

## Reincarnation and Karma

From the Point of View of Modern Scientific Thought  
26th March, 1903 - Rudolf Steiner

During the 17th century the Italian Scientist, Francesco Redi, was looked upon by the leading scientific circles as a dangerous heretic because he asserted that the lower animals reproduced themselves. He barely escaped the martyr's death of Giordano Bruno and Galileo. For the orthodox scholars of that day believed that worms, insects and even fish originated from inanimate mud. Redi did not assert anything that has not since been universally accepted, for instance, such a statement as "All that is alive originates from something alive." He committed the sin of acknowledging a truth two centuries before science had discovered "incontestable proofs" thereof. Since Pasteur's researches there can be no doubt that the former belief in the origin of living organisms by spontaneous generation was an illusion. The life-germs which entered such inanimate matter escaped observation. Pasteur, however, tried an experiment preventing the entrance of such germs into substances in which generally small living beings originate – and not a trace of life appeared. Life only originates from living germs. Redi was perfectly right.

The Anthroposophist of to-day finds himself in a position similar to that of the Italian thinker. On the basis of his knowledge he must make the same remark about the soul as Redi made about life. He must assert: Soul can only originate in soul. And should natural science proceed along the lines which it has followed since the 17th century the time will come when out of its own perception it will represent the same view. For – and this must be emphasised again and again – at the root of the Anthroposophical conception which we hold to-day lies the same disposition of thought as we find in the scientific statement that worms, insects and fish do not originate in mud but in life-germs. Anthroposophy maintains: "Every soul originates in soul;" in the same sense as the scientist says: "All life originates in life." [Note 1]

Now-a-days our customs are different from those of the 17th century. But the attitude underlying these customs has not undergone much change. In the 17th century heresy was prosecuted by methods which no longer appear humane; Anthroposophists to-day could not well be threatened with being burnt alive. People are content to make them harmless by declaring them to be visionaries and muddle-heads. Ordinary everyday science dubs them fools. A new execution by journalism has taken the place of the former execution by the inquisition. Still, Anthroposophists hold their ground; they comfort themselves with the knowledge that the time will come when some Virchow perhaps will say: There was a time – we are glad that time is past – when people thought that the soul originated by means of spontaneous generation, when certain complicated chemical and physical processes took place within the skull. But to-day for every earnest investigator this childish conception must be swept aside by the sentence: "Soul originates from Soul." And the chorus of "enlightened journalists," belonging to different parties – provided that at such a time journalism is not reckoned as pure childishness – will write: "That highly gifted Scientist X has manfully raised the flag in favour of the enlightened Science of the Soul and has completely routed the superstition of a mechanical conception of nature, – the conception which was so triumphant when Ladenburg, Professor of Chemistry at Breslau, demonstrated it at the convention of Natural Scientists as late as the year 1903."

No one should form the erroneous opinion that Anthroposophy is trying to use Natural Science as a means of proving its truth. What must be accentuated is that Anthroposophy has the same Attitude as Natural Science. The Anthroposophist accomplishes the same in the sphere of the soul as the Scientist strives to attain in the sphere of what he can see with his eyes and hear with his ears. Between real Natural Science and Anthroposophy there can be no opposition. The Anthroposophist explains that the laws which he advances for soul-life apply adequately to external phenomena. He does that because he knows that the human state of mind regarding knowledge can only be satisfied when it realises that harmony and not opposition exists between the different spheres of existence. To-day, most people who trouble at all about truth and knowledge are acquainted with certain scientific views. Such truths come to man without his seeking; the literary supplements of the newspapers set forth these laws for the cultured and unlettered alike; how the perfect animals evolve from the imperfect and what deep-rooted relations exist between man and the anthropoid apes; and busy journalists do not tire in impressing upon their readers what they ought to believe about the "Spirit" in the age of the great "Darwin." They rarely add that you can find the following sentence in Darwin's principal work: "I believe that all the organic beings that have ever lived on earth are derived from an archetype, into which life was breathed by the creator."

In this age it is very necessary to point out again and again that Anthroposophy does not take the inspiration of life or of soul as lightly as Darwin and many of his followers, and that Anthroposophical truths are not in opposition to the truths of Natural Science. Anthroposophy does not want to use modern Natural Science as a crutch with which to attain to the secrets of spiritual life; it only wants to say:— the literary supplements of the Recognise the laws of spiritual life and you will find these higher laws verified in a corresponding form if you descend to the region where you can see with your eyes and hear with your ears. Modern Natural Science does not contradict Anthroposophy, but is, in itself, elementary Anthroposophy. Haeckel has only attained such brilliant results in the domain of animal life because he has applied to it those laws which psychologists have for a long time applied to the soul. If he did not share with them that conviction himself, it does not matter; he does not know the laws of the soul and he knows nothing of investigations which can be made in the sphere of soul-life, but that does not lessen the importance of the results acquired in his domain. Great men have the faults of their virtues. It is our task to show that Haeckel, standing on the ground he knows, is nothing but an Anthroposophist. It is also of assistance to the Anthroposophist when he connects himself with modern scientific knowledge; the things pertaining to external nature are palpable and it is therefore easy to demonstrate their laws. There is no difficulty in realising that plants change when they are transplanted from one region to another. It is not difficult to conceive that certain animals lose their eye sight when they live in dark caves for some time. And by demonstrating those laws which are at work in such processes as these, you can easily pass on to the less self-evident ones which we find in soul life, which are more difficult to understand. When he calls Natural Science to his aid the Anthroposophist merely wishes to illustrate, he wishes nothing else. He has to prove that in the sphere of Science Anthroposophical truths are to be found again in a corresponding form, and that Natural Science can be naught but elementary Spiritual Science; and he has to make use of scientific conceptions to lead on to those of a higher nature. The objection may be raised that any inclination towards the conceptions of modern Natural Science might lead Spiritual Science into a precarious position, because those conceptions themselves rest on a very uncertain basis. That is correct. There are scientists who accept certain

ideas of Darwinism as incontestable truths, and there are others who already speak of a crisis in Darwinism. Some find "the omnipotence of natural selection," "the struggle for existence," a comprehensive explanation for the evolution of organisms; others look on "the struggle for existence" as if it were a nursery ailment of modern scientific teachings and speak about the "impotence of natural selection." If these special points of contention were at all important, Anthroposophists could do nothing better than to take no notice of them for the present and to await a more hopeful time to harmonise Spiritual and Natural Science. But that is not the point at all. The point is rather that there is a certain attitude, a certain way of thinking, which underlies the researches of Natural Science of the day and certain large lines of thought, and that these are acknowledged everywhere, though the ideas of different thinkers and scientists concerning various questions differ widely. It is true that Ernst Haeckel's and Virchow's ideas on "the Origin of Man" differ greatly. But the Anthroposophist would be glad if authoritative people had as clear ideas on certain large aspects of soul-life as their opponents have on those points which, in spite of all contention, appear to them as being perfectly certain. To-day neither Haeckel's nor Virchow's partisans seek the origin of worms in inanimate mud; neither the former nor the latter doubted the sentence: "All life originates from life" in the sense described above.

We have not yet reached that point in psychology. There is no lucidity on any point which could be compared with these fundamental scientific convictions. He who wants to explain the form and habits of life of a worm knows that he must go back to the egg of the worm and to the ancestors of the worm, he knows in what direction he must search, even if a difference of opinion exists on everything further or if it were contended that the time had not yet come to put forward certain thoughts on this or that point. Where could we find a similar clearness in Psychology? That the soul [Note 2] possesses spiritual attributes, in the same way as the worm has physical ones, does not bring it about – as it certainly should – that the one subject of research be approached with the same attitude of mind as the other. Our age is under the influence of habits of thought the result of which is that numbers of those who occupy themselves with these things refuse to examine into such a demand in a manner adequate to the matter. Certainly, when it cannot be avoided, it is admitted that the psychic attributes of man as well as the physical must come from somewhere. Conjectures are made as to how it comes about that the souls of a number of children are different, from one another, though they have grown up and been educated under the same circumstances. Even twins differ in essential qualities though they have always lived in the same place under the care of the same nurse. Occasionally it is mentioned that the "Siamese Twins" were said to have been very uncomfortable during the latter part of their life because of their opposite sympathies during the North-American Civil War. I do not, however, mean to assert that careful thought and observation have not been brought to bear upon such phenomena, or that no work worthy of notice exists on this subject; but ordinarily, the attitude of such work to the Soul is like what the attitude of a Scientist would be towards what is alive if he were simply to declare that life originated from lifeless clay.

Without doubt it is justifiable if you go back to the physical ancestors to explain the lower qualities of the soul, and to speak of heredity in the same way as is done regarding the physical characteristics. But one has made up one's mind to close one's eyes to the most essential thing if one adopts the same line with respect to the higher qualities of the soul, the really spiritual in

mans One has accustomed oneself to look on these higher qualities of the soul not only as a development but as a higher degree of the lower. And therefore one thinks an explanation could satisfy, which follows the same lines usual in contemplating the psychic traits of animals. It cannot be denied that the observation of certain psychic functions in the higher animals may easily lead to such a conception. We need only remark that dogs give proof of a remarkably faithful memory; that horses which notice the loss of a shoe may go of their own accord to a forge where they are usually shod; that even animals which are shut up in a room may open the latch of the door. And other astonishing facts could be cited. True, Anthroposophists, as well as other people, will readily admit any development of the qualities possessed by animals. But is that a reason to wipe out all difference between the lower characteristics of soul which man shares with animals and the higher spiritual qualities which he alone possesses? No one can do so except one who is quite blinded by the dogmatic prejudices of a Science that insists on clinging to gross matter. Take the fact proved by accurate observation, that animals, even the highest, cannot count, and therefore cannot learn arithmetic. Even in the Schools of Ancient Wisdom the significant statement was made, that man differed from the animals in being able to count. Counting is the simplest, the most trivial of the higher faculties of the soul. And therefore it shall here be mentioned as the extreme limit where animal-soul merges into spirit-soul, that is, into the higher human. Naturally, it is very easy to raise objections to this. It may be observed that the last word on this point has not yet been said, and that one may eventually succeed in teaching certain intelligent animals to count! Secondly, it might be mentioned that the human brain, compared to that of animals, has perfected itself; and that this is the reason why it is able to produce higher degrees of soul-activity. One may admit over and over again that the person making these objections is correct; but one finds oneself in the same position towards them as towards those people who, when confronted with the fact that "life originates in life," reply again and again: But in the worm the same chemical and physical laws obtain as exist in clay, only in a more complicated manner. Whoever wishes to unveil the secrets of nature in a matter-of-course way, and by means of trivialities, can try to do so. There are people who consider that that particular stage of reasoning power to which they have attained at the moment is the highest possible, and into whose mind it never seems to enter, that somebody else could himself make their trivial objections if he did not realise their futility.

We find no objection to the statement that all higher functions in the world are only improvements of those lower functions found in the clay. But as now-a-days nobody with the slightest insight will affirm that worms originate in clay, neither will any clear thinker bring the spiritual soul into the same scheme of thought as the animal soul. Just as we must remain in the domain of the living to explain the origin of a living being, so must we remain in the sphere of soul-spirit to understand the origin of soul-spirit.

There are facts which can be observed everywhere and which numbers of people pass by without specially thinking about them. Then someone comes along and out of a fact accessible to every one discovers a most important truth. Galileo is said to have found the important law of oscillation while watching the swinging of a church lamp at Pisa. Many men had previously seen church lamps swinging without having formed the above conclusion. The point is to combine the right thoughts with the objects you observe.

Now there is one fact which is accessible to all and which, rightly understood, throws a clear light on the character of the soul-spirit. It is the simple truth that every human being has a biography, but an animal has none. Many will, indeed, say: Cannot one write the history of a cat or of a dog? Doubtless one can – but school children are sometimes required in their tasks to narrate the fortunes of a pen! The point is that the biography of an individual human being has the same essential significance as the description of the whole species in the case of the animal. Just in the same sense in which, in the case of a lion, the description of the lion species interests me, so in the individual human being I am interested in his biography. I have not exhausted the description of Goethe and Schiller and Heine when I describe them as members of the human species, as I would have when I have described a lion as a specimen of his kind. The individual man is more than a specimen of the human species. He has the same racial characteristics as his physical ancestors in the same way as the animal; but where the genus-characteristics cease, there begins for man that which determines his special position and his mission in the world. And where this begins all possibility of an explanation according to the laws of physical-animal heredity ceases. The form of Schiller's nose and the colour of his hair, perhaps also certain qualities of temperament, may be traced back to his ancestors, but, his genius cannot be traced in this way. And, of course, that does not apply only to Schiller; it also applies to plain Mrs. Miller, for example! In her, too, if you will only observe, you will find a soul-spirit. which cannot be traced back in the same way to her parents or her grandparents as are her nose or her blue eyes. Goethe did, indeed, say: "My stature and my serious views of life I get from my father: my happy disposition and my pleasure in inventing stories, from my mother." Consequently, therefore, there is nothing original in him! But in spite of that, nobody would try to derive Goethe's talents from his father and mother and be content with this explanation, in the same way as we derive the form and habits of life of the lion from his ancestors. This is the direction which psychology has to take if it wants to place side by side with the scientific assertion: "Everything that is alive originates from the living," the corresponding statement, "Everything psychic can only be explained as originating in soul." We will follow this line of thought further and show how the laws of Reincarnation and Karma are a scientific necessity from this point of view. It appears very strange that so many pass by the question as to the origin of the soul, simply because they are afraid that they might enter upon an uncertain sphere of knowledge. Let them hear what the great scientist Carl Gegenbauer, said of Darwinism. "Even if the direct assertions of Darwin were not quite right, they had yet led to discoveries which would not have been made without them. Darwin drew attention in an illuminating way to the development of one form of life from another, and this has spurred people on to find the connection between such forms. Even those who contest the errors of Darwinism ought to realise that this very same Darwinism has brought clearness and certainty into the study of animal and plant evolution, and that by its means, Darwin has thrown light into dark regions of Nature's workings. His errors will rectify themselves. If he had not existed, we should not have been able to benefit by the valuable results of his researches." And the same as the above must be granted to the Anthroposophical teachings as regards the spiritual life by one who fears insecurity in this teaching; even if they were not quite correct they would of themselves lead to light on the riddles of the soul. To them also will be owed clearness and security. And as they relate to our human destiny, to our highest aims, the gaining of this clarity and security should be the most important concern of our life. In this sphere the striving for knowledge is at the same time a moral necessity, an absolute moral duty.

David Friedrich Strauss wanted to give the world a sort of bible for the "enlightened" man of modern days, when, in 1872, he published his book: "Ancient and Modern Faith." The revelations of Natural Science were to form the basis for this modern faith, and not the revelations of the ancient faith which in the opinion of this Apostle of Enlightenment has become obsolete. This new bible was written under the influence of Darwinistic ideas. And it originated in a person who said to himself: "Anyone who, like myself, wishes to be considered as holding enlightened views, has ceased to believe, long before Darwin's time, in 'Supernatural Revelation' and its miracles. He has come to the following conclusion:— Nature is governed by necessary immutable laws, and such events as the bible relates as miracles would be disturbances, interruptions of those laws. And such disturbances are impossible. We know from the laws of nature that a dead man cannot be made alive again; therefore Jesus cannot have raised Lazarus from the dead." But our enlightened friend says further: "Our explanation of nature showed a hiatus. We were able to understand how inanimate phenomena can be explained by immutable natural laws; but how the multifarious varieties of plants and animals and man himself originated we were unable to form any natural idea. It is true, we believed that here as well as elsewhere only an immutable law came into consideration; but what law this was, or how it worked, we did not know. However hard we tried, we could not find any reasonable objection to the opinion of Karl von Linné, the great Natural Scientist of the 18th century, who said that there existed as many species of animals and plants as had originally in principle been created. Did we not have as many miraculous creative acts before us as we have species of plants and animals? What use would our conviction be to us, that God, — by a supernatural interference with the order of nature, — by a miracle, — was unable to raise Lazarus from the dead, if we are obliged to admit numberless supernatural facts in other cases? But now Darwin comes and proves to us that plant and animal species originate according to immutable laws of nature (adaptability and the struggle for existence) just as do the inorganic forms. Our hiatus in the evolution of nature has been bridged over."

From out of the frame of mind which arose from such convictions David Friedrich Strauss wrote as follows in his "Ancient and Modern Faith": "It was no use for us philosophers and critical Theologians to decree the exit of the miracle; for the decree was without effect, as we were not able to dispense with miracle, not able to indicate a power of nature which could replace it in situations where it has hitherto been considered indispensable. Darwin has proved this power of nature, this method of nature, he has opened the door through which a happy posterity will cast miracle out, never to return. Everybody who knows what is bound up with miracle will extol him as one of the greatest benefactors of mankind."

A victorious feeling lives in those words. And all those who feel like Strauss may reveal the following prospect in a "modern faith." Once upon a time inorganic particles of matter by means of their intrinsic forces have clustered into balls in such a way as to turn into living matter. The latter developed by necessary laws into the simplest and lowest living beings. In accordance with no less necessary laws these changed into worm, fish, snake, marsupial and at last into the ape. And as Huxley, the great English Scientist, has proved, there is much more similarity between the human being and the higher species of ape than there is between these and the lower ones, who is to contradict the belief that man himself evolved, according to the same laws of nature, from the higher species of ape? Further, do we not find that which we call higher human spiritual activity, what we call morality in an imperfect condition already in animals? Can

we doubt that animals, when their form grew more perfect, when it evolved into the human form, merely on the basis of physical laws, also developed their rudimentary intellect and morality up to human perfection?

This seems plausible. Although everybody will have to admit that our knowledge of nature is by no means sufficient to conceive how that which has been described above works out in detail, yet more and more facts and laws will be discovered and the "modern faith" will then have yet firmer supports.

The researches and reflections of later days have, however, by no means supported this theory; on the contrary, they have contributed all sorts of things to shake it; yet it continues to live on in ever-growing circles, and is a great hindrance to any other conviction.

No doubt can exist on the one point; if David Friedrich Strauss and his followers are in the right, all talk of higher spiritual laws of existence is absurd. One would simply have to build up the "new faith" on that basis which these personalities affirm is the result of a knowledge of nature. A remarkable fact presents itself to anyone who looks without prejudice at the reasoning of the followers of the new creed; and this fact comes up very irresistibly when we observe the thoughts of those who have preserved a little impartiality towards the assertions of the orthodox exponents which are made with such assurance. For these are hidden nooks in the creed of these "New Believers," and if one reveals that which is to be found there, the true facts of modern science appear in a clear light, but the opinions of the "New Believers" about man begin to fade away.

(Note. There are many people who are anxious to gather information on Anthroposophical tenets quickly, and they will find it very inconvenient when scientific details are shown them in such a light as to form a basis for Anthroposophical system. They say, "We should like to know something about Anthroposophy, and you tell us about scientific facts which every educated man knows." This shows that our contemporaries object to serious thinking. In truth, those who speak in such a way know nothing of the bearings of their knowledge. The Astronomer knows nothing of the logical results of his theories, nor does the professor of Chemistry, and so on. And there is no heir for them but to be modest and to listen quietly when it is shown them how, because of their superficial way of thinking, they know nothing at all on the subjects which they proudly believe to have completely mastered. Even Anthroposophists consider it often unnecessary to look for scientific confirmation of the tenets of Karma and Reincarnation. They do not know that this is the task of the sub-race of Europe and America, and that without this scientific foundation the members of these races are not really able to come to an Anthroposophical understanding. Those who only want to repeat what they have heard from the great Eastern Teachers cannot become Anthroposophists within the European-American civilisation.)

Let us shed some light on a few of these nooks. Above all, let us look at the personality who is the most important and venerable of the "New Believers." On page 489, Vol II of the 4th English edition of Haeckel's "History of Creation," he writes: "The final result of a comparison between animal and man is that between the most highly developed animal-souls and the lowest developed human souls there exists only a small quantitative difference but no qualitative difference; this difference is much less than the difference between the lowest and the highest human souls or than the difference between the highest and lowest animal-souls." On account

of this the "New Believer" declares:— "We must explain the difference between the lower and the higher animal-souls by necessary and immutable laws; and we study these laws. We ask ourselves: How is it that animals with higher types of souls have evolved from those with lower kind of souls? We search in nature for conditions by means of which the lower can become the higher. We find, for example, that animals coming from other dwelling-places into the caves of Kentucky become blind. We understand that dwelling in darkness has destroyed the sense of sight. In those eyes the physical and chemical processes characteristic of seeing no longer take place. The stream of nourishment which was formerly used for this activity now flows to other organs. Animals change their shape. In this way new species of animals can evolve as long as the transformations which nature causes to take place are strong and varied enough. And what happens in such a case? Nature effects changes in certain beings and these changes also appear in their offspring. They are said to be hereditary. And thus the origin of new species of animals and plants is explained."

(Note. Many may object to the above exposition on the grounds that Natural Science in its present form contradicts the theosophical teachings. For example:— in H.P.Blavatsky's "Secret Doctrine" there is to be found another theory of derivation than the one represented by Haeckel. This will be explained on another occasion. We do not intend to point out in this lecture how the "new faith" stands as regards the "Secret Doctrine" but only how it ought to stand in relation to itself if it understood the premises from which it starts.)

And so the new believer gaily proceeds with his explanations. The difference between the lowest human soul and the highest animal soul is not so very great. Therefore certain conditions of life, into which higher animal souls have been placed, caused changes which transformed them into lower human souls. Any miraculous creation of the human soul has thus (according to Strauss) been for ever thrown out of the temple of the new faith and man has been linked to the animal world through "eternal, necessary" laws. The "new believer" retires content to peaceful slumber; and now he refuses to go a step further.

Honest thinking must disturb him in his slumber. For honest thought must keep alive round his couch of repose spirits which he himself has evoked. Let us examine more closely Haeckel's sentence: "The difference (between highest animal and man) is much smaller than the difference between the highest and lowest human souls." And the "new believer" acknowledges this. Is he therefore justified in drowsing away into peaceful slumber, as soon as — according to his opinion — he has explained the development of the lowest human being from the highest animals? (Note, — and thus done away with only the smallest gap that has to be explained).

No, he is not, and if he feels so, then he denies the whole basis on which he has built up his convictions. What would a "new believer" answer if anybody came and said: I have proved how fish evolve from lower living creatures, and that is enough. I have proved that everything evolves — therefore higher species than fish will probably have evolved in the same manner. No doubt our "new believer" would reply: Your general ideas about evolution are insufficient; you must also explain how mammals evolve, for there is a greater difference between the mammals and the fish than between the fish and the next lower animal.

What would follow if the "new believer" really remained true to his principles. He would have to say: The difference between the highest and lowest human souls is greater than the one



between these latter and highest animal souls; therefore I must admit that there are causes in the universe which work. changes within the lower human soul, transforming that soul as much as those causes recorded by myself transform lower animals into higher ones. If I do not do so, the difference existing between higher and lower human souls remains unexplained – a miracle. For it is true that the “new believers” who think themselves so enlightened, on account of their having done away with miracle in the realm of physical life, remain believers, even worshippers, of miracle within the realm of psychic life. And the only distinction between them and the miracle believers is that while they have no idea that they have fallen prey to the same dark superstition, these, whom they despise so deeply, confess their belief honestly.

Now we will carry our light into another nook of the “new Belief.” Dr. Paul Topinard has very well compiled in his Anthropology the results of modern doctrine on the origin of man. At the end of his book, he recapitulates briefly, how the higher animal forms according to Haeckel have developed during the various earth-periods. “At the beginning of the earth-period, which the geologists have called the Laurentine, the first globules of protoplasm formed themselves out of some elements: carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, by accidental coincidence under conditions which probably only presented themselves during that period. Out of these the Monera, the smallest imperfect living beings grew by spontaneous generation. After that they split up and multiplied, grouped themselves so as to form organs and at last produced (after a series of transformations which Haeckel fixes as nine) some vertebrate animals something like the *Amphioxus Lanceolatus* (lancet fish). We can skip the details of further evolutions of animals species along the same lines, and add at once the end of Topinard’s statements. “During the twentieth earth-period, the Anthropoid (man-like ape) exists practically during the whole of the Miocene period; in the twenty-first, you find the anthropoid who does not yet have speech or adequate brains. In the twenty-second, at last, man appears as we know him, at least in his less perfect forms.” And now, after Topinard has expounded what is supposed to be the “scientific basis of the modern faith,,” he makes an important confession in a few words. He says: “Here the enumeration is cut short. Haeckel forgets the twenty-third degree in which a Lamarck and Newton shine.” A corner is here shown in the confession of the “new believer” where he points as clearly as possible to facts regarding which he denies his confession. He will not carry up into the realm of the human soul those principles by the aid of which he tries to explain the rest of nature. If he did so, if he entered, with the conception gained in external nature, into the region which Topinard calls the twenty-third degree, he would then have to continue: As I deduce the higher animal species from the lower, through evolution, so I deduce the higher soul-species through evolution from the lower. I cannot understand Newton’s soul unless I imagine it as evolving from an earlier psychic being.

And this psychic being can never be looked for in physical ancestors. If you sought it there, you would act against the spirit of Natural Investigation. Could the Scientist ever think of letting one race of animals evolve from another if they were as unlike each other in the physical sense as Newton was to his ancestors in a psychic sense? One thinks of one animal species evolving from another which is only one degree below it. Consequently Newton’s soul must have proceeded from one which was like it, but in psychic development was one degree power. The soul in Newton comprises his biography. I reconsider Newton from his biography, as I recognise a lion from the description of his species. And I understand the species of the lion when I conceive that it has evolved out of one which in comparison is lower. Therefore I understand what is comprised in Newton’s biography when I conceive that it has evolved out of the biographical

characteristics of a soul which is similar to it, or as a soul related to it. Therefore Newton's soul existed in another shape already just as the lion species existed already in another form.

If you think it out clearly, this conclusion is unavoidable. It is only because these "new believers" have not the courage to continue their line of thought that they never come to this logical conclusion. But from this conclusion the reappearance of the being comprehended in the biography is assured. Either you must let the whole scientific theory of evolution drop or you must acknowledge that it has to be extended to the development of the soul as well. There are only two ways: either every soul is created by a miracle, as the animals species would have to be created by a miracle if they had not evolved one from another; or the soul has developed and was there previously in another form, just as the animal species was there in another form. Some of the thinkers of the day who have preserved a little clearness and logic are a living example of these facts.

It is true they are as unable to familiarise themselves with the at present unusual idea of the evolution of the soul as the above-mentioned "new believers." But they have at least the courage to acknowledge the only possible remaining point of view: the miracle of the creation of the soul. One reads in the work on Psychology by Professor Johannes Rehmke of Griefswald, one of the clearest thinkers of the day, "The idea of creation ... appears to us ... to be the only one capable of explaining the mystery of the origin of the soul." Rehmke reaches the point at which he admits a conscious universal Being, of whom he says, "Being the only condition for soul to originate, He would have to be called the Creator of the Soul." Thus speaks a thinker who is not willing to drowse into spiritual slumber, after having grasped the physical processes of life and who yet lacks the capacity to admit the conception that every soul must have evolved out of its previous form of existence. Rehmke has the courage to believe in miracle; he cannot have the courage to admit the Anthroposophical view of the reappearance of the soul, or of reincarnation, and miracle is his means of escape.

Thinkers in whom the scientific tendency begins to develop logically arrive of necessity at this view. Julius Baumann, Professor of Philosophy at Göttingen, writes in his pamphlet, "Modern Christianity and real Religion," in one of the thirty-nine statements, in a sketchy summary of exact scientific religion, the following (twenty-second statement) "... Just as ... in inorganic nature physical and chemical elements and forces do not perish, but only alter their way of combination, so must we admit the same, according to scientific methods, with reference to the organic and organic-spiritual forces. The human soul as a formal unit, as a connecting ego, returns in new human bodies and in this way can go through all the stages of human evolution." People who have the courage to believe the full scientific creed of the present day must have such opinions. This is not to be misunderstood as if we meant that the most eminent among the new believers were – in the usual sense of the word – devoid of courage. Courage, extraordinary courage, is necessary to maintain scientific opinions against the opposing forces of the 19th century. (Note. The writer of this lecture cannot be accused of not recognising the great merits of these "new believers," for he greatly appreciates their merits in connection with the spiritual development of the time, and has expressed his sense of their great worth in his book, "Welt and Lebensanschauungen im neunzehnten Jahrhundert.") But this courage is somewhat different from the higher which is connected with logical thought, and such logical thought is not exercised by the scientists of the day who wish to build up a universal philosophy out of the knowledge gained in their own particular domain.

Does it not seem hopeless, that during a lecture given in Breslau by Albert Ladenberg, Professor of Chemistry, at the last convention of Natural Scientists, the statement can be found: "Do we know a substratum of the soul? I know of none," And that afterwards the following words could be spoken by the same man: "What is your opinion on immortality? I believe, as regards this question, more than any other, the wish is the father to the thought, for I know of no scientific corroborated fact, upon which we can establish our belief in immortality." What would the learned gentleman say if he were confronted by a man who said: "I know nothing of chemical facts; and therefore I deny chemical laws, for I do not know a single scientific corroborated fact which would confirm these laws." The professor would naturally say: "Your ignorance as to chemical laws has nothing to do with us; study chemistry first and then speak about it." Professor Ladenburg knows no substratum of the soul; therefore he should not importune the world with the result of his ignorance,

Just as, in order to understand certain animal forms, the scientist refers back to those from which they have developed, so must the psychologist, when speaking of soul-forms. The shape of the skull of higher animals is explained by the scientists as a transformation of the skull of lower animals. One should explain all that belongs to the biography of a soul out of the soul from which proceeded the soul one has in view. Later conditions are the results of earlier ones. Later physical conditions are the result of former physical ones, and in the same way the later psychic are the results of previous psychic conditions.

This is the purport of the law of Karma which says: my present capabilities and everything I do in my present life does not exist apart as a miracle, but is the result of previous forms of my soul's existence and is the cause of future ones.

An observer of human life who does not know this far-reaching law or who does not wish to recognise it, is continually confronted by life-riddles. We will take one example among many. We find it in Maurice Maeterlinck's "Buried Temple," a book which speaks of such riddles as they appear in a caricatured form to present-day thinkers, because they are not familiar with Karma, or the great laws of cause and effect in spiritual life. Those who have fallen victim to the narrow dogmas of the "new believers" have no interest in these riddles, one of which Maeterlinck presents; he says: "If I jump into icy cold water to save my neighbour's life or if I fall into it while trying to throw him in, the consequences of the chill will be the same in both cases, and no power in heaven or earth outside myself and humanity will increase my sufferings because I have committed a crime, or reduce my pain because I have done a virtuous action." Certainly, the results in question seem to be the same in both instances when observed by one confined only to the purely physical facts; but can this observation be regarded as a complete one? If anyone asserts this, he is in about the same position as the thinker who observes that two boys have been taught by two different masters, and yet sees nothing else; he sees that in both instances the teachers give the same numbers of lessons daily to the children and attain about the same results. If he went deeper into the facts he would perhaps perceive a great difference in the two instances and would find an explanation for the fact that one boy turns out incompetent, while the other one grows up to be a capable man. And if anyone who is willing to enter upon psychic spiritual considerations were to look upon the above consequences for the souls of the men in question, then he would have to admit that what happens here cannot be considered entirely by itself. The effects of the cold are psychic experiences, and if they are not to be considered as miracles they must be looked upon as causes and effects taking place in the

life of the soul. The result of the deed will come from other causes in the case of the rescuer and the criminal; or they will have different effects in the one and in the other case. And, if I cannot find these causes and effects in the present life of these men, if during the present life things seem equal for both, I must look for the compensation in their past or expect to find it in the future. I go to work in exactly the same manner as the Natural Scientist works in the region of external facts. He explains the loss of eyesight of certain animals living in the dark caves of Kentucky as due to former experiences, and he presumes that present experiences will result in future formations of new races and species. Only that man has an inner right to speak of development in the realm of external nature who also admits this development in the spiritual-psychic realm.

Now it is clear that this recognition, this extension of the principles of Natural Science to realms beyond physical nature is more than mere knowledge. For it changes knowledge into life. It not only enriches the knowledge of man but it gives him strength to live his life. It shows him whence he comes and whither he goes; and will disclose to him this whence and whither beyond birth and death if he steadfastly follows the direction in which this knowledge points; he knows that his actions become part of a stream which flows from eternity to eternity. Higher and higher the point of view rises from which he regulates his life. Man appears as if wrapped in a heavy mist until these conclusions dawn upon him, for he has no conception of his true being, he knows nothing of its origin nor of its aims. He follows the impulses of his nature without having any insight into these impulses. And yet he must own to himself that perhaps he would follow very different ones if knowledge were to be a light on his path. The feeling of responsibility in regard to life always grows under the influence of such conclusions. But if man does not develop this feeling of responsibility in himself then he denies, in the highest sense of the word, his humanity. Knowledge without aiming at the ennobling of mankind is only gratification of a higher kind of curiosity. To raise knowledge till you can grasp the spiritual so that it may become the ruling power of your whole life, that is in the highest sense – duty. And therefore it is every man's duty to seek understanding as to the whence and whither of the soul.

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Notes:

**Note 1.** The above had to be said distinctly, for careless readers are plentiful now-a-days, and the careless are always ready to read some nonsense or other into the exposition of a thinker, however careful he may be to explain his meaning accurately. For that reason I will now particularly mention that I should never dream of attacking those who study the problem of spontaneous generation based on scientific hypotheses. But even though it may be possible that somehow or other, "inanimate substances" should unite to form living albumen, we cannot hence conclude that, if rightly understood, Redi's conception is wrong.)

**Note 2.** The followers of Wundt's school may be very shocked when I speak of the "Soul" in such an old-fashioned manner while they cling to the words of their master who has again announced recently that we must not speak of "soul" because nothing remained of this supernatural substance after "the mythologising of the phenomena had vanished into the transcendental," except "a connected series of "processes."

Well, the wisdom of Wundt reminds one of the assertion that you may not speak of a "lily" because you are only dealing with colour form, processes of growth, etc. (Wundt, Natural Science and Psychology Leipzig. 1903).