the early conditions of embryonic existence find their reflection in a later phase before conception. So, we obtain a spiritual mirror-picture in reverse of embryonic development. Here is the embryo in the one direction, and for each phase in the one direction I find a mirror-image in the other. The two sides are related as object and mirror-image, and conception marks the point at which the mirror-images arise.

Life between death and a new birth is full of content, but one thing is missing. We do in fact recapitulate everything we have experienced from the previous incarnation until the present one. We sense cosmic being, but during the first stage of life after death we do not experience what has happened on the Earth between the two incarnations. Until we reach the Sun sphere we are so preoccupied with our memories of life before death that our interest in events on the earth is completely diverted. We live with those individuals who also are dwelling in the spiritual world after death. We are fully involved in the relationships that we have with them on earth and shape these connections to fit their ultimate consequences.

During this period our interest is continually diverted and thereby lessened for those who are still on the Earth. Only when those who remain on Earth seek us with their souls can a link with them be created. This should be considered an important moral element that throws light upon the connection between the living and the dead.

A person who has died before us and whom we completely forget, finds it difficult to reach us here in earthly life. The love, the constant sympathy we feel for the dead, creates a path on which a connection with earthly life is established. During the early stages after death, those who have passed on can live with us only out of this connection. Those who have passed on can reach us most easily if they can find thoughts and feelings directed toward them from the earth.

The situation is different for the second stage between death and a new birth. We are then so deeply involved in cosmic interests that it becomes exceedingly difficult to establish a connection with the Earth during this second period. Apart

from the interest we take in the cosmos, we wish to cooperate in the right shaping of our further karma. In addition to our cosmic impressions, we retain best what we have to correct karmically, and we help to shape a next life that will help to compensate for the karmic debts incurred.

During this period, we want to return to life with all our strength in order to correct our karma. We forget all too easily after the cosmic sleep described, when we awaken into the present, that we actually want to reincarnate. Just as we are strengthened through sleep in earthly life and endowed with new forces, so as a result of the described cosmic sleep are we equipped with forces for our new incarnation.

During spirit-existence between death a new birth, we are in fact old to begin with, and we become children in relation to the spiritual life during the second period. Spiritual life flows in the reverse order. To begin with, we carry the errors and shortcomings of earthly life into the spiritual world. Then gradually during the cosmic existence they are removed.

Ultimately, you will refer the being of God to yourself, to let it be reflected in you. Such a stage arises after death when gazing back on man. The surroundings are reflected in him, even the Godhead. Life after death is the reflection of the divine. It is well known that Dante said that during one's existence in the spiritual world a point comes where one 'beholds the divine as man.'

What could be more uplifting than to know that we can discover the fount of our life between death and rebirth. We can discover our kinship with the whole universe! What could give us greater strength for our duties in life than the knowledge that we bear within us the forces pouring in from the universe and must so prepare ourselves in life that these forces can become active in us when, between death and rebirth, we pass into the spheres of the planets and of the Sun.

Creating a New Body

Man builds his entire body both from the movements of the stars and from the constellations of the stars in the great Universe. The human body is indeed an image of the world of stars. Much of the work we have to do between death and new birth consists in the building of our own body from the Universe. The human being as he stands on Earth is indeed a shrunken Universe.

Moreover, his life of soul and spirit between death and re-birth consists in working with the spiritual Beings — working at the super-sensible form of man, which is created first in the etheric and astral realms and only then shrinks and contracts till it is able to be clothed in physical material.

Only if we can understand how the soul-and-spirit, having thus lost itself in language, becomes one with the world of stars and then recovers itself from the world of stars, — only then do we apprehend the complete cycle of human life between death and a new birth.

For if we have the faculty to concentrate in a single point within the heart and thence to turn ourselves inside out in spirit, we simply do become the Universe which in the normal course we experience between death and a new birth. Such is the secret of the inner man. It is only in the physical world that he cannot be turned inside out. The heart of man however is in effect a Universe turned inside out, and that is how the physical and earthly world is really joined to the spiritual.

Appendix

Theosophical Terms of the Afterlife

The following selection by Rudolf Steiner is the last of ten lectures in the lecture series *Between Death and Rebirth* (GA 141) clarifying his usage of Theosophical terms found in his book *Theosophy*. The terms for each of the spheres that the soul traverses in the afterlife, are here aligned with the selections presented above from *Life Between Death and Rebirth*. For those interested in comparing the two versions, this is the best lecture that clarifies Theosophical and Anthroposophical terminology in relationship to the planetary spheres that are experienced in sleep and in death. Steiner is keen to point out that both schemes agree perfectly. Some may find the older Theosophical terms difficult to understand but it is well worth the study. These selections are not as appropriate to read to the dead as are the selections from *Life Between Birth and Death* found above.

The selections below are a beautiful example of the development of Steiner's thought that coincided with Eastern terminology and yet was transformed and delivered in a Western esoteric format. The presentation below is not as picturesque or poetic as the selections from *Life Between Birth and Death* and yet they present a concise, clear, and comprehensive Imagination of these planetary realms. They are offered to give a well-rounded understanding of Dr. Steiner's indications concerning the life after death.

Selections from *Theosophy* by Rudolf Steiner

In the book *Theosophy*, there is a description of the passage of the soul after death through the Soul-World. This Soul-World is divided into a region of 'Burning Desires' a region of 'Flowing Susceptibility', a region of 'Wishes', a region of 'Attraction and Repulsion' (Lust und Unlust), and then into the higher regions of 'Soul-Light', of 'Active Soul-Force', and the true 'Soul-Life.' That was

how the Soul-World through which the soul has to pass after death was described. Thereafter, the soul has to pass through what is described as the Spiritland and this sphere, too, with its successive regions, is described in the book *Theosophy* by using certain earthly images: the 'continental' region of Spiritland, the 'oceanic' region, and so forth.

In the course of these lectures, descriptions have been given of how the soul, having passed through the gate of death, lays aside the physical body, then the etheric body, and then expands and expands, lives through regions which for reasons that were explained may be called the region of the Moon, then that of Venus, of Mercury, of the Sun, of Mars, of Jupiter, of Saturn, and then of the starry firmament itself. The soul or, let us say, the actual spiritual individuality of the human being concerned, continually expands, lives through these regions which enclose ever more extensive cosmic spaces and then begins to contract, becoming smaller and smaller, in order finally to unite with the seed which comes to it from the stream of heredity.

And through this union of the human seed which the individual acquired through heredity with what has been absorbed from the great macrocosmic spheres, there arises the human being who is to embark on the course of earthly life, the being who is to live through his existence between birth and death.

Now as a matter of fact, what was said in the book *Theosophy* and in the lectures was fundamentally the same, and your attention has been called to this. In *Theosophy* the description was given in certain pictures more closely related to inner conditions of the soul. In the lectures given here during the Winter, the descriptions dealt with the great cosmic relationships connected with the functions of the several planets. It is now a matter of harmonizing the two descriptions.

During the first period after death the soul has to look back upon what was experienced on Earth. The period of kamaloca, or call it what you will, is a period during which the soul's life is still concerned entirely with earthly conditions. Kamaloca is fundamentally a period during which the soul feels bound to disengage itself gradually from any direct connections still persisting from the

last incarnation on Earth. In the physical body on Earth, the soul has experiences which depend upon the bodily life, indeed very largely upon sense-impressions. If you 'think away' everything that sense-impressions bring into the soul and then try to realize how much still remains in it, you will have a picture of a very meagre content indeed! And yet on final consideration you will be able to say: When the soul passes through the gate of death, everything given by the senses comes to an end and whatever is left can at most only be memories of earlier sense-impressions. If, therefore, you think about how much of what is yielded by sense-impressions is left in the soul, it will be easy for you to form an idea of what remains of these impressions after death.

Recall any sense-impressions experienced, for example, yesterday, while they are still comparatively vivid, and you will realize how pale they have already become compared with their former vividness; that will give you some idea of how little of what the sense-impressions have conveyed is left to the soul as remembrance.

This shows you that basically all the soul's life in the world of the senses is specifically earthly experience. When the sense-organs fall away at death, all significance of the sense-impressions falls away as well. But because the human being still clings to his sense-impressions and retains a longing for them, the first region through which he passes in the life after death is the region of Burning Desires. He would like still to have sense-impressions for a long time after death, but this is impossible because he has discarded the sense-organs. The life spent in longing for sense-impressions and being unable to enjoy them is life in the region of Burning Desires. It is a life that does actually burn within the soul and is part of the existence in kamaloka; the soul longs for sense-impressions to which it was accustomed on Earth and — because the sense-organs have been laid aside — cannot have them.

A second region of the life in kamaloka is that of Flowing Susceptibility. When the soul lives through this region it has already ceased to long for sense-impressions but still longs for thoughts, for thoughts which in life on Earth are acquired through the instrumentality of the brain. In the region of Burning Desires the soul gradually realizes that it is nonsense to wish for sense-impressions in a world for the experience of which the necessary sense-organs have been

discarded, a world in which no being can possibly have sense-organs formed entirely of substance of the Earth. The soul may long since have ceased to yearn for sense-impressions but still longs to think in the way that is customary on Earth. This earthly thinking is discarded in the region of Flowing Susceptibility. There the human being gradually recognizes that thoughts such as are formed on Earth have significance only in the life between birth and death.

At this stage, when the human being has weaned himself from fostering thoughts that are dependent upon the physical instrument of the brain, he is still aware of a certain connection with the Earth through what is contained in his Wishes. After all, wishes are connected with the soul more intimately than thoughts. Wishes have their own distinctive coloring in every individual. Whereas thoughts differ in youth, in middle life and in old age, a particular form of wishing continues throughout a man's earthly life. This form and coloring of wishes are only later discarded in the region of Wishes.

And then finally, in the region of Attraction and Repulsion, man rids himself of all longing to be connected with a physical body, with the physical body which was his in the last incarnation. While a man is passing through these regions, of Burning Desires, of Flowing Susceptibility, of Wishes, of Attraction and Repulsion, a certain longing for the last earthly life is still present.

First, in the region of Burning Desires the soul still longs to be able to see through eyes, to hear through ears, although eyes and ears no longer exist. When the soul has finally cast off any such longing, it still yearns to be able to think by means of a brain such as was available on Earth. Having got rid of this longing too, there still remains the desire to wish with a heart as on Earth. Finally, the human being ceases to long for sense-impressions or for thoughts formed by his brain or for wishes of his heart, but a hankering for his last incarnation on Earth taken as a whole, still lingers. Gradually, however, he then rids himself of this longing too. You will find that all the experiences in these regions correspond exactly with the passage of the expanding soul into the region called the Mercury sphere, an expansion through the Moon sphere into the Venus sphere. On approaching the Venus sphere, however, the soul encounters conditions described in the book *Theosophy* as a kind of spiritual region of the Soul-World.

Read the description of the passage of the soul through this region and you will see from what is said about the kind of experiences undergone there that what is generally called the unpleasant element of kamaloca already comes to an end in the region of Soul-Light. This region of Soul-Light corresponds with what I have said about the Venus sphere. If you compare what was said about the life of the soul when it has expanded to the Venus sphere with what is contained in the book *Theosophy* about the region of Soul-Light, you will realize that endeavors were made to describe this region first from the aspect of inner influences of the soul and then from the aspect of the great macrocosmic conditions through which the soul passes.

If you read what is said in *Theosophy* about the 'Active Soul-Force', you will realize that the inner experiences undergone in that region are in keeping with what is decisive during the passage through the Mercury sphere. It has been said that if the soul is to pass in the right way through the Mercury sphere it must have developed certain religious impulses during earthly life. In order to progress through the Mercury sphere with companionship and not in compulsory isolation, the soul must be imbued with certain religious concepts. Compare what was said about this with the description given in the book *Theosophy* of the region of Active Soul-Force and you will find that they agree, that in one case the inner aspect of the conditions was described, in the other, the outer aspect.

The highest region of the Soul-World, the region of pure Soul-Life, is experienced by the soul in passing through the region of the Sun. So, we can say that the sphere of existence in kamaloca extends to and somewhat beyond the Moon sphere; then the more luminous regions of the Soul-World begin and extend to the sphere of the Sun. The soul experiences in the Sun sphere the region of true Soul-Life. We know that in the Sun sphere after death the soul comes into contact with the Light-Spirit, with Lucifer, who on Earth has become the tempter, the corrupter.

When the soul has expanded into the cosmos it comes more and more closely into contact with those forces which now enable it to develop what is needed for the next incarnation on Earth. Not until the soul has passed through the region of the Sun has it finished with the last earthly incarnation. As far as the region

of Attraction and Repulsion is concerned, that is to say the region between the Moon and Venus, the soul is still burdened inwardly with yearning for the last life on Earth; moreover, even in the regions of Venus, Mercury, and the Sun the soul is not yet completely free from the ties of the last incarnation. But then it must finally have finished even with everything that transcends merely personal experience; in the Venus region with whatever moral concepts have or have not been acquired, in the region of Mercury with whatever religious conceptions have been developed, in the region of the Sun with whatever understanding has been acquired of the 'human-universal' quality in existence — that which is not confined to any particular religious creed but is concerned with a religious life befitting all mankind. Thus, it is even the higher interests that can develop in the further evolution of humanity with which the soul has finished by the time it enters into the region of the Sun.

Then the soul passes into cosmic-spiritual life and finds its place in the Mars region. This region corresponds with what is described in *Theosophy* as the first sphere of the 'Spiritland.' This description portrays the inner aspect of the fact that the soul is spiritual to the extent of being able to behold as something external to itself the 'archetype', as it were, of the physical bodily organization and of physical conditions on the Earth in general. The archetypes of physical life on Earth appear as a kind of 'continental' mass of the Spiritland. The external configurations of a man's different incarnations are inscribed in this 'continental' region. There we have a picture of what, in terms of cosmic existence, the human soul has to experience in the Mars region.

It might seem strange that this Mars region which has repeatedly been described in these lectures as a region of strife, should be said to be the first region of Devachan, of the true Spiritland. Nevertheless, this is the case. Everything that on Earth belongs to the actual material realm and causes the mineral kingdom to appear as a purely material realm is due to the fact that on Earth the forces are engaged in perpetual conflict among themselves. This also led to the result that at the time when materialism was in its prime and material life was assumed to be the sole reality, the 'struggle for existence' was regarded as the only valid law of life on Earth. That is, of course, an error, because material existence is not the only form of existence evolving on Earth. But when the human being assumes

embodiment on Earth he can only enter into the form of existence that has its archetypes in the lowest region of what is, for the Earth, the Spiritland. Read the description of the lowest region of Spiritland as given in the book *Theosophy*. I want to quote this particular chapter today in connection with our present studies. Towards the beginning of the description of the Spiritland you will find the following passage.

“The development of the spirit in Spiritland takes place through the man throwing himself completely into the life of the different regions of this land.”

“His own life as it were dissolves into each region successively; he takes on, for the time being, their characteristics. Through this they permeate his being with theirs, in order that his being may be able to work, strengthened by theirs, in his earthly life. In the first region of the Spiritland, man is surrounded by the spiritual archetypes of earthly things. During life on earth he learns to know only the shadows of these archetypes which he grasps in his thoughts. What is merely thought on the earth is in this region experienced, lived. Man moves among thoughts; but these thoughts are real beings.”

“Our own embodiments dissolve here into a unity with the rest of the world. Thus, here we look upon the archetypes of the physical, corporeal reality as a unity, to which we have ourselves belonged. We learn, therefore, gradually to know our relationship, our unity, with the surrounding world, by observation. We learn to say to it: ‘That which is here spread out around thee, thou art that.’ And that is one of the fundamental thoughts of ancient Indian Vedanta wisdom. The sage acquires, even during his earthly life, what others experience after death, namely, ability to grasp the thought that he himself is related to all things, the thought, ‘Thou art that.’ In earthly life this is an ideal to which the thought-life can be devoted; in the Land of Spirit it is an immediate reality, one which grows ever clearer to us through spiritual experience. And man himself comes to know more and more clearly in this realm that in his own inner being he belongs to the spirit-world. He is aware of himself as a

spirit among spirits, a member of the Primordial Spirits, and he will feel in his own self the word of the Primordial Spirit: 'I am the Primal Spirit.'"

If we now pass on to consider the cosmic aspects of the second region of Spiritland as described from the inner point of view of the soul, we shall find that this second region, the 'oceanic' region of Spiritland corresponds with the Jupiter region. Further, if we pass to the third region of Devachan, the 'Airy' region of Spiritland, we shall find that it corresponds with the influences of the Saturn region. What was described in Theosophy as the fourth region of Spiritland already extends beyond our planetary system. There the soul expands into still wider spaces, into the starry firmament itself.

From the descriptions that were given from the inner standpoint of the soul, it will be quite clear to you that the experiences of the soul in the fourth region of Spiritland could not be undergone in any realm where the spatial relationship to the Earth is still the same as that of the planetary system. There is something so utterly foreign in what is conveyed by the fourth region of Spiritland that it can never correspond with what can be experienced even within the outermost planetary sphere, the Saturn sphere.

Therefore, the soul passes into the starry firmament, that is to say into distances more and more remote both from the Earth and also from the Sun. These distant realms are described in the account of the three highest regions of Spiritland traversed by the soul before it begins to draw together again and to pass, in the reverse order, through all the preceding conditions. On this journey the soul acquires the forces by means of which it can build up a new life on Earth.

In general, it can be said that when the soul has passed through the Sun region it has finished with every element of 'personality.' What is experienced beyond the Sun region, beyond the region of Soul-Life in the true sense, is spiritual; it transcends everything that is personal. What the soul then experiences as 'Thou art that' — and especially in our time as the Buddha-impulse in the Mars region — is something that seems strange here on Earth, though it is not so on Mars; it is the impulse denoted by the word 'Nirvana.' This means liberation from everything that is significant on the Earth, for the soul begins to realize the great

cosmic significance of universal space. In living through all this, the soul emancipates itself entirely from the element of personality.

In the Mars region, the lowest region of Spiritland, where the soul acquires understanding of the 'Thou art that', or, as we should put it today, receives the Buddha-impulse, it frees itself from everything that is earthly. After the soul has become inwardly free of this — and the Christ Impulse is needed here — it also liberates itself spiritually by recognizing that all ties of blood are forged on Earth and therefore belong by nature to the Earth. But the soul then passes on to new conditions.

In the Jupiter region, conditions which force the soul into some particular creed are dissolved. We have heard that the soul can pass through the Mercury region with companionship only if it had adopted a creed; without religion in some form it would be lonely and isolated. We have also heard that the soul can pass through the Sun region only when it has learnt to understand the creeds of all religions on the Earth. In the Jupiter region, however, the soul must liberate itself entirely from the particular creed to which it belonged during life on Earth. This was not an essentially personal attachment but something into which it was born and was shared in company with other souls.

Thus, the soul can pass through the Mercury region only if it has acquired religious ideas in earthly life; it can pass through the Sun region only if it has developed some measure of understanding of all such beliefs. The soul can pass through the Jupiter region only if it is able to liberate itself from the particular confession to which it belonged on Earth; merely to understand the others is not enough. For during the passage through the Jupiter region, it will be decided whether in the next life the soul will have to be connected with the same creed as before, or whether it has experienced everything that can be offered by one particular creed. In the Mercury sphere the soul garners the fruits of a particular faith; in the Sun sphere the fruits of an understanding of all forms of religious life; but when it reaches the Jupiter region the soul must be able to lay the foundation for a new relationship to religion during the next life on Earth. These are three stages experienced by the soul between death and the new birth: first it experiences inwardly the fruits of the faith to which it belonged in the last

life; then the fruits of having developed the capacity to appreciate the value of all other religious beliefs; and then it must free itself so completely from the beliefs held in the last life that it can wholeheartedly adopt a different religion. This cannot be achieved by attaching equal value to all creeds; and we know that on its return journey through these regions the soul comes once again into the Jupiter region and there prepares the traits enabling it to live in the fullest sense in a different religion in the next life. In this way the forces which the soul needs in order to shape a new life are gradually impressed into it.

(See chart on next page.)

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