

Anthroposophy in Everyday Life



Practical Training
In Thought

Overcoming
Nervousness

Facing Karma

The Four
Temperaments

Four Lectures By

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PRACTICAL TRAINING IN THOUGHT

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IT may seem strange to some, if an anthroposophist, of all people, feels himself called upon to speak of practical training in thought. For people very often imagine Anthroposophy to be something highly unpractical, having nothing whatever to do with real life. That is because they look at the thing externally and superficially. In reality, what we are concerned with in the anthroposophical movement is intended as a guide for everyday life, for the most matter-of-fact affairs of life. We should be able to transform it at every moment into a sure sense and feeling, enabling us to meet life confidently and find our footing in the world.

People who call themselves practical imagine that their actions are guided by the most practical principles. When you look into the matter closely, you will, however, frequently discover that what they call their practical way of thinking is not thinking at all, but the mere "jogging along" with old opinions and acquired habits of thought. You will often find there is very little that is really practical behind it. What they call practical consists in this: they have learned how their teachers, or their predecessors in business, thought about the matter in hand, and then they simply take the same line. Anyone who thinks along different lines they regard as a very unpractical person. In effect, his thinking does not accord with the habits to which they have been brought up. In cases where something really practical has been invented, you will not generally find that it was done by any of the "practical" people.

Take for instance our present postage stamp. Surely the most obvious thing would be to suppose that it was invented by a practical post-office official. But it was not. At the beginning of last century it was a very long and troublesome business to post a letter. You had to go to the office where letters were posted, and various books had to be referred to; in short, there were all manner of complicated proceedings. It is hardly more than sixty years since the uniform postal rate to which we are now accustomed was introduced. And our postage stamp, which makes this simple arrangement possible, was invented, not by a practical man in the postal service, but by a complete outsider. It was the Englishman, Rowland Hill. When the postage stamp had been invented, the Minister who had to do with the Postal Department said in the English Parliament: In the first place, we can by no means assume that as a result of this simplification postal communication will really increase so enormously as this unpractical man imagines; and secondly, even assuming that it did, the main Post Office in London would not be big enough to hold it.

It never dawned on this very practical man that the Post Office building ought to be adapted to the amount of correspondence, and not the amount of correspondence to the building. Yet in what was, comparatively speaking, the shortest imaginable time, the thing was carried out. One of the unpractical people had to fight for it against a practical man. To-day we take it as a matter of course that letters are sent with a postage stamp.

It was similar in the case of the railways. In the year 1887, when the first German railway was to be constructed between Nuremberg and Fürth, the Bavarian College of Medicine, being consulted, pronounced the following expert opinion. In the first place, they said, it was inadvisable to build

railways at all; if, however, it were intended to do so, it would at any rate be necessary to erect a high wall of wooden planks to the left and right of the line, in order that passers-by might not suffer from nerve and brain shock.

When the line from Potsdam to Berlin had to be built, the Postmaster-General Stengler said: I send two mail coaches a day to Potsdam and they are not full up; if these people are bent on wasting their money, they might as well throw it out of the window without more ado.

In effect, the real facts of life leave the "practical" people behind, or rather they leave behind those who so fondly call themselves practical.

We have to distinguish true thinking from the so-called practical thinking, which merely consists in opinions based on the habits of thought in which people have been brought up.

I will tell you a little experience of my own, and make it a starting-point for our considerations to-day.

In my undergraduate days, a young colleague once came to me. He was bubbling over with that intense pleasure which you may observe in people who have just had 'a really brilliant idea. "I am on my way," he said, "to see Professor X. (who at that time occupied the chair in Machine Construction), for I have made a wonderful discovery. I have discovered a machine whereby it will be possible by the use of a very little steam-power to exert an enormous amount of work." That was all he could tell me, for he was in a tremendous hurry to go to see the Professor. However, he did not find him at home, so he came back and set to work to explain the matter to me. Of course, from the very start the whole thing had sounded to me suspiciously like perpetual motion; but, after all, why shouldn't such a thing be possible one fine day? So I listened; and after he had gone through the whole explanation, I had to answer: "Yes, it is certainly very cleverly thought out; but you see, in practice it surely comes to this. It's as though you were to get into a railway truck and push tremendously hard, and imagine that the truck would thereby begin to move. That is the principle of thought in your invention?" And then he saw that it was so, and he did not go to see the Professor again.

THAT is how it is possible to shut oneself up, as it were, in one's thought. People put themselves in a neat little box with their thought. In rare cases this is perfectly evident; but people are continually doing it in life, and it is not always so clear and striking as in the instance we have taken. One who is able to look into the matter a little more intimately knows that this is the way with a great many human processes of thought. He constantly sees people standing, as it were, in their truck, pushing from the inside, and imagining that it is they who are propelling it.

Much of what happens in life would happen altogether differently if people were not such pushers, standing in their trucks!

True practice of thought requires us in the first place to have the right attitude of mind, the right feeling about thought. How can we gain this? No one can come to a right feeling about thought who imagines that thought is something which merely takes place within man, inside his head, or in his mind or soul. Anyone who starts with this idea will have a wrong feeling, and will continually be diverted from the search for a truly practical way of thought. He will fail to make the necessary demands on his thinking activity. To acquire the right feeling towards thought, he must rather say to himself: "If I am able to make myself thoughts about the things, if I am able to

get at the things through thoughts, then the things must already contain the thoughts within them. The thoughts must be there in the very plan and structure of the things. Only so can I draw the thoughts out of them.”

Man must say to himself that it is the same with the things in the world outside as with a watch. The comparison of the human organism to a watch is frequently used, but people often forget the most important thing. They forget the watchmaker. The cogs and wheels did not run together and join up of their own accord and set the watch in motion, but there was a watchmaker there first, to construct the watch. We must not forget the watchmaker. It is through thoughts that the watch has come into being. The thoughts have, as it were, flowed out into the watch, into the external object. And this is the way in which we must think of all the works of nature of all the natural creation, and of all natural processes. It can easily be illustrated in a thing that is human creation: in the things of nature it is not quite so easy to perceive. **And yet they too are works of the spirit; behind them are spiritual beings.**

When man thinks about things, he is only thinking after, he is only re-thinking, that which has first been laid into them. We must believe that the world has been created by thought and is still in continual process of creation by thought. This belief, and this alone, can give birth to a really fruitful inner practice of thought.

It is always unbelief in the spiritual content of the world that underlies the greatest impracticality of thought. This is true in the sphere of science itself. For example, some one will say, our planetary system came about as follows: “First there was a primeval nebula. It began to rotate, drew together into one central body from which rings and spheres split off, and by this mechanical process the whole planetary system came into being.” People who speak like that are making a grave error in thought. They have a pretty way of teaching it to the children nowadays. There is a neat little experiment which they show in many schools. They float a drop of oil in a glass of water, stick a pin through the middle of the drop and then set it in rotation. Thereupon little drops split off from the big drop in the middle, and you have a minute planetary system. A nice little object lesson, so they think, to show the pupil how such a thing can come about in a purely mechanical way.

Only an unpractical way of thinking can draw this conclusion from the experiment. For the man who transplants the idea to the great cosmic planetary system generally forgets just one thing — which at other times it is perhaps quite good to forget — he forgets himself. He forgets that he himself, after all, set the thing in rotation. If he had not been there and done the whole thing, the drop of oil would never have split off the little drops. If the man would observe that too, and transfer the idea to the planetary system, then, and then only, would his thought be complete.

Such errors in thought play a very great part to-day — and they do so especially in what is now called science. These things are far more important than people generally imagine.

IF we would make our thinking practical, we must first know that thoughts can only be drawn from a world in which thoughts already are. Just as you can only draw water from a glass that does really contain water, so you can only draw thoughts from things that already contain thoughts. The world is built up by thoughts, and it is only for that reason that we can gain thoughts from the world. If it were not so, then there could be no such thing as a practice of thought at all. When a man really feels what has here been said, and feels it to the full, then he will easily transcend the stage of abstract thinking. When a man has full confidence and faith that behind things there are

thoughts, that the real facts of life take place according to thoughts — when he has this confidence and feeling, then he will readily be converted to a practice of thought that is founded on reality.

We will now set forth some elements of practice in thought. If you are penetrated by the belief that the world of facts takes its course in thoughts, you will admit how important it is to develop true thinking.

Let us assume that someone says to himself: “I want to strengthen my thought, so that it may find its true bearings at every point in life.” He must then take guidance from what will now be said. The indications that will now be given are to be taken as real practical principles — principles such, that if you try again and again and again to guide your thought accordingly, definite results will follow. Your thinking will become practical, even though it may not appear so at first sight. Indeed, if you carry out these principles, you will have altogether fresh experiences in your life of thought.

Let us assume that someone makes the following experiment. On a certain day he carefully observes some process in the world which is accessible to him, which he can observe quite accurately — say, for example, the appearance of the sky. He observes the cloud formations in the evening, the way in which the sun went down. And now he makes a distinct and accurate mental image of what he has observed.

He tries to hold it fast for a time in all its details. He holds fast as much of it as he can, and tries to keep it till the following day. On the morrow, about the same time, or even at another time of day, he again observes the appearance of the sky and the weather, and he tries once more to form an exact mental image of it.

If in this way he forms clear mental images of successive conditions, he will soon perceive with extraordinary distinctness that he is enriching his thought and making it inwardly intense. For what makes a man's thought unpractical is the fact that in observing successive processes in the world he is generally too much inclined to leave out the actual details and to retain only a vague and confused picture in his mind. The essential, the valuable thing for strengthening our thought is to form exact pictures above all in the case of successive processes and then to say to ourselves: “Yesterday the thing was so; to-day it is so.” And in doing this we must bring before our minds the two pictures which are separated in the real world, as graphically, as vividly as possible.

To begin with, this exercise is simply a particular expression of our belief that the thoughts are there in reality. We are not immediately to draw some conclusion — to conclude from what we observe to-day what the weather and the sky will be like to-morrow. That would only corrupt our thinking. No, we must have faith that outside in the reality of things they have their connection, and that to-morrow's process is somehow connected with to-day's. We are not to speculate about it, but first of all to think, in mental images as clear as possible, the scenes which in the external world are separated in time. We place the two pictures side by side before our minds, and then let the one gradually change into the other.

This is a definite principle which must be followed if we would develop a truly objective way of thinking. It is especially valuable to take this line with things which we do not yet understand, where we have not yet penetrated the inner connection. Particularly with those processes — the sky and the weather, for example — which we do not understand at all, we must have the belief that, as they are connected in the outside world, so will they work their connections within us.

And we must do it simply in mental pictures, refraining from thought. We must say to ourselves: "I do not yet know the connection, but I will let these things grow and evolve within me, and if I refrain from all speculation, I am sure they will be working something within me."

You will not find it difficult to imagine that something may take place in the invisible vehicles of a human being who, refraining from thought in this way, strives to call forth clear mental images of processes and events that succeed one another in time in the outer world. Man has an astral body as the vehicle of his life of thought and ideation. So long as he speculates, this astral body of man is the slave of his Ego. But it is not completely involved in this conscious activity, for it also stands in relation to the whole Universe. Now as we refrain from giving play to our own arbitrary trains of thought, and simply form in ourselves mental images, clear pictures of successive events, in like measure will the inner thoughts of the universe work in us and impress themselves upon our astral body, without our knowing it. As, by observation of the processes in the world, we fit ourselves to enter into the world's course, and as we take its scenes and pictures into our thoughts clearly and faithfully in their reality and let them work in us, so do we become ever wiser and wiser in those vehicles and members of our being that are outside our consciousness.

So it is with processes in nature that are inwardly connected. When we are able to let the one picture change into the other just as the change took place in nature, we shall soon perceive, that our thought is gaining a certain flexibility and strength.

That is how we should proceed with things that we do not yet understand. For things that we do understand — events, for example, that take place around us in our daily life — our attitude should be slightly different.

For instance, someone — your neighbour, perhaps — has done something or other. You consider: **Why did he do it? You come to the conclusion: Perhaps he did it in preparation for such and such a thing that he intends to do to-morrow. Very well; do not go on speculating, but try to sketch out a picture of what you think he will do to-morrow. You imagine to yourself: That is what he will do to-morrow; and now you wait and see what he really does. It may be on the following day you will observe that he really does what you imagined. Or it may be that he does something different. You observe what really happens and try to correct your thoughts accordingly.**

Thus we select events in the present which we follow out in thought into the future, and we wait and see what actually happens. We can do this with the actions of men, and with many other things. Where we feel that we understand a thing, we try to form a picture of what, in our opinion, will take place. If it does take place as we expected, our thinking was correct; that is good. If what happens is different from what we expected, then we try to think where we made the mistake. Thus we try to correct our wrong thoughts by quiet observation, by examining where the mistake lay, and why it was that it happened as it did.

If, however, we were right, then we must be careful to avoid the danger of mere self-congratulation and boasting of our prophecy: "Oh yes, I knew that was going to happen, yesterday."

Here again you have a method based on the belief that there is an inner necessity lying in the things and events themselves — that there is something in the facts themselves which drives them forward. The forces working in things, working on from one day to the next, are forces of thought. If we dive down into the things, then we become conscious of these thought-forces. By such exercises we make them present to our consciousness. When what we foresaw is fulfilled, we are

in attunement with them. Then we are in an inner relationship to the real thought-activity of the thing itself.

Thus we accustom ourselves not to think arbitrarily, but to take our thought from the inner necessity, the inner nature of things.

There is yet another direction in which we can train our practice of thought.

An event that happens to-day is also related to things that happened yesterday. For example, a child has been naughty. What can have caused it? You follow the events back to the previous day, you construct the causes which you do not know. You say to yourself: "I fancy that this thing which has happened to-day was led up to by such and such things yesterday or the day before."

You then make inquiries and find out what really happened, and so discover whether your thought was correct. If you have found the real cause, then it is well; but if you have formed a wrong idea of it, then you must try to see the mistake clearly. You consider how your thought-process developed, and how it took place in reality, and compare the one with the other.

It is very important to carry out such principles and methods. We must find time to observe things in this way — as though with our thinking we were in the things themselves. We must dive down into the things, into their inner thought-activity.

If we do so, we shall gradually perceive how we are entering into the very life of things. We no longer have the feeling that the things are outside, and we are here in our shell, thinking about them; but we begin to feel how our thought is living and moving in the things themselves. To a man who has attained this in a high degree, a new world opens up. Such a man was Goethe. He was a thinker who was always in the things with his thoughts. In 1826 the psychologist Heinroth said in his book, Anthropology, that Goethe's was an objective thinking. Goethe was delighted with this description. Heinroth meant that Goethe's thought did not separate itself off from the things or objects; it remained in the objects, it lived and moved in the necessity of things. Goethe's thought was at the same time contemplation; his contemplation, his looking at things, was at the same time thought.

Goethe developed this way of thinking to a high degree. More than once it happened, when he was intending to go out for some purpose or other, that he went to the window and said to whoever happened to be by: "In three hours it will rain" — and so it did. From the little segment of the sky which was visible from his window he could tell what would happen in the weather in the next few hours. His true thought, remaining in the things, enabled him to sense the later events that were already preparing in the preceding ones.

FAR more can be achieved by practical thinking than is generally imagined. We have described certain principles of thought. A man who makes them his own will discover that his thought is really becoming practical. His vision widens, and he grasps the things of the world quite differently than before. Little by little his attitude to things, and also to other human beings, will become different. A real process takes place in him, one that alters his whole conduct of life. It can be of immense importance for a man to try to grow into the things with his thought in this way. In the fullest sense of the word it is a practical undertaking to train our thinking by such exercises.

There is another exercise which is particularly valuable for people who fail to get the right idea at the right moment.

Such people should try, above all, to think not merely in the way suggested by every passing moment. They should not merely give themselves up to what the ordinary course of things brings with it. When a man has half an hour to lie down and rest, it nearly always happens that he simply gives his thoughts free play. They spin out in a thousand different directions. Or perhaps his life is just occupied by some special worry. Suddenly it flies into his consciousness, and he is completely absorbed in it. If a man lets things happen in this way, he will never arrive at the point where the right thing occurs to him at the right moment. If he wants to succeed in this, he must do as follows. When he has half an hour to lie down and rest, he must say to himself: "Now that I have time, I will think about something which I myself will choose — something which I bring into my consciousness by my own will and choice. For example, I will think about something that I experienced at some earlier date — say on a walk two years ago. I will bring it into my thought and think about it for a certain time — say even only for five minutes. All other things — away with them for these five minutes! I myself will choose what I am going to think about."

The choice need not even be as difficult as the one I have just suggested. The point is, not that you try to work upon your processes of thought by difficult exercises to begin with, but that you tear yourself away from all you are involved in by your ordinary life. You must choose something right outside the web of interests into which you are woven by your everyday existence. And if you suffer from lack of inspiration, if nothing else occurs to you at the moment, then you can have recourse, say, to a book. Open it, and think about whatever you happen to read on the first page which catches your eye. Or, you say to yourself: "Now I will think about what I saw at a certain time this morning just as I was going into the office." Only it must be something to which in the ordinary course you would have paid no further attention. It must be something beside the ordinary run of things, something you would otherwise not have thought about at all.

If you carry on such exercises systematically and repeat them again and again, the result will soon be to cure you of your lack of inspiration. You will get the right idea at the right moment. Your thought will become mobile, which is immensely important for a man in practical life.

Another exercise is especially adapted to work on the memory.

First you try to remember some event — say, an event of yesterday — in the crude way in which one generally remembers things. For, as a rule, people have the greyest of grey recollections of things. As a rule you are satisfied if you only remember the name of someone you met yesterday. But if you want to develop your power of memory you must no longer be satisfied with that. You must set to work systematically and say to yourself: "I will now recall the person I saw yesterday, clearly and distinctly. I will recall the surroundings, the particular corner at which I saw him. I will sketch out the picture in detail; I will have an accurate mental image of what he was wearing — his coat, his waistcoat, and so on." Most people, when they try this exercise, will discover that they are quite unable to do it. They will notice how very much is missing from the picture. They are unable to call up a graphic idea of what they actually experienced on the previous day.

In the vast majority of cases it is so; and this is the condition from which we must start. As a matter of fact, people's observation is generally most inaccurate. An experiment which a University Professor made with his class showed that, of thirty people who were present, only two had observed a thing correctly; the other twenty-eight had it wrong. But good memory is the child of

faithful observation. To develop our memory, the important thing is that we should observe accurately. By dint of faithful observation we can acquire a good memory. Through certain inner paths of the soul a true memory is born of a good habit of observation.

Now suppose that, to begin with, you find you are unable to call to mind, exactly, something that you experienced on the previous day. What is the next thing to do? Begin by remembering the thing as accurately as possible; and where your memory fails you, try to fill in the gaps by imagining something which is, probably, incorrect. For instance, if you have absolutely forgotten whether a person you met had on a grey coat or a black one, then imagine him in a grey coat, and say to yourself that he had such and such buttons to his waistcoat, and a yellow tie; and then you fill in the surroundings — a yellow wall, a tall man passing on the left, a short man on the right, and so forth.

Whatever you remember, put it in the picture, and then fill it in arbitrarily with the things you do not remember. Only try to have a complete picture before your mind. The picture will, of course, be incorrect, but by the effort to gain a complete picture you will be stimulated to observe more accurately in the future. Continue doing such exercises — and when you have done them fifty times, then the fifty-first time you will know exactly what the person you met looked like and what he had on. You will remember exactly, to the very waistcoat-buttons. You will no longer overlook anything, but every detail will impress itself upon your mind. By this exercise you will first have sharpened your powers of observation, and in addition you will have gained a truer memory, which is the child of accurate observation.

It is especially valuable to pay attention to this. Do not merely content yourself with remembering the names and the main outlines of things, but try to get mental images as graphic as possible, including the real details; and where your memory fails you, fill in the picture and make it whole. You will soon see — though it seems to come in a roundabout way — that your memory is becoming more faithful.

Clear directions can thus be given, whereby a man can make his thought ever more and more practical.

There is another thing of great importance. Man has a certain craving to reach a definite result when he is considering some line of action. He turns it over in his mind, how should he do the thing, and comes to a definite conclusion. We can well understand this impulse; but it does not lead to a practical way of thinking. Every time we hurry our thought on, we are going backward and not forward. Patience is necessary in these things.

For example: there is something you have to do. It is possible to do it in one way or in another; there may be various possibilities. Now have patience; try to imagine exactly what would happen if you did it in this way, and then try to imagine what would happen if you did it in that way.

Of course, there will always be reasons for preferring the one course of action to the other. But now refrain from making up your mind at once. Try, instead, to sketch out the two possibilities, and then say to yourself: "Now that's done — now I will stop thinking about it."

At this point many people will become fidgety, and that is a difficult thing to overcome. But it is no less valuable to overcome it. Say to yourself: "The thing is possible in this way and in that way, and now for a time I will think no more about it." If the circumstances permit, defer your action to the

next day, and then once more bring the two possibilities before your mind. You will find that in the meantime the things have changed, and that on the following day you are able to decide quite differently — far more thoroughly, at any rate, than you would have done the day before.

There is an inner necessity in the things themselves, and if we do not act impatiently and arbitrarily, but let this inner necessity work in us — and it will work in us — then it will enrich our thought. And our thought, being thus enriched, will appear again the next day and enable us to form a more correct decision. That is immensely valuable.

Or to take another example: someone asks your advice about some point that has to be decided. Do not burst in with your decision straight away, but have the patience to lay the various possibilities before your own mind quietly and to form no conclusion on your own account. Let the different possibilities hold sway. An old proverb says: “Sleep on it before deciding” — but sleeping on it is not enough. It is necessary to think over two or even more possibilities (if there are more than two, so much the better). These possibilities work on in us, when we ourselves, so to speak, are not there with our conscious Ego. Later on, we return to the thing. We shall see that by this means we are calling to life inner forces of thought, and that our thinking grows ever more practical and to the point.

Whatever it is that a man is seeking to find, it is there in the world. Whether he stands at the lathe or behind the plough, or whether he belongs to the so-called privileged classes and professions, if he does these exercises, he will become a practical thinker in the most everyday affairs of life. Practising his thought in this way, he begins to look at the things in the world with a new vision. And though these exercises may at first sight appear ever so inward and remote from external life, it is precisely for external life that they are so useful. They entail the greatest imaginable significance for the external world; they have important consequences.

I will give you an example to show how necessary it is to think about things practically. A man climbed a tree and was doing something or other up above; suddenly he fell down and was dead. The thought that lies nearest at hand is that he was killed by the fall. Most probably, people will say: “The fall was the cause, and his death the result.” Such is the apparent connection between cause and effect. But this conclusion may involve an utter inversion of the facts. For it may be that he had a fatal heart attack, and fell down as a consequence. Exactly the same thing happened as though he had fallen down alive. He went through the same external processes that might really have been the cause of his death. So it is possible to make a complete inversion of cause and effect.

In this example the fault is very evident, but often it is not so striking. Such mistakes in thought occur very frequently. Indeed, it must be said that in modern Science conclusions of this kind are drawn day by day, with a complete reversal of cause and effect. It is only not perceived because people fail to put before them the possibilities of thought.

One more example may be given, to show you as vividly as possible how such mistakes in thought come about, and how they will no longer happen to a man who has done the kind of exercises which have here been indicated.

A learned scientist says to himself that man, as he is to-day, is descended from an ape. That is to say, what I learn to know in the ape — the forces at work in the ape — evolve to greater perfection and so result in the human being. Now in order to indicate the significance of this as thought, let

us make the following supposition. Suppose that by some circumstance the man who will propound this theory be placed on the earth alone. There are no other human beings around him; there are only those apes of which the said theory declares that human beings can originate from them. Let him now make an accurate study of them. Entering into the minutest detail, he forms a conception of what there is in the ape. Albeit he has never seen a man, let him now try to develop the concept of a man out of his concept of an ape. He will see that he cannot. His concept "ape" will never transform into the concept "man."

If he had right habits of thought, he would say to himself: "I see that the concept of an ape will not transform itself within me into the concept of a man. Therefore what I perceive in the ape is also not capable of becoming man, for if it were, the same power of evolution would be latent in the concept. Something more must come in, something that I am unable to perceive." Thus, behind the visible ape, he would have to imagine something invisible and super-sensible — something which he could not perceive, but which alone would make the transformation into man a possible conception.

The impossibility of the whole thing need not here concern us; we only wanted to reveal the faulty thinking which lies behind that theory. If the man's thinking were right, he would be led to the conclusion that he could not think the theory at all without postulating something super-sensible.

If you consider it, you will readily see that in this matter a whole succession of thinkers have committed a grave error. Such errors will no longer be committed by one who trains his thinking in the way here indicated.

A large proportion of modern literature (and particularly of the scientific literature) is positively painful to read, for a man who is able to think rightly. Its crooked, perverted ways of thought are distressing to have to follow. In saying this, we are by no means depreciating the wealth of observation and discovery that has been accumulated by modern Natural Science with its objective methods.

All this has to do with short-sightedness of thought. It is a fact that men seldom know how very little to the point their thinking is, and to what a large extent it is the result of mere habits of thought. And so, one who penetrates the world and life will judge differently from one who lacks this penetration, or who has it only to a very small degree — a materialistic thinker, for example. It is not easy to convince people by grounds and arguments, however good, however genuine. It is often a thankless task to try to convince by grounds and reasoned arguments a man who knows little of life. For he simply does not see the reasons which make this or that statement possible. If, for instance, he has grown used to see nothing but matter in things, he simply adheres to this habit of thought.

As a rule it is not the alleged reasons which lead people to their statements. Beneath and behind the reasons, it is the habits of thought which they have acquired, and which determine their whole way of feeling. While they put forward reasons, they are only masking feelings that are instinctive with thoughts that are habitual. Thus often, not only is the wish father to the thought, but all the feelings and habits and ways of thinking are parents of the thoughts. A man who knows life, knows how little possibility there is of convincing people by logical grounds and arguments. That which decides in the soul is far deeper than the logical reasons.

And so there is good reason for this anthroposophical movement, working on in its different groups and branches. Everyone who works in this movement will presently perceive that he has acquired a new way of thinking and feeling about things. For by our work in the groups we are not only finding the logical reasons for this and that; we are acquiring a wider mental outlook, a deeper and more far-reaching way of feeling.

How, for example, did a man scoff a few years ago, when he heard a lecture on Spiritual Science for the first time! And to-day, perhaps, how many things are clear and transparent to him, which a short time ago he would have considered highly absurd! By working in this anthroposophical movement we not only transform our thoughts; we learn to bring all our life of soul into a wider perspective.

We must understand that the colouring of our thoughts has its origin far deeper than is generally imagined. It is the feelings which frequently impel a man to hold certain opinions. The logical reasons he puts forward are often a mere screen, a mask for his deeper feelings and habits of thought.

To bring ourselves to the point where logical reasons really mean something to us, we must first learn to love the logic in things. Only when we have learned to love what is real and objective, only then will the logical reasons be the decisive thing for us. We gradually learn to think objectively — independently, as it were, of our affections for this thought or that. Then our vision widens and we become practical — not in the sense of those who can only think on along the accustomed lines, but practical in the sense that we learn to draw our thoughts from out of the things themselves.

Practical life is born of objective thinking — that thinking which flows out of the things themselves. It is only by carrying out such exercises that we learn to take our thoughts from the things. And these exercises must be done with sound and healthy things — things that are least perverted by human civilisation — things of Nature.

Practising our thought as here described in connection with the things of Nature, will make us practical thinkers. This is a really practical thing to do. And we shall take hold of the most everyday occupations in a practical way, if once we train this fundamental element in life: our thinking. A practical frame of mind, a practical way of thinking, forms itself, when we exercise the human soul in the way here indicated.

The spiritual-scientific movement must bear fruit: it must place really practical men and women out into the world. It is less important for a man to feel able to accept the truth of this or that teaching. It is more important that he should develop the faculty for seeing things and penetrating things correctly. It is not a matter of theorising away beyond the things visible to the senses, — spinning theories into the spiritual realm. Far more important is the way in which Anthroposophy penetrates our soul, stimulates our activity of soul, widens our vision. It is in this that Anthroposophy is truly practical.

OVERCOMING NERVOUSNESS

A Lecture By

Rudolf Steiner

Munich, January 11, 1912

GA 143

TODAY let us try to add something to what is already familiar to us. What I have to say may be useful to some of you in that it will lead to a more exact idea of the nature of man and his relationship to the cosmos.

Anthroposophists often hear objections to spiritual science from outsiders. Scholars and laymen alike criticize the division of man into the four members of physical body, etheric body, astral body and ego (see [Note 1](#)). These skeptics often say that perhaps one who has developed hidden soul forces may be able to see these things but there is no reason why one who has not should concern himself with such ideas. It should be emphasized, however, that life itself, if one is attentive to it, confirms what spiritual science has to say. Furthermore, the things anthroposophy has to teach can be extremely useful in everyday life. This usefulness, which is not meant to be taken pragmatically, gradually comes to carry conviction even for those who are not particularly inclined to concern themselves with clairvoyant perception.

Now let's consider nervousness. It is well-known today that there are many people who complain of nervousness and all that this implies, and we are hardly surprised when the statement is made that there is none who is not afflicted. Considering present social conditions to which all this nervousness can be attributed, such a statement can be readily understood.

Nervousness becomes manifest in a variety of ways, most obviously perhaps when a person becomes an emotional fidgety-gibbet, that is to say, someone who constantly jumps from one thought to another and is unable to hold a single thought in his head, let alone carry it through to a conclusion. Such constant scurrying in the inner life is the most common form of nervousness. Another is one in which people do not know what to do with themselves and are unable to make anything of themselves. When called upon to make a decision in a given situation, they are at a loss for an answer. This condition can lead to more serious symptoms that may finally be expressed in various forms of disease that simulate organic illnesses in a most deceptive way. Gastric disturbances are an example. Many other conditions might be mentioned, but who in our time does not know of them? We need only mention the "political alcoholism" that has pervaded the important events of public life. This expression was coined because of the way political affairs in Europe have been conducted during recent months. There has been no little talk about it since people began to notice how unpleasantly the prevailing nervousness is making itself felt.

If people remain as they are, we need not doubt but that there will be no improvement in the near future. The prospects of change are by no means hopeful. There are many harmful factors strongly influencing our lives that pass like an epidemic from person to person and thus those who are weak also become infected.

It is extremely harmful for our time that many of the men who hold high and responsible positions in public life have had to study as one does today. There are whole branches of learning that are taught in such a way that throughout the entire school year the student will be unable to spend his time and energy really thinking through what he has heard from his professors. As a result, when he is faced with an exam, he is forced to cram for it. This cramming, however, is dreadful because

it provides no real connection of interest of the soul with the subject matter that the student is to be examined in. No wonder the prevailing opinion of the student often is one of wanting to forget as soon as possible what he has just had to learn!

What are the consequences of these educational methods? In some respects, men are no doubt receiving the training needed to take part in public life. But, as a result of their schooling, they are not inwardly united with their work. They feel remote from it. Now there is nothing worse than to feel remote in your heart from the things you have to do with your head. It is not only repugnant to sensitive people, but it also acts most adversely on the strength of the etheric body. Thus, because of the tenuous interest that may exist in the core of a person's soul for his professional pursuits, his etheric body is gradually weakened. Precisely the opposite effects are obtained, however, when anthroposophy is taken up in a healthy way. A man will not merely learn that he consists of physical body, etheric body, astral body and ego. He will also come to behave in such a way that these members unfold strongly and harmoniously in him.

Often in anthroposophy, even a simple experiment repeated with diligence can work wonders. Let me speak in detail, for example, of forgetfulness, so common and such a nuisance, but also so significant in our lives. Strange as it may seem, anthroposophy shows it to be harmful to health, and that many upsets bordering on severe illness can be avoided if people would only be less forgetful. And who can claim to be exempt, since there is no one who is not forgetful to some degree. Just consider the numerous cases in which people can never find where they put things. One has lost his pencil, another cannot find his cufflinks, etc., etc., all of which seems trivial but such things do, after all, occur often enough in life.

There is a good exercise for gradually curing such forgetfulness. Suppose, for example, a lady is forever putting her brooch down when she takes it off in the evening, and then cannot find it in the morning. You might think the best cure for her forgetfulness would be to remember to put it always in the same place. There is, however, a far more effective means of remembering where it is. This does not, of course, apply to all objects but in this case the lady should say to herself, "I will put my brooch in a different place each evening, but as I do so I will hold the thought in mind that I have put it in a particular spot. Then I will form a clear picture in my mind of all the surroundings. Having done this, I will go quietly away. I realize that if I only do this once, I probably will not succeed, but if I make a habit of it, I will find that my forgetfulness gradually disappears."

This exercise is based on the fact that the person's ego is brought consciously into connection with the deed he does, and also that he forms a picture of it. Connecting the ego, that is, the spiritual kernel of man's being, in this way with a pictorial image, sharpens memory. Such an exercise can be quite useful in helping us to become less forgetful.

Further results can also be attained from such an exercise. When it becomes habit to hold such thoughts when things are put aside, it represents a strengthening of the etheric body, which, as we know, is the bearer of memory. But now assume you have advised someone to do this exercise not because he is forgetful but because he is nervous. It will prove to be an excellent cure. His etheric body will be strengthened and the nervous tendencies will disappear. In such cases, life itself demonstrates that what spiritual science teaches is correct.

Here is another example that may also appear trivial on the surface. You know that the physical and etheric bodies are intimately connected. Now anyone with a healthy soul will be moved to compassion for clerical workers and others whose professions demand a great deal of writing.

Perhaps you have noticed the strange movements they make in the air whenever they are about to write. Actually, with some of them the movements are not so extreme and they may only give a kind of jerk when they write, a jerk repeated for every up and down stroke. You can see the jerking in the writing. This condition is easily understood through spiritual science. In a healthy human being the etheric body, guided by the astral body, is always able to permeate the physical body. Thus, the physical body is normally the servant of the etheric body. When, undirected by the astral body, the physical body executes movements on its own, it is symptomatic of an unhealthy condition. These jerks represent the subordination of the etheric to the physical body, and denote that the weak etheric body is no longer fully able to direct the physical. Such a relationship between the physical and etheric bodies lies at the occult foundation of every form of cramp or convulsion. Here the physical body has become dominant and makes movements on its own, whereas in a healthy man all his movements are subordinated to the will of the astral body working through the etheric.

Again, there is a way of helping a person with such symptoms, provided the condition has not progressed too far, if one takes into account the occult facts. In this case we must recognize the existence and efficacy of the etheric body and try to strengthen it. Imagine someone so dissipated that his fingers get to shaking and jerking when he tries to write. You certainly would do well to advise him to write less and take a good vacation, but better still you might also recommend that he try to acquire a different handwriting. Tell him to stop writing automatically and try practicing for fifteen minutes a day to pay attention to the way he forms the letters he writes. Tell him to try to shape his handwriting differently and to cultivate the habit of drawing the letters. The point here is that when a man consciously changes his handwriting, he is obliged to pay attention to, and to bring the innermost core of his being into connection with what he is doing. The etheric body is strengthened in this way and the person is made healthier.

It would not be a bad idea to introduce such exercises systematically into the classroom to strengthen the etheric body even in childhood. But, even though anthroposophy can give such pedagogical advice, it will doubtless be a long time before leading educators will consider it anything but foolish. Nevertheless, suppose that children were first taught to write a particular style of penmanship and after a few years were expected to acquire an entirely different character in their handwriting. The change, and the conscious attention it would involve, would result in a remarkable strengthening of the etheric body.

So you see, something can be done to strengthen the etheric body. This is of immense importance because in our time weakness of the etheric body leads to many unhealthy conditions. What has been indicated here represents a definite way of working upon the etheric body. When these exercises are practiced, an actual force is applied to the etheric body that certainly could not be applied if the existence of this body were denied. Surely, however, the effects of the force, when they become apparent, demonstrate the existence of the etheric body.

The etheric body can be strengthened by performing another exercise, in this case, for the improvement of memory. By thinking through events, not only in the way they occurred but also in reverse sequence, that is, by starting at the end of an event and pursuing it through to the beginning, will help to make the etheric body stronger. Historical events, for example, which are usually learned in chronological sequence, can be followed backwards. Or a play or story can be thought through in reverse from end to beginning. Such exercises when done thoroughly are highly effective in consolidating and strengthening the etheric body.

When you come to think of it, it soon becomes apparent that people do not do the things that would contribute to the strengthening of the etheric body. The restless daily bustle of modern life does not allow them the opportunity to come to that inner quiet required for such exercises, and in the evening after the day's work they are generally too tired to be bothered. Should spiritual science begin to penetrate their souls, however, people would soon see how many things done in the bustle of modern life could be dispensed with, and they would find the time to practice such exercises. They also would become aware of the positive results that could be achieved if such exercises were carefully applied in education.

Another little exercise may be mentioned here. If it has not been cultivated from early youth, it is, perhaps, not quite so useful in later life. Nevertheless, it is still a good exercise to practice in later years. With certain things we do, no matter whether or not they are of enduring importance, it is good practice to look carefully at what is being done. This is comparatively easy in writing and I am quite sure many people would soon correct their hideous handwriting if they really looked at the letters.

In still another exercise a person should endeavor to watch himself the way he walks, moves his head, laughs, etc. In short, he should try to form a clear picture of his movements and gestures. Few people actually know what they look like when they are walking, for instance. While it is good to make this experiment, it should not be prolonged because it would quickly lead to vanity. Quite apart from the fact that it can be corrective of undesirable habits, this exercise also tends to consolidate the etheric body. When a man cultivates an awareness of his gestures and involuntary actions, the control of the astral becomes increasingly stronger over the etheric. Thus, he also becomes able, if necessary, to suppress certain actions or movements out of his free will.

It is an excellent accomplishment to be able to do quite differently the things we do out of habit. Nowadays, people only alter their handwriting for unlawful purposes, but I am not advocating a school of forgery when I suggest that if one changes one's handwriting honestly, it will help to consolidate one's etheric body. The point is that it is good to be able to do quite differently on occasion the things we do habitually. This does not mean that we need become fanatical about the indifferent use of our right and left hands. If a man, however, is occasionally able to do with his left hand what he commonly does with the right, he will strengthen the control of his astral over his etheric body.

The cultivation of the will, as we may call it, is most important. I have already mentioned how nervousness often makes it impossible for people to know what they should do. They do not know their desires, or even what they should desire. This may be regarded as a weakness of the will that is due to an insufficient control of the ego over the astral body. Some people do not know what they want and, if they do, they never manage to carry it out. Others, still, cannot bring themselves to will firmly what they should.

The way to strengthen one's will is not necessarily to carry out something one wishes, provided, of course, it will do no harm to leave the wish unfulfilled. Just examine your life and you will find countless desires it would no doubt be nice to satisfy, but equally possible to leave unsatisfied. Fulfillment of them would give you pleasure, but you can quite well do without. If you set out to examine yourself systematically in this way, every restraint will signify additional strength of the will, that is, strength of the ego over the astral body. If we subject ourselves to this procedure in later life, it becomes possible to make good much that has been neglected in our earlier education.

Let me emphasize that it is not easy to apply what has just been described in the education of the child. If a father, for example, denies a wish of his son that he could fulfill, he is apt to awaken the boy's antipathy. Since it is thus possible to arouse antipathy, you might say that the non- fulfillment of wishes in education is a doubtfully correct principle. What, then, is to be done? The answer is for the person guiding the child or pupil to deny himself the wishes in such a way that the child becomes aware of the denial. There is a strong imitative impulse at work here in the child, especially during the first seven years, and it will soon become evident that he will follow the example of his elders and also deny himself wishes. What is hereby achieved is of untold importance. When, through our interest in anthroposophy, our thoughts are directed in the right way, we come to know spiritual science not only as theory but as a wisdom of life that sustains and carries us forward.

A most important means of strengthening the control of the ego over the astral body was presented here in two recent lectures. In them I discussed the importance of being flexible enough to consider what is said not only for, but also against, an issue to be able, as it were, to see both sides of a problem. Generally, people see only one side, but there is really no problem in life that should be treated this way. Pros and cons are never lacking. We would do well to acquire the habit of always adducing the pros as well as the cons in a case. Being what they are, human vanity and egoism usually favor what one wants to do. Therefore, it is also good to list the reasons against. The fact is that man would so much like to be "good" that he is often convinced he will be if he does the things there are so many reasons in favor of doing, and disregards the things there are so many reasons against. It is an uncomfortable fact to have to realize, but there are always many possible objections to practically everything we do. People are not nearly as good as they think. That is a universal truth, a truism, but it can become an effective truth when it is made a practice in everything that is done to consider also what might be left undone.

The results to be attained by these means can be clarified by an example. No doubt you have met people so weak-willed that they would rather let others take care of their affairs. They would rather sit around asking themselves what they should do than find reasons in themselves to act. What I am now going to say must also be conceived as having many cons as well as pros. Assume that one of these weak-willed people is confronted by two others. One of them says, "Do this." The other says, "Don't." The one whose will exerts the stronger influence on the weak-willed person will be the victor. This is a most significant phenomenon because the decision of "yes" or "no" made by the weak-willed person will have been brought about by the adviser whose strength of will was the greater.

In contrast, however, suppose that I stand alone and quite independently face in my own heart the necessity of making a "yes" or "no" decision. Then, having answered "yes," suppose I go forth and do what must be done. This "yes" will have released a strong force within me. When you thus place yourself in consciousness before a choice of alternatives, you allow strength to prevail over weakness simply from the manner in which your decision is made. This is important because in this way the control of the ego over the astral body is greatly strengthened. Try to carry out what I have just described and you will find it will do much to strengthen your will.

This problem, however, also has its darker side. You will not strengthen but only weaken your will if, instead of acting under the influence of what speaks for one course as opposed to another, you were out of slackness to do nothing. Seemingly you will have followed the "no" direction, but in reality you will have been merely lax and easy going. If you feel limp and weary, it would be better not to attempt to make a choice until you are inwardly strong and know that you can really follow

through with the eventual pros and cons you place before your soul. It is obvious that such things must be brought before the soul at the right time.

The control of the ego over the astral body is also strengthened when we witness from our souls everything that creates a barrier between us and the surrounding world. The anthroposophist, however, should not feel that he should repress justified criticism if it is objective. On the contrary, it would represent a weakness

to advocate the bad in place of the good, and one need not do this. But we must be able to distinguish something that is to be criticized objectively from something that we find exasperating simply because of its effect on ourselves. The more we make ourselves independent of what confronts us, the better. Thus it is good to practice self-denial in not considering bad in our fellow-men the things we consider bad only because they are bad for us. In other words, we should not apply our judgment only where we ourselves are not involved. This is really difficult to apply in life. When a man has lied to you, for instance, it is not easy to restrain your antipathy, but having caught him in it you should not immediately jump to conclusions. There is another way. We can observe from day to day how he acts and speaks and let this, rather than what he has done to us, form a basis for our judgment. Then you are taking into consideration what there is in the man himself and are not basing your judgment on the effect his conduct has made on you. Your personal relationship with him should be disregarded in order that you may view him quite objectively.

It is advisable for the strengthening of the ego to reflect on the fact that in all cases we might well refrain from a considerable portion of the judgments we pronounce. It would be more than enough if but a tenth of them were experienced in our souls. Our lives would by no means be impoverished thereby.

These may seem like small details I have given here, but it must also be our task now and again to consider such problems. Then, in order to lead purposeful, healthy lives, we see how differently life must be grasped than is ordinarily the case. It is not always right to send to the drug store for medicine when a man is ill. What is important is to order life in such a way that people become less susceptible to illnesses and that they have a less oppressive effect. They will become less oppressive when we strengthen the influence of the ego over the astral body, the astral body over the etheric, and the etheric body over the physical. Self-education and an influence upon the education of children can follow from our fundamental anthroposophical convictions.

Facing Karma

A Lecture By

Rudolf Steiner

Vienna, February 8, 1912

GA 130

At the end of the two public lectures I have given in this city, I emphasized that anthroposophy should not be considered a theory or mere science, nor as knowledge in the ordinary sense. It is rather something that grows in our souls from mere knowledge and theory into immediate life, into an elixir of life. In this way, anthroposophy not only provides us with knowledge, but we receive forces that help us in our ordinary lives during physical existence as well as in the total life that we spend during physical existence and the non-physical existence between death and a new birth. The more we experience anthroposophy as bringing to us strength, support and life renewing energies, the more do we understand it.

Upon hearing this, some may ask, "If anthroposophy is to bring us a strengthening of life, why do we have to acquire so much of what appears to be theoretical knowledge? Why are we virtually pestered at our branch meetings with descriptions about the preceding planetary evolutions of our earth? Why do we have to learn about things that took place long ago? Why do we have to acquaint ourselves with the intimate and subtle laws of reincarnation, karma and so on?"

Some people may believe that they are being offered just another science. This problem, which forces itself upon us, demands that we eliminate all easy and simplistic approaches toward answering it. We must carefully ask ourselves whether, in raising this question, we are not introducing into it some of the easy-going ways of life that become manifest when we are reluctant to learn and to acquire something in a spiritual way. This is an uncomfortable experience for us and we are forced to wonder whether something of this attitude of discomfort does not find expression in the question that is being asked. As it is, we are led to believe that the highest goal that anthroposophy may offer us can be attained on easier roads than on that taken by us through our own literature.

It is often said, almost nonchalantly, that man has only to know himself, that all he has to do in order to be an anthroposophist is to be good. Yes, it is profound wisdom to know that to be a good person is one of the most difficult tasks, and that nothing in life demands more in the way of preparation than the realization of this ideal to be good. The problem of self-knowledge, however, cannot be solved with a quick answer, as many are inclined to believe. Therefore, today, we will shed light on some of these questions that have been raised. We then will come to see how anthroposophy meets us, even if only by appearance, as a teaching or as a science, but that it also offers in an eminent sense a path toward self-knowledge and what may be called the pilgrimage toward becoming a good person. To accomplish this we must consider from different points of view how anthroposophy can be fruitful in life.

Let us take a specific question that does not concern scientific research, but everyday life — a question known to all of us. How can we find comfort in life when we have to suffer in one way or another, when we fail to find satisfaction in life? In other words, let us ask ourselves how anthroposophy can offer comfort and consolation when it is really needed. Obviously, what can be said here only in general terms must always be applied to one's own individual case. If one lectures to many people, one can only speak in generalities.

Why do we need comfort, consolation in life? Because we may be sad about a number of events, or because we suffer as a result of pains that afflict us. It is natural that, at first, man reacts to pain as though he is rebelling inwardly against it. He wonders why he has to stand pain. "Why am I afflicted by this pain? Why is life not arranged for me in such a way that I don't suffer pain, that I am content?" These questions can only be answered satisfactorily on the basis of true knowledge concerning the nature of human karma, of human destiny. Why do we suffer in the world? We refer here to outer as well as to inner sufferings that arise in our psychic organization and leave us unfulfilled. Why are we met by such experiences that leave us unsatisfied?

In pursuing the laws of karma, we shall discover that the underlying reasons for suffering are similar to what can be described by the following example relating to the ordinary life between birth and death. Let us assume that a youngster has lived until his eighteenth year at the expense of his father. Then the father loses all his wealth and goes into bankruptcy. The young man must now learn something worthwhile and make an effort to support himself. As a result, life hits him with pain and privation. It is quite understandable that he does not react sympathetically to the pain that he has to go through.

Let us now turn to the period when he has reached the age of fifty. Since, by the necessity of events, he had to educate himself at an early age, he has become a decent person. He has found a real foothold in life. He realizes why he reacted negatively to pain and suffering when it first hit him, but now he must think differently about it. He must say to himself that the suffering would not have come to him if he had already acquired a sense of maturity — at least, to the limited degree than an eighteen year old can attain one. If he had not been afflicted by pain, he would have remained a good-for-nothing. It was the pain that transformed his shortcomings into positive abilities. He must owe it to the pain that he has become a different man in the course of forty years. What was really brought together at that time? His shortcomings and his pain were brought together. His shortcomings actually sought pain in order that his immaturity might be removed by being transformed into maturity.

Even a simple consideration of life between birth and death can lead to this view. If we look at the totality of life, however, and if we face our karma as it has been explained in the lecture two days ago, we will come to the conclusion that all pain that hits us, that all suffering that comes our way, are of such a nature that they are being sought by our shortcomings. By far the greater part of our pain and suffering is sought by imperfections that we have brought over from previous incarnations. Since we have these imperfections within ourselves, there is a wiser man in us than we ourselves are who chooses the road to pain and suffering. It is, indeed, one of the golden rules of life that we all carry in us a wiser man than we ourselves are, a much wiser man. The one to whom we say, "I," in ordinary life is less wise. If it was left to this less wise person in us to make a choice between pain and joy, he would undoubtedly choose the road toward joy. But the wiser man is the one who reigns in the depth of our unconscious and who remains inaccessible to ordinary consciousness. He directs our gaze away from easy enjoyment and kindles in us a magic power that seeks the road of pain without our really knowing it. But what is meant by the words: Without really knowing it? They mean that the wiser man in us prevails over the less wise one. He always acts in such a way that our shortcomings are guided to our pains and he makes us suffer because with every inner and outer suffering we eliminate one of our faults and become transformed into something better.

Little is accomplished if one tries to understand these words theoretically. Much more can be gained when one creates sacred moments in life during which one is willing to use all one's

energy in an effort to fill one's soul with the living content of such words. Ordinary life, with all its work, pressure, commotion and duties provides little chance to do so. In this setting, it is not always possible to silence the less wise man in us. But when we create a sacred moment in life, short as it may be, then we can say, "I will put aside the transitory effects of life; I will view my sufferings in such a way that I feel how the wise man in me has been attracted by them with a magic power. I realize that I have imposed upon myself certain experiences of pain without which I would not have overcome some of my shortcomings." A feeling of blissful wisdom will overcome us that makes us feel that even if the world appears to be filled with suffering, it is, nevertheless, radiating pure wisdom. Such an attitude is one of the fruits of anthroposophy for the benefit of life. What has been said may, of course, be forgotten, but if we do not forget it, but practice such thoughts regularly, we will become aware of the fact that we have planted a seed in our soul. What we used to experience as feelings of sadness and attitudes of depression will be transformed into positive attitudes toward life, into strength and energy. Out of these sacred moments in life will be born more harmonious souls and stronger personalities.

We may now move on to another step in our experience. The anthroposophist should be determined to take this other step only after he has comforted himself many times with regard to his sufferings in the way just described. The experience that may now be added consists of looking at one's joys and at everything that has occurred in life in the way of happiness. He who can face destiny without bias and as though he had himself wanted his sufferings, will find himself confronted by a strange reaction when he looks at his joy and happiness. He cannot face them in the same way that he faced his sufferings. It is easy to see how one can find comfort in suffering. He who does not believe this only has to expose himself to the experience.

It is difficult, however, to come to terms with joy and happiness. Much as we may accept the attitude that we have wanted our suffering, when we apply the same attitude to joy and happiness, we cannot but feel ashamed of ourselves. A deep feeling of shame will be experienced. The only way to overcome this feeling is to realize that we were not the ones who gave ourselves our joys and happiness through the law of karma. This is the only cure as, otherwise, the feeling of shame can become so intense that it virtually destroys us in our souls. Relief can only be found by not making the wiser man in us responsible for having driven us toward our joys. With this thought, one will feel that one hits the truth, because the feeling of shame will disappear. It is a fact that our joy and happiness come to us in life as something that is bestowed upon us, without our participation, by a wise divine guidance, as something we must accept as grace, as something that is to unite us with the universe. Happiness and joy shall have such an effect upon us in the sacred moments in our lives and in our intimate hours of introspection that we shall experience them as grace, as grace from the divine powers of the world who want to receive us and who, as it were, embed us in their being.

While our pain and suffering lead us to ourselves and make us more genuinely ourselves, we develop through joy and happiness, provided that we consider them as grace, a feeling that one can only describe as being blissfully embedded in the divine forces and powers of the world. Here the only justified attitude toward happiness and joy is one of gratitude. Nobody will understand joy and happiness in the intimate hours of self-knowledge when he ascribes them to his karma. If he involves karma, he commits an error that is liable to weaken and paralyze the spiritual in him. Every thought to the effect that joy and happiness are deserved actually weakens and paralyzes us. This may be a hard fact to understand because everyone who admits that his pain is inflicted upon himself by his own individuality would obviously expect to be his own master also with regard to joy and happiness. But a simple look at life can teach us that joy and happiness have an

extinguishing power. Nowhere is this extinguishing effect of joy and happiness better described than in Goethe's *Faust* in the words, "And thus I stagger from desire to pleasure. And in pleasure I am parched with desire." Simple reflection upon the influence of personal enjoyment shows that inherent in it is something that makes us stagger and blots out our true being.

No sermon is here being delivered against enjoyment, nor is an invitation extended to practice self-torture, or to pinch ourselves with red hot pliers, or the like. If one recognizes a situation in the right way, it does not mean that one should escape from it. No escape, therefore, is suggested, but a silent acceptance of joy and happiness whenever they appear. We must develop the inner attitude that we experience them as grace, and the more the better. Thus do we immerse ourselves the more in the divine. Therefore, these words are said not in order to preach asceticism, but in order to awaken the right mood toward joy and happiness.

If it is thought that joy and happiness have a paralyzing and extinguishing effect, and that therefore man should flee from them, then one would promote the ideal of false asceticism and self-torture. In this event, man, in reality, would be escaping from the grace that is given to him by the gods. Self-torture practiced by ascetics, monks and nuns is nothing but a continuous rebellion against the gods. It behooves us to feel pain as something that comes to us through our karma. In joy and happiness, we can feel that the divine is descending to us.

May joy and happiness be for us a sign as to how close the gods have attracted us, and may our pain and suffering be a sign as to how far removed we are from what we are to become as good human beings. This is the fundamental attitude toward karma without which we cannot really move ahead in life. In what the world bestows upon us as goodness and beauty, we must conceive the world powers of which it is said in the Bible, "And he looked at the world and he saw that it was good." But inasmuch as we experience pain and suffering, we must recognize what man has made of the world during its evolution, which originally was a good world, and what he must contribute toward its betterment by educating himself to bear pain with purpose and energy.

What has now been described are two ways to confront karma. To a certain extent, our karma consists of suffering and joys. We relate ourselves to our karma with the right attitude when we can consider it as something we really wanted and when we can confront our sufferings and joys with the proper understanding. But a review of karma can be extended further, which we shall do today and tomorrow.

Karma not only shows us what is related to our lives in a joyful and painful manner. But as the result of the working of karma, we meet many people during the course of our lives with whom we only become slightly acquainted, and people with whom we are connected in various ways during long periods of our lives as relatives and friends. We meet people who either cause us pain directly, or as a result of some joint undertaking that runs into obstructions. We meet people who are helpful, or to whom we can be helpful. In short, many relationships are possible. If the effects of karma, as described the day before yesterday, are to become fruitful, then we must accept the fact that the wiser man in us wants certain experiences. He seeks a person who seems accidentally to cross our paths. He is the one who leads us to other people with whom we get engaged in this or that way. What is really guiding this wiser man in us when he wants to meet this or that person? What is he basing himself on? In answer, we have to say to ourselves that we want to meet him because we have met him previously. It may not have happened in the last life; it could have happened much earlier. The wiser man in us leads us to this person because we had dealings with

him in a previous life, or because we may have incurred a debt in one way or another. We are led to this person as though by magic.

We are now reaching a manifold and intricate realm that can be covered only by generalities. The indications here stem from clairvoyant investigation. They can be useful to anybody since they can be applied to many special situations.

A strange observation can be made. We all have experienced or observed how, toward the middle of our lives, the ascending growth-line gradually tilts over to become a descending line, and our youthful energies begin to decline. We move past a climax and from there on we move downward. This point of change is somewhere in our thirties. It is also the time in our lives when we are living most intensively on the physical plane. In this connection, we can fall prey to a delusion. The events that from childhood precede this climax were brought with us into this incarnation. They were, so to speak, drawn out of a previous existence. The forces that we have brought along with us from the spiritual world are now placed outside ourselves and used to fashion our lives. These forces are used up when we reach this middle point.

In considering the descending curve of our lives, we perceive the lessons that we have learned in the school of life, that we have accumulated and have worked over. They will be taken along into the next incarnation. This is something we carry into the spiritual world; previously, we took something out of it. This is the time when we are fully engaged on the physical plane. We are thoroughly enmeshed with everything that comes to us from the outside world. We have passed our training period; we are fully committed to life and we have to come to terms with it. We are involved with ourselves, but we are primarily occupied with arranging our environments for ourselves, and in finding a proper relationship to the world in which we live. The human capacities that are seeking a relationship to the world are our power of reasoning and that part of our volitional life that is controlled by reason. What is thus active in us is alien to the spiritual world, which withdraws from us and closes up. It is true that in the middle of our lives we are the farthest removed from the reality of the spirit.

Here occult investigation reveals a significant fact. The people with whom we meet, and the acquaintances we make in the middle period of our lives are curiously enough the very people with whom we were engaged during the period of early childhood in one of our previous incarnations. It is an established fact that, as a general rule, although not always, we meet in the middle period of our lives, as a result of karmic guidance, the very people who were once our parents. It is unlikely that we meet in early childhood the persons who were once our parents. This happens during the middle of life. This may appear as a strange fact, but this is the way it is. When we attempt to apply such rules to the experience of life, and when we direct our thoughts accordingly, then we can learn a great deal. When a person at about the age of thirty establishes a relationship to another, either through the bonds of love or of friendship, or when they get involved in conflict, or in any other experience, we will understand a great deal more about these relationships if we consider hypothetically that the person may have once been related to the other as a child is to his parents.

In reversing this relationship, we discover another remarkable fact. The very people with whom we have been associated in our early childhood, such as parents, sisters and brothers, playmates and other companions, as a rule are the very people whom we have met in the previous or one of our previous incarnations around our thirtieth year. These people frequently appear as our parents, sisters or brothers in the present incarnation.

Curious as this may appear to us at first, let us try to apply it to life. The experience of life becomes enlightened if we look at it in this way. We may, of course, err in our speculation. But if, in solitary hours, we look at life so that it is filled with meaning, we can gain a great deal. Obviously, we must not arrange karma to our liking; we must not choose the people we like and assume that they may have been our parents. Prejudices must not falsify the real facts. You realize the danger that we are exposed to and the many misconceptions that may creep in. We must educate ourselves to remain open-minded and unbiased.

You may now ask what the relation is to the people we meet during the declining curve of our lives. We have discovered that at the beginning of our lives, we meet people with whom we were acquainted during the middle period of a previous life, while now during the middle of our lives, we recognize those with whom we were involved at the beginning of previous existences. But how about the period of our descending life? The answer is that we may be led to people with whom we were involved in a previous life, or we may not yet have been involved with them. They will have been connected with us in a previous life if we are meeting under special circumstances that occur at decisive junctures of a life span, when, for example, a bitter disappointment confronts us with a serious probation. In such a situation, it is likely that we are meeting during the second period of our lives people with whom we were previously connected. Thereby conditions are dislodged and experiences that were caused in the past can be resolved.

Karma works in many ways and one cannot force it into definite patterns. But as a general rule, it can be stated that during the second half of our lives we encounter people with whom the karmic connections that are beginning to be woven cannot be resolved in one life. Let us assume that we have caused suffering to someone in a previous life. It is easy to assume that the wiser man in us will lead us back to this person in a subsequent life in order that we may equalize the harm that we have done. But life conditions cannot always permit that we can equalize everything, but perhaps only a part of it. Thereby matters are complicated, and it becomes possible that such a remainder of karma may be corrected in the second half of life. Looking at it this way, we are placing our connections and communications with other people in the light of this karma.

But there is something else that we can consider in the course of karma. This is what I have called in my two recent public lectures the process of maturing and the acquisition of life experiences. These terms may be used with utter modesty. We may take into account the process by which we become wiser. Our errors may render us wiser and it is really best for us when this happens because during one lifetime we do not often have the opportunity to practice wisdom. For this reason, we retain the lessons that we have learned from our errors as strength for a future life. But what really is this wisdom and the life experience that we can acquire?

Yesterday I referred to the fact that our ideas cannot be taken immediately from one life to another. I pointed to the fact that even a genius like Plato could not carry the ideas of his mind into a new incarnation. We carry with us our volitional and soul powers, but our ideas are given us anew in every life, just as is the faculty of speech. The greater part of our ideas live in speech. Most of our ideas are derived from our faculty to express ourselves in a language. The ideas we conceive during the time between birth and death are always related to this particular earthly existence. This being so, it is true that our ideas will always depend on the where and how of our incarnations, no matter how many we have to live through. Our wealth of ideas is always derived from the outer world, and depends on the way karma has placed us into race, family and speech relationships.

In our ideas and concepts we really know nothing of the world except what is dependent on karma. A great deal is said with this statement. This means that everything we can know in life and

acquire in the form of knowledge is something quite personal. We never can transcend the personal level with regard to everything we may acquire in life. We never come quite as far as the wiser man in us, but we always remain with the less wise man. If someone believes that he can, by himself, know more about his higher self from observations in the outer world, he is being led by his laziness into an unreal world. Thereby we are saying nothing less than that we know nothing of our higher self as a result of what we acquire in life.

How can we gain an understanding of our higher self; how do we come to such knowledge? To find an answer, we must ask ourselves the simple question, "What do we really know?" First of all, we know what we have learned from experience. We know this and nothing else. Anyone who wants to know himself and does not realize that he carries in his soul nothing but a mirror of the outer world may delude himself into believing that he can find his higher self by introspection. What he finds within, however, is nothing else than what has come in from outside. Laziness of thinking has no place in this quest. So we must inquire about the other worlds into which our higher self is embedded, and thereby we learn about the various incarnations of the earth and the world picture described by spiritual science.

Just as we try to understand a child's soul with regard to its outer life conditions by examining the child's surroundings, so must we ask what the environment of the higher self is. Spiritual science gives us insight into the worlds in which our higher self lives by its accounts of the evolution of Saturn and all its secrets, of the Moon and Earth evolution, of reincarnation and karma, of devachan and kamaloka, and so on. This is the only way we can learn about our higher self, about that self that extends beyond the physical plane. He who refuses to accept these secrets is as playful as a little kitten in regard to himself. It is not by petting and caressing oneself that one can discover the divine man in oneself. Only what is experienced in the outer world is stored inside, but the divine man in us can only be found when we search in our soul for the mirrored world beyond the physical.

The very things that are uncomfortable to learn make up knowledge of self. In reality, true anthroposophy is true knowledge of self. Properly received, the science of the spirit enlightens us about our own self. Where is this self? Is it within our skin? No, it is poured into the entire world, and what is in the world is linked to the self; also, what once was in the world is connected with this self. Only if we get to know the world can we also get to know the self.

Anthroposophical knowledge, although it may appear first as mere theory, points to nothing less than a path to self-knowledge. He who wants to find himself by staring into his inner being may be motivated by the noble desire to be good and unselfish. But in reality, he becomes more and more selfish. In contrast to this, the struggle with the great secrets of existence, the attempt to emancipate oneself from the complacent personal self, the acceptance of the reality of the higher worlds and the knowledge that can be obtained from them, all lead to true self-knowledge.

While contemplating Saturn, Sun and Moon, we lose ourselves in cosmic thoughts. Thus, a soul thinking in anthroposophy exclaims, "In thy thinking cosmic thoughts are living." He then adds to these words, "Lose thyself in cosmic thoughts."

A soul creating out of anthroposophy says, "In thy feeling cosmic forces are weaving," and adds in the same breath, "Feel thyself through cosmic forces." These universal powers will not reveal themselves when we expect them to be flattering or when we close our eyes and pledge to be a good human being. Only when we open our spiritual eye and perceive how "cosmic forces" work

and create, and when we realize that we are embedded in these forces, will we have an experience of our own self.

Thus, a soul that draws strength from anthroposophy will say, "In thy willing cosmic beings are working," and he will quickly add, "Create thyself through beings of will."

The meaning of these words can be realized if self-knowledge is practiced in the right way. If this is done, one recreates oneself out of the cosmic forces.

These thoughts may appear to be dry and abstract, but they are not mere theory. They have the inherent power of a seed planted in the earth. It sprouts and grows; life shoots in all directions and the plant becomes a tree. Thus it is with the experiences we receive through the science of the spirit that we become capable of transforming ourselves. "Create thyself through beings of will." Thus, anthroposophy becomes an elixir of life. Our view of spirit worlds opens up, we draw strength from these worlds and once we can fully absorb them, they will help us to know ourselves in all our depth. Only when we imbue ourselves with world knowledge can we take hold of ourselves and gradually move from the less wise man in us, who is split off by the guardian of the threshold, to the wise man in us. This, which remains hidden to the weak, can be gained by the strong through anthroposophy.

In thy thinking cosmic thoughts are living;
Lose thyself in cosmic thoughts.
In thy feeling cosmic forces are weaving;
Feel thyself through cosmic forces.
In thy willing cosmic beings are working;
Create thyself through beings of will.

The Four Temperaments

A Lecture By Rudolf Steiner

It has frequently been emphasized that man's greatest riddle is himself. Both natural and spiritual science ultimately try to solve this riddle — the former by understanding the natural laws that govern our outer being, the latter by seeking the essence and purpose inherent in our existence. Now as correct as it may be that man's greatest riddle is himself, it must also be emphasized that each individual human being is a riddle, often even to himself. Every one of us experiences this in encounters with other people.

Today we shall be dealing not with general riddles, but rather with those posed to us by every human being in every encounter, and these are just as important. For how endlessly varied people are! We need only consider temperament, the subject of today's lecture, in order to realize that there are as many riddles as there are people. Even within the basic types known as the temperaments, such variety exists among people that the very mystery of existence seems to express itself within these types. Temperament, that fundamental coloring of the human personality, plays a role in all manifestations of individuality that are of concern to practical life. We sense something of this basic mood whenever we encounter another human being. Thus we can only hope that spiritual science will tell us what we need to know about the temperaments.

Our first impression of the temperaments is that they are external, for although they can be said to flow from within, they manifest themselves in everything we can observe from without. However, this does not mean that the human riddle can be solved by means of natural science and observation. Only when we hear what spiritual science has to say can we come closer to understanding these peculiar colorations of the human personality.

Spiritual science tells us first of all that the human being is part of a line of heredity. He displays the characteristics he has inherited from father, mother, grandparents, and so on. These characteristics he then passes on to his progeny. The human being thus possesses certain traits by virtue of being part of a succession of generations.

However, this inheritance gives us only one side of his nature. Joined to that is the individuality he brings with him out of the spiritual world. This he adds to what his father and mother, his ancestors, are able to give him. Something that proceeds from life to life, from existence to existence, connects itself with the generational stream. Certain characteristics we can attribute to heredity; on the other hand, as a person develops from childhood on, we can see unfolding out of the center of his being something that must be the fruit of preceding lives, something he could never have inherited from his ancestors. We come to know the law of reincarnation, of the succession of earthly lives and this is but a special case of an all-encompassing cosmic law.

An illustration will make this seem less paradoxical. Consider a lifeless mineral, say, a rock crystal. Should the crystal be destroyed, it leaves nothing of its form that could be passed on to other crystals.* A new crystal receives nothing of the old one's particular form. When we move on to the world of plants, we notice that a plant cannot develop according to the same laws as does the crystal. It can only originate from another, earlier plant. Form is here preserved and passed on.

* Translator's note: The reader may conclude from this remark — for it was, after all, a remark, not a published claim — that Steiner was ignorant of the concept of seed crystals. However, a likelier explanation is that Steiner, whose audience was very likely not a scientifically knowledgeable one, was simply indulging in a bit of rhetorical hyperbole. He doubtless knew that a seed crystal will hasten the crystallization process in a saturated salt solution, but this fact is not really relevant to his point, which comes out only gradually in this paragraph. His point is not that a newly-forming crystal cannot receive some contribution from a previously existing one, only that it need not; this is in contrast to living things, which require a progenitor.

Moving on to the animal kingdom, we find an evolution of the species taking place. We begin to appreciate why the nineteenth century held the discovery of evolution to be its greatest achievement. In animals, not only does one being proceed from another, but each young animal during the embryo phase recapitulates the earlier phases of its species' evolutionary development. The species itself undergoes an enhancement.

In human beings not only does the species evolve, but so does the individual. What a human being acquires in a lifetime through education and experience is preserved, just as surely as are the evolutionary achievements of an animal's ancestral line. It will someday be commonplace to trace a person's inner core to a previous existence. The human being will come to be known as the product of an earlier life. The views that stand in the way of this doctrine will be overcome, just as was the scholarly opinion of an earlier century, which held that living organisms could arise from nonliving substances. As recently as three hundred years ago, scholars believed that animals could evolve from river mud, that is, from nonliving matter. Francesco Redi, an Italian scientist, was the first to assert that living things could develop only from other living things. [see Note 1] For this he was attacked and came close to suffering the fate of Giordano Bruno. [see Note 2] Today, burning people at the stake is no longer fashionable. When someone attempts to teach a new truth, for example, that psycho-spiritual entities must be traced back to earlier psycho-spiritual entities, he won't exactly be burned at the stake, but he will be dismissed as a fool. But the time will come when the real foolishness will be to believe that the human being lives only once, that there is no enduring entity that unites itself with a person's inherited traits.

Now the important question arises: How can something originating in a completely different world, that must seek a father and a mother, unite itself with physical corporeality? How can it clothe itself in the bodily features that link human beings to a hereditary chain? How does the spiritual-psycho stream, of which man forms a part through reincarnation, unite itself with the physical stream of heredity? The answer is that a synthesis must be achieved. When the two streams combine, each imparts something of its own quality to the other. In much the same way that blue and yellow combine to give green, the two streams in the human being combine to yield what is commonly known as temperament. Our inner self and our inherited traits both appear in it. Temperament stands between the things that connect a human being to an ancestral line, and those the human being brings with him out of earlier incarnations. Temperament strikes a balance between the eternal and the ephemeral. And it does so in such a way that the essential members of the human being, which we have come to know in other contexts, enter into a very specific relationship with one another.

Human beings as we know them in this life are beings of four members. The first, the physical body, they have in common with the mineral world. The first super-sensible member, the etheric body, is integrated into the physical and separates from it only at death. There follows as third member the astral body, the bearer of instincts, drives, passions, desires, and of the ever-changing

content of sensation and thought. Our highest member, which places us above all other earthly beings, is the bearer of the human ego, which endows us in such a curious and yet undeniable fashion with the power of self-awareness. These four members we have come to know as the essential constituents of a human being.

The way the four members combine is determined by the flowing together of the two streams upon a person's entry into the physical world. In every case, one of the four members achieves predominance over the others, and gives them its own peculiar stamp. Where the bearer of the ego predominates, a choleric temperament results. Where the astral body predominates, we find a sanguine temperament. Where the etheric or life-body predominates, we speak of a phlegmatic temperament. And where the physical body predominates, we have to deal with a melancholic temperament. The specific way in which the eternal and the ephemeral combine determines what relationship the four members will enter into with one another.

The way the four members find their expression in the physical body has also frequently been mentioned. The ego expresses itself in the circulation of the blood. For this reason, in the choleric the predominant system is that of the blood. The astral body expresses itself physically in the nervous system; thus in the sanguine, the nervous system holds sway. The etheric body expresses itself in the glandular system; hence the phlegmatic is dominated physically by his glands. The physical body as such expresses itself only in itself; thus the outwardly most important feature in the melancholic is his physical body. This can be observed in all phenomena connected with these temperaments.

In the choleric, the ego and the blood system predominate. The choleric thus comes across as someone who must always have his way. His aggressiveness, everything connected with his forcefulness of will, derives from his blood circulation.

In the nervous system and astral body, sensations and feelings constantly fluctuate. Any harmony or order results solely from the restraining influence of the ego. People who do not exercise that influence appear to have no control over their thoughts and sensations. They are totally absorbed by the sensations, pictures, and ideas that ebb and flow within them. Something like this occurs whenever the astral body predominates, as, for example, in the sanguine. Sanguines surrender themselves in a certain sense to the constant and varied flow of images, sensations, and ideas since in them the astral body and nervous system predominate.

The nervous system's activity is restrained only by the circulation of the blood. That this is so becomes clear when we consider what happens when a person lacks blood or is anaemic, in other words, when the blood's restraining influence is absent. Mental images fluctuate wildly, often leading to illusions and hallucinations.

A touch of this is present in sanguines. Sanguines are incapable of lingering over an impression. They cannot fix their attention on a particular image nor sustain their interest in an impression. Instead, they rush from experience to experience, from percept to percept. This is especially noticeable in sanguine children, where it can be a source of concern. The sanguine child's interest is easily kindled, a picture will easily impress, but the impression quickly vanishes.

We proceed now to the phlegmatic temperament. We observed that this temperament develops when the etheric or life-body, as we call it, which regulates growth and metabolism, is predominant. The result is a sense of inner well-being. The more a human being lives in his etheric

body, the more is he preoccupied with his internal processes. He lets external events run their course while his attention is directed inward.

In the melancholic we have seen that the physical body, the coarsest member of the human organization, becomes master over the others. As a result, the melancholic feels he is not master over his body, that he cannot bend it to his will. His physical body, which is intended to be an instrument of the higher members, is itself in control, and frustrates the others. This the melancholic experiences as pain, as a feeling of despondency. Pain continually wells up within him. This is because his physical body resists his etheric body's inner sense of well-being, his astral body's liveliness, and his ego's purposeful striving.

The varying combinations of the four members also manifest themselves quite clearly in external appearance. People in whom the ego predominates seek to triumph over all obstacles, to make their presence known. Accordingly their ego stunts the growth of the other members; it withholds from the astral and etheric bodies their due portion. This reveals itself outwardly in a very clear fashion. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, that famous German choleric, was recognizable as such purely externally. [see Note 3] His build revealed clearly that the lower essential members had been held back in their growth. Napoleon, another classic example of the choleric, was so short because his ego had held the other members back. [see Note 4] Of course, one cannot generalize that all choleric are short and all sanguines tall. It is a question of proportion. What matters is the relation of size to overall form.

In the sanguine the nervous system and astral body predominate. The astral body's inner liveliness animates the other members, and makes the external form as mobile as possible. Whereas the choleric has sharply chiseled facial features, the sanguine's are mobile, expressive, changeable. We see the astral body's inner liveliness manifested in every outer detail, for example, in a slender form, a delicate bone structure, or lean muscles. The same thing can be observed in details of behavior. Even a non-clairvoyant can tell from behind whether someone is a choleric or a sanguine; one does not need to be a spiritual scientist for that. If you observe the gait of a choleric, you will notice that he plants each foot so solidly that he would seem to want to bore down into the ground. By contrast, the sanguine has a light, springy step. Even subtler external traits can be found. The inwardness of the ego, the choleric's self-contained inwardness, express themselves in eyes that are dark and smoldering. The sanguine, whose ego has not taken such deep root, who is filled with the liveliness of his astral body, tends by contrast to have blue eyes. Many more such distinctive traits of these temperaments could be cited.

The phlegmatic temperament manifests itself in a static, indifferent physiognomy, as well as in plumpness, for fat is due largely to the activity of the etheric body. In all this the phlegmatic's inner sense of comfort is expressed. His gait is loose-jointed and shambling, and his manner timid. He seems somehow to be not entirely in touch with his surroundings.

The melancholic is distinguished by a hanging head, as if he lacked the strength necessary to straighten his neck. His eyes are dull, not shining like the choleric's; his gait is firm, but in a leaden rather than a resolute sort of way.

Thus you see how significantly spiritual science can contribute to the solution of this riddle. Only when one seeks to encompass reality in its entirety, which includes the spiritual, can knowledge bear practical fruit. Accordingly, only spiritual science can give us knowledge that will benefit the individual and all mankind. In education, very close attention must be paid to the individual

temperaments, for it is especially important to be able to guide and direct them as they develop in the child. But the temperaments are also important to our efforts to improve ourselves later in life. We do well to attend to what expresses itself through them if we wish to further our personal development.

The four fundamental types I have outlined here for you naturally never manifest themselves in such pure form. Every human being has one basic temperament, with varying degrees of the other three mixed in. Napoleon, for example, although a choleric, had much of the phlegmatic in him. To truly master life, it is important that we open our souls to what manifests itself as typical. When we consider that the temperaments, each of which represents a mild imbalance, can degenerate into unhealthy extremes, we realize just how important this is.

Yet, without the temperaments the world would be an exceedingly dull place, not only ethically, but also in a higher sense. The temperaments alone make all multiplicity, beauty, and fullness of life possible. Thus in education it would be senseless to want to homogenize or eliminate them, but an effort should be made to direct each into the proper track, for in every temperament there lie two dangers of aberration, one great, one small. One danger for the young choleric is that he will never learn to control his temper as he develops into maturity. That is the small danger. The greater is that he will become foolishly single-minded. For the sanguine the lesser danger is flightiness; the greater is mania, induced by a constant stream of sensations. The small danger for the phlegmatic is apathy; the greater is stupidity, dullness. For the melancholic, insensitivity to anything other than his own personal pain is the small danger; the greater is insanity.

In light of all this it is clear that to guide and direct the temperaments is one of life's significant tasks. If this task is to be properly carried out, however, one basic principle must be observed, which is always to reckon with what is given, and not with what is not there. For example, if a child has a sanguine temperament, he will not be helped if his elders try to flog interest into him. His temperament simply will not allow it. Instead of asking what the child lacks, in order that we might beat it into him, we must focus on what he has, and base ourselves on that. And as a rule, there is one thing we can always stimulate the sanguine child's interest in. However flighty the child might be, we can always stimulate his interest in a particular personality. If we ourselves are that personality, or if we bring the child together with someone who is, the child cannot but develop an interest. Only through the medium of love for a personality can the interest of the sanguine child be awakened. More than children of any other temperament, the sanguine needs someone to admire. Admiration is here a kind of magic word, and we must do everything we can to awaken it.

We must reckon with what we have. We should see to it that the sanguine child is exposed to a variety of things in which he has shown a deeper interest. These things should be allowed to speak to him, to have an effect upon him. They should then be withdrawn, so that the child's interest in them will intensify; then they may be restored. In other words, we must fashion the sanguine's environment so that it is in keeping with his temperament.

The choleric child is also susceptible of being led in a special way. The key to his education is respect and esteem for a natural authority. Instead of winning affection by means of personal qualities, as one does with the sanguine child, one should see to it that the child's belief in his teacher's ability remains unshaken. The teacher must demonstrate an understanding of what goes on around the child. Any showing of incompetence should be avoided. The child must persist in the belief that his teacher is competent, or all authority will be lost. The magic potion for the

choleric child is respect and esteem for a person's worth, just as for the sanguine child it was love for a personality. Outwardly, the choleric child must be confronted with challenging situations. He must encounter resistance and difficulty, lest his life become too easy.

The melancholic child is not easy to lead. With him, however, a different magic formula may be applied. For the sanguine child this formula was love for a personality; for the choleric, it was respect and esteem for a teacher's worth. By contrast, the important thing for the melancholic is for his teachers to be people who have in a certain sense been tried by life, who act and speak on the basis of past trials. The child must feel that the teacher has known real pain. Let your treatment of all of life's little details be an occasion for the child to appreciate what you have suffered. Sympathy with the fates of those around him furthers the melancholic's development. Here too one must reckon with what the child has. The melancholic has a capacity for suffering, for discomfort, which is firmly rooted in his being; it cannot be disciplined out of him. However, it can be redirected. We should expose the child to legitimate external pain and suffering, so that he learns there are things other than himself that can engage his capacity for experiencing pain. This is the essential thing. We should not try to divert or amuse the melancholic, for to do so only intensifies his despondency and inner suffering; instead, he must be made to see that objective occasions for suffering exist in life. Although we mustn't carry it too far, redirecting the child's suffering to outside objects is what is called for.

The phlegmatic child should not be allowed to grow up alone. Although naturally all children should have play-mates, for phlegmatics it is especially important that they have them. Their playmates should have the most varied interests. Phlegmatic children learn by sharing in the interests, the more numerous the better, of others. Their playmates' enthusiasms will overcome their native indifference towards the world. Whereas the important thing for the melancholic is to experience another person's fate, for the phlegmatic child it is to experience the whole range of his playmates' interests. The phlegmatic is not moved by things as such, but an interest arises when he sees things reflected in others, and these interests are then reflected in the soul of the phlegmatic child. We should bring into the phlegmatic's environment objects and events toward which "phlegm" is an appropriate reaction. Impassivity must be directed toward the right objects, objects toward which one may be phlegmatic.

From the examples of these pedagogical principles, we see how spiritual science can address practical problems. These principles can also be applied to oneself, for purposes of self-improvement. For example, a sanguine gains little by reproaching himself for his temperament. Our minds are in such questions frequently an obstacle. When pitted directly against stronger forces such as the temperaments, they can accomplish little. Indirectly, however, they can accomplish much. The sanguine, for example, can take his sanguinity into account, abandoning self-exhortation as fruitless. The important thing is to display sanguinity under the right circumstances. Experiences suited to his short attention span can be brought about through thoughtful planning. Using thought in this way, even on the smallest scale, will produce the requisite effect.

Persons of a choleric temperament should purposely put themselves in situations where rage is of no use, but rather only makes them look ridiculous. Melancholics should not close their eyes to life's pain, but rather seek it out; through compassion they redirect their suffering outward toward appropriate objects and events. If we are phlegmatics, having no particular interests, then we should occupy ourselves as much as possible with uninteresting things, surround ourselves with numerous sources of tedium, so that we become thoroughly bored. We will then be thoroughly

cured of our “phlegm;” we will have gotten it out of our system. Thus does one reckon with what one has, and not with what one does not have.

By filling ourselves with practical wisdom such as this, we learn to solve that basic riddle of life, the other person. It is solved not by postulating abstract ideas and concepts, but by means of pictures. Instead of arbitrarily theorizing, we should seek an immediate understanding of every individual human being. We can do this, however, only by knowing what lies in the depths of the soul. Slowly and gradually, spiritual science illuminates our minds, making us receptive not only to the big picture, but also to subtle details. Spiritual science makes it possible that when two souls meet and one demands love, the other offers it. If something else is demanded, that other thing is given. Through such true, living wisdom do we create the basis for society. This is what we mean when we say we must solve a riddle every moment.

Anthroposophy acts not by means of sermons, exhortations, or catechisms, but by creating a social groundwork, upon which human beings can come to know each other. Spiritual science is the ground of life, and love is the blossom and fruit of a life enhanced by it. Thus spiritual science may claim to lay the foundation for humankind's most beautiful goal — a true, genuine love for man.