

The Christmas Thought and the Secret of the Ego

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Lecture given by Rudolf Steiner in Dornach, 19th December, 1915. Edited by Harry Collison and published for the first time in English by permission of the Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung. This lecture is number sixteen of nineteen, given in the years 1906 through 1916, entitled *The Festivals of the Seasons*. This lecture is also known as "The Tree of the Cross and the Golden Legend," and "The Origin of the Christmas Plays." Contained in Volume No. 157a and 165 of the Complete Centenary Edition of Rudolf Steiner's works. - See more at: <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19151219p02.html#sthash.pIdgGGc8.dpuf> Made available to the Rudolf Steiner Archive by Mercury Press.

Today we bring to mind the words that resound out of the depths of earthly evolution's Mysteries:

Revelation of the divine in the heights of being,
and peace to those on earth
who are of good will.

Especially this year as Christmas approaches, we must think of the kind of feelings that unite us with these words and their deep and universal meaning — that deep meaning for the world experienced by countless people in such a way that the word peace resounds through it, the word peace in a time when peace is utterly absent in the widest circles of humanity. How do we think of these Christmas words in this time?

Nevertheless, it is a thought that, perhaps in connection with these words resounding through the world, touches us ever more deeply in the present than in other times. One thought! Nations confront one another full of animosity. Blood, so much blood saturates our earth. We have witnessed and must feel countless deaths around us in this time. Infinite suffering weaves around our inner atmosphere of feeling. Hate and antipathy race through spiritual space and can easily show how far human beings in our time still are from that love spoken about by the One whose birth is celebrated at Christmas. One thought, however, is especially predominant. We think how enemy stands against enemy, opponent against opponent, how human beings can bring death to each other and how they then can go through the same portal of death with the thought of the divine leader of light, the Christ Jesus. We think of how, all over the earth, where there is war and pain and discord, those who are otherwise in such discord can be united. Within their deepest hearts they carry their connection with Him who entered the world on the day we celebrate at Christmas.

We think how through all animosity, through all antipathy, through all hate, a feeling can impress itself into all human souls everywhere in these times, can impress itself in the midst of blood and hate: the thought of the innermost link with the One, with Him who thereby united hearts through something higher than what is able to separate human beings on earth. And so it is nevertheless a thought of infinite greatness, a thought of infinite depth of feeling, this thought of the Christ Jesus who harmonizes human beings no matter what their discord might be, no matter what goes on in the world.

If we take hold of the thought in this way, we will want to grasp it even more intensely, especially in our time. Then we will have an intimation of how strongly this thought is connected with what must become great and strong and powerful within human evolution. If this were to

happen, much that must still be fought for in such a bloody way at this time could be achieved in another way by human hearts, by human soul.

That *He* makes us strong, that *He* strengthens us, that *He* teaches us all over the earth really to feel in the truest sense of the word the Christmas verse, transcending everything that separates us: those who truly feel themselves connected with the Christ Jesus must promise this to themselves on Christmas night again and again.

There is a tradition within the history of Christianity that arose repeatedly in later times and was a custom in certain Christian regions over many centuries. Already in far distant times in various regions, mostly emerging from Christian churches, there were presentations for believers of the mystery of Christmas night. Especially in these most ancient times, the presentation of the mystery of Christmas night began with a reading, yes, at times even with a presentation of the story of Creation, the story of Creation as it is presented at the beginning of the Bible. Especially around the time of Christmas it was described how, out of the depths of the cosmos, the universal Word resounded, how out of the universal Word creation arose gradually, bit by bit. It was described how Lucifer approached the human being and how human beings thereby began earthly existence in a different way from what would have been the case had Lucifer not approached, in a way different from what was originally destined. The entire story of the temptation of Adam, and Eve was presented, and then it was shown how the human being was integrated, as it were, into ancient, pre-testamental history.

Only as time went on do we find what was presented in more or less detail in the various plays that developed in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in Central Europe, of which we have seen a small example just now.

At the Christmas festival, an infinitely great thought originally drew together the beginning of the Old Testament with the mysterious story of the Mystery of Golgotha. Very little indeed has remained of what it was from this thought that drew together the two sacred stories. Only a little of this insight has remained, one contemporary example being our calendar, in which the day before Christmas Eve is called the day of Adam and Eve. This has its origin in the same thought. In more ancient times, however, there were those with deeper thoughts, with deeper feelings, a deeper knowledge received from their teachers who taught them how they were to grasp the mystery of Christmas and the mystery of Golgotha. For them a great, encompassing symbolic thought was always being presented: the thought of the origin of the Cross.

The God who is presented to us in the Old Testament gives one commandment to the human being, represented by Adam and Eve: "You may eat from all the fruits of the garden; only the fruits that grow on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil must you avoid, because they who have eaten of that fruit would be cast out of the original scene of their existence."

The tree, however — which was now represented in the most varied ways — came by some means into the sequence of generations that were the original generations from which the bodily sheath of the Christ Jesus proceeded. This came about in the following way (as it was presented in certain periods of time): when Adam, the sinful man, was buried, this tree again grew out of his grave and was thus removed from Paradise. In this story we see the thought suggested that Adam rests in the grave, the human being who went through sin, the human being who was

misguided by Lucifer; he rests in the grave and he unites himself with the body of the earth; but out of his grave the tree grows, the tree that can now grow out of the earth with which Adam's body has been united.

The wood of this tree passes over to the generations to which Abraham also belongs, to which David belongs. And out of the wood of this tree, which actually stood in Paradise, which then grew again out of Adam's grave, out of the wood of this tree, the Cross was made on which Christ Jesus was crucified.

This is the thought that was made clear again and again by the teachers of those who were to understand the secrets of the Mystery of Golgotha out of deeper foundations. There is a deep meaning in the fact that in ancient times deep thoughts came to expression in such pictures, and this meaning holds good for the present as well. It will become clear to us that it still holds true for today.

We have also acquainted ourselves with the thought of the Mystery of Golgotha that says to us; the Being who has lived on earth through the body of Jesus poured out over the earth what He could bring to the earth, He poured it into the aura of the earth. What the Christ brought into the earth has since then become united with the entire corporeality of the earth. The earth has become something different since the Mystery of Golgotha. What Christ brought out of heavenly heights down to the earth is living in the earth aura.

If we consider this spiritually in connection with the ancient picture of the tree, this picture shows us the entire relationship from a higher point of view. The Luciferic principle entered the human being when the human being made his beginning on earth. The human being, as he is now in his union with the Luciferic principle, belongs to the earth, indeed he forms a part of the earth. And when we lay his body into the earth, this body is not just as anatomy sees it; this body is at the same time the outer mold of what the human being is in his inner being within the earthly realm. It can then also be clear out of spiritual science that it is not just what goes through the portal of death into the spiritual world that belongs to the being of man; rather it becomes clear that the human being through all his activity, through all his deeds, is united with the earth. He is really united with it in the same way as those happenings that the geologist, the mineralogist, the zoologist, etc., find connected with the earth.

It is only when the human being goes through the portal of death that one could say that there is a termination for the human individuality of that which unites him to the earth. Our outer form, however, which we surrender in some way to the earth, enters the body of the earth. It carries in itself the stamp of what the earth has become through the fact that Lucifer entered into earthly evolution. What the human being achieves on the earth carries the Luciferic principle; the human being brings this Luciferic principle into the aura of the earth. It is not only what was originally the intention of the human being that arises, that blossoms out of human deeds, out of the activities of human beings; out of human deeds there arises something that has the Luciferic element mixed in with it. This then is in the aura of the earth. And when we now look upon the tree growing out of the grave of the human being Adam, who was led astray by Lucifer, if we look at the tree that has become something different through the Luciferic temptation — this tree that was originally the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil — we see everything that the

human being brought about by the fact that he left his original state of existence, that he became something different through the Luciferic temptation and that something was thereby brought into earthly evolution that had not previously been intended.

We see the tree grow out of what forms the physical body for the earth, which was stamped in its earthly form by that which permits the human being to appear on the earth in a lower sphere than he would have if he had not gone through the Luciferic temptation. Something grows out of man's entire earthly existence that has come into humanity's evolution through the Luciferic misguidance, through the temptation. When we seek knowledge, we seek it in a different way than was originally predestined. This makes it appear that something different grows out of our earthly deeds from what would have been the case in accordance with the gods' original intention. We form an earthly existence that is not as the gods originally intended for us; we mix something else into it, and we must form very definite pictures of this if we wish to understand it. Definite mental images are required if we wish to understand, to understand properly.

We must say to ourselves: I am placed into earthly evolution. What I give to earthly evolution through my deeds bears fruit; it bears the fruit of knowledge that has become mine by the fact that I have gained the knowledge of good and evil on the earth. This knowledge lives in the evolution of the earth, this knowledge is there. As I look at this knowledge, however, it becomes something different for me, something that is different from what it originally should have been. It becomes something that I must change if the goal and task of the earth are to be achieved. I see growing out of my earthly deeds something that must become different. The tree grows forth, the tree that becomes the Cross of earthly existence, the tree that becomes something to which the human being must gain a new relationship. For the old relationship allows this tree to grow. The tree of the Cross, of that Cross which grows out of the Luciferically colored evolution of the earth, grows out of Adam's grave, out of the humanity that Adam has become since the temptation. The Tree of Knowledge must become the trunk of the Cross, because the human being must unite himself anew with the properly understood Tree of Knowledge as it is now in order to achieve the goal and task of the earth.

Let us ask ourselves — and here we touch on a significant mystery of spiritual science — what is really the situation with the members we have come to know as the members of human nature? We know to begin with that the highest member of human nature is the “I.” We learn to express our “I” at a definite moment in childhood. We gain a relationship to this “I” at the point to which we have memories in later life. We know from the most varied spiritual scientific considerations that until this point in time the “I” itself was active in forming and structuring us. This remains the case until the point at which we begin to have a relationship, a conscious relationship, to our “I.” In the child, this “I” is there also, but it works within, its first task is to form our body. To begin with it creates the super-sensible forces in the spiritual world. When we have gone through conception and birth it still works creatively on our body for a period of time that lasts a few years, until we have our body as a tool so that we can consciously comprehend our self as an “I.” A deep mystery is connected with this entry of the “I” into the human bodily nature. When we meet a person we ask him, “How old are you?” He gives his age as the years that have passed since his birth. As has been said, we touch here on a certain mystery of spiritual science that will become more and more clear as time passes. Today, however, I will only touch on it, will only share it with you. What a person gives as his age at a definite time of his life is connected with

his physical body. He says nothing other than that his physical body has been developing for so-and-so long since his birth. The “I” does not go along with this development of the physical body. The “I” stays there.

This is a difficult mystery to grasp, that the “I” stays at the point of time to which we can recollect, the point at which we remember ourselves. It does not change with the body, it stays there. For just this reason we always have it in front of us so that, as we look, it can mirror our experiences for us. The “I” does not take part in our earthly journey. Only when we have gone through the portal of death must we take the path that we call Kamaloca backward again to our birth in order to re-encounter our “I” and then to take it along on our further journey. The “I” remains behind. The body pushes itself forward in years while the “I” remains behind, the “I” stays there. This is difficult to comprehend because one cannot imagine that something remains standing in time while time keeps moving. Nevertheless this is so, the “I” stays there, and it remains there because the “I” does not actually unite itself with what approaches the human being from earthly existence. It remains united with those forces we call ours in the spiritual world. The “I” remains there, the “I” fundamentally remains in the form in which it has been conferred on us, as we know, by the Spirits of Form.

This “I” is retained in the spiritual world, It must be held in the spiritual world, for otherwise we would never be able to achieve again the earth's original goal and aim as human beings during our earthly evolution. What the human being underwent here on earth because of his Adam nature, you could say, of which he takes an impress into the grave when he dies as Adam — this clings to the physical body, etheric body, and astral body, this comes from these. The “I” waits, waits with everything that is in it, waits the entire time undergone by the human being on the earth. It looks only toward the further development of the human being as he repeats it for himself when he has gone through the portal of death and follows this path in reverse. This means that we remain with our “I” back in the spiritual world (this is meant in a specific sense). Humanity ought to become conscious of this fact. And humanity is only able to become conscious of this fact because at a certain time the Christ descended out of those worlds to which the human being belongs, out of the spiritual worlds. In the body of Jesus He prepared for Himself, in the way we know, in a twofold way, what was to serve Him as body on the earth. If we understand ourselves correctly, we always look back through our entire earthly life, back to our childhood. Our spiritual element has remained back in our childhood. We always look toward this if we wish to understand things correctly. And humanity ought to be instructed to look toward what the spirit out of the heights can say: “Let the little children come to me.” Not adults, who are connected with the earth, but rather the little children. In having been given the festival of Christmas in addition to the Mystery of Golgotha, humanity ought to be instructed in this. Otherwise the Mystery of Golgotha would only need to have been conferred on humanity in relation to the last three years of Christ's life, when Christ was in the body of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Christmas festival shows how Christ prepared the human body for himself during childhood. This is what should lie at the basis of the Christmas experience: to know how the human being has actually always remained connected with what is approaching now through what remained behind during growth, remaining in the heavenly heights. In the form of the child, the human being should be reminded of the human-divine element from which he has distanced himself on descending to the earth but that now has returned to him. The human being ought to be reminded

of this childlike element in him. He ought to be reminded of Him who brought back the childlike element to him again. Though it was not easy, one can see the force that works so wonderfully to carry this precisely in the way in which the festival of the World Child, the Christmas festival, was developed in areas of Central Europe.

What we have seen today was only a small example of the Christmas plays, of which there are many. It comes from olden times and is one of the kind of Christmas plays that I have already pointed to. Only a few of these so-called Paradise Plays have remained, which were performed at Christmas and in which the story of Creation was presented. It has remained connected to the Shepherds' Play and with the play of the Three Kings, who bring their gifts. Much of this used to live in numerous Christmas plays, but to a large extent they have now disappeared.

These plays disappeared even in rural areas in approximately the middle of the eighteenth century, but it is wonderful to see how some remained alive. A man about whom I have spoken, Karl Julius Schröer, collected such Christmas plays in the area of western Hungary in the 1850's. He searched for them in the area around Pressburg, and then further beyond Pressburg into Hungary. Others collected such Christmas plays in different areas, but what Karl Julius Schröer was able to find at that time of the performance of these Christmas plays and the customs connected with them can enter our hearts deeply. These Christmas plays, handwritten, remained in the hands of certain families in the villages and were treasured as something especially sacred. When October came around, people began thinking about having to perform these plays during the Christmas season for the people of the village. Then the best behaved boys and girls were selected, and they began to prepare themselves: they were not permitted to drink wine or any alcoholic beverages, nor were they permitted — which could well happen in such places, as we know — to be rowdy and rambunctious on Sundays, and they were not permitted any other transgressions. They really had to “lead a holy life,” as is said. Thus people were aware that a certain moral mood of the soul had to be assumed by those who were to devote themselves to the performance of such plays during the Christmas season. Such plays were not to be performed out of ordinary worldliness.

They were performed with all the naïveté with which the peasants could perform something like that. And yet the whole performance was permeated with deepest seriousness, with infinite seriousness. The plays gathered by Karl Julius Schröer and others in the most varied areas have in common this deep seriousness, the seriousness with which one approached the Christmas mystery. But this was not always the case. We only need to go back just a few centuries to find something different, to encounter something most curious. In looking at how these Christmas plays arose and gradually developed in areas of Central Europe, we are able to see especially clearly how overwhelmingly the Christmas thought was active.

But this thought was not immediately taken up in the way I have just described it, approached with a certain kind of sacred modesty, with great seriousness and awareness of the significance of the event that lived in the feeling. No indeed! In many areas it began by simply placing a manger in some kind of side altar in this or that church. (This was still the case in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but it goes back to still earlier times.) A manger was placed there, and therefore a stall, in which were placed an ox and an ass, as well as the Child and two dolls representing Joseph and Mary. At first they used a very naive sculptural technique, but then it

was desired to bring more life to the figures. This came first from the side of the clergy. Thus priests dressed themselves up, one as Joseph, the other as Mary, and they then represented these figures. They played these roles instead of using the dolls. In the earliest times they even presented the scene in Latin, because in the old churches, if the performance was to present a deep meaning it was considered important that those who saw or listened *understand* as little as possible, that they only see the outer mimicry.

After some time this was no longer tolerated. The people also wanted to understand what was performed in front of them. Gradually there was a transition to presenting portions of it in the local language spoken in those regions. And finally the people awoke to a feeling of wanting to participate, to experience it themselves. Yet it remained foreign to them, quite foreign. We need only consider that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, familiarity with these holy mysteries of Christmas night, for example, did not exist. Today we take these things for granted, but at that time it was not there. You have to keep in mind that year in and year out people heard the mass, also hearing it at Christmas (held at midnight during the holy night), but that they did not hear the Bible — the Bible was only there for the priest to read. Thus they knew only single fragments of the sacred story. The initial attempts by the priests to present these things dramatically were really in order to acquaint the people with what had once taken place. In this way the people learned to know what was written in the Bible.

I must say something now that I beg you not to misunderstand. It can be mentioned because it corresponds to purely historical truth. Some kind of mystery mood or something similar did not immediately emanate from these presentations once people wanted to participate in the Christmas plays. This is not how it was. Rather the longing to take part in what was presented to them, to be more active participants, was what brought people closer to the situation. And finally they had to be permitted to participate to some extent; things had to be made more comprehensible to the people. By making it more comprehensible, things moved forward step by step. For example, people did not understand initially that in the manger lay the Child. They had never seen that, they had never seen a child in a manger. Certainly earlier, when they were not permitted to understand anything, they just accepted it, but now that they wanted to participate it needed to be made completely comprehensible to them.

At that time only a rocking cradle was placed in front of them, and people began to take part by walking by the cradle, each person rocking the Child in it for a little while. Gradually similar moments of participation developed. There were even regions where first a person approached the manger very seriously and then, on finding the Child there, incredible noise erupted and everyone screamed and pointed and danced, indicating the pleasure they now experienced because the Child had been born. This was taken up entirely in a mood emanating from the longing to participate themselves, the longing to experience a story. In the story, however, there was such grandness, something so powerful, that out of this completely profane mood — for it was initially a profane mood — there developed gradually, bit by bit, the holy mood about which I have just been speaking. The situation itself poured its holiness out over a reception that initially could not have been called holy. Especially in the Middle Ages, the holy story of Christmas first had to conquer the people. And the story conquered them to such an extent that while they were performing their plays they wanted to prepare themselves morally in such an intensive way.

What was it that conquered human feelings, the human soul? It was the sight of the Child, the view of what has remained holy in the human being while the three remaining bodies unite themselves with earthly development. Although in certain regions and during certain periods the story of Bethlehem took on grotesque forms, it was inherent in human nature to develop this holy view toward the nature of the Child, which is connected with what entered into Christian evolution from the very beginning: the consciousness of how what remains behind in the human being when he begins his earthly development must enter into a new bond with that which united itself with earthly man. He gives over to the earth the wood out of which the Cross must be made, through which he establishes a new bond.

In older times of Christian development in Central Europe, only the Easter thought was present among the people. Only in the way in which I have described it has the Christmas thought gradually been added. What we find written in the *Heliand*, or similar works, was recorded by individual poets, but it did not become popular. The popular aspects of Christmas arose in the way I have just described, which shows in a truly grand way how the thought of the bond with the childlike, with the pure, truly childlike element that appeared in a new form in the Jesus Child, has conquered the human being. If we bring the power of this thought together with the fact that this thought can live in souls so as to unite all people (and to begin with it is the only thought in our earthly existence that can do so), we come to the true Christ thought. The Christ thought therefore becomes great and must gradually become stronger in us if the further evolution of the earth is to take place in the right way.

Just consider how far removed the human being in present earthly existence still is from what is concealed in the depths of the Christ thought. A book has just recently been published — perhaps you have read it — written by Ernst Haeckel, *World War Thoughts About Life, Death, and Infinity and Religion*. A book by Ernst Haeckel is certainly one that proceeds from the most serious search for truth. This book by Ernst Haeckel points to what is now taking place on the earth, how people are at war with one another, how they hate one another, how countless deaths result every day. Haeckel mentions all these thoughts that obtrude upon people so painfully. Certainly he always mentions these thoughts with the background of looking at the world as he sees it from his standpoint. We know about his standpoint, having often spoken about it and about how we can recognize in Haeckel one of the greatest scientists. This standpoint leads also to other things, but it leads to something that can be observed in the newer phases of Haeckel's development.

Haeckel offers some thoughts about the World War. He also remarks on how much blood is flowing now, how many deaths surround us, and he asks himself, “Can the thoughts of religion survive next to these events?” As Haeckel asks it, “Can one believe that there is in any way a wisdom-filled providence, a beneficent God who rules the world, when every day one sees that by mere chance,” so he says, “so many people's lives are ended, that they die by no cause that can be proven to be related in any way to some kind of wise world rulership? Instead, by chance” he says, “this one or that one is struck by a bullet, suffering either death or injury. In the face of all these events, do thoughts of wisdom, thoughts of divine providence, have any meaning? Must not just such events as these prove that the human being must stay in one place, that he is nothing but what the outer, materialistically conceived history of evolution shows us, and that

fundamentally everything in earthly existence is ruled not by divine providence but by chance? Is it possible in the face of all these events to have another religious thought” says Haeckel, “to do something other than resign oneself, saying that a person simply surrenders his body and dissipates into the cosmos?”

One can ask further, however — Haeckel no longer asks this question — “If this cosmos is nothing but the play of atoms, does human life really provide a meaning for earthly existence?” As I said, Haeckel does not ask this question any more, but he does give an answer in his Christmas book: “Precisely events such as those that touch us so painfully now, just such events show that there is no justification for believing in any kind of beneficent providence or wise guidance of the world or anything like it; it is impossible now to maintain that anything like this weaves through and guides the world. Therefore resignation, seeing one's own way, is all there is.”

Haeckel's book is also a Christmas book! It is a Christmas book meant very sincerely and honestly. But this book is based on a significant prejudice. It rests on the prejudice that it is not permissible to seek in a spiritual way for the earth's meaning, that humanity is prohibited from looking for a meaning of the earth in a spiritual way.

If it is only the outer course of events that is considered, one does not see this meaning. This is what happens to Haeckel. Then the situation must remain with the recognition that this life has no meaning. This is what Haeckel means. Looking for meaning is not permitted! But is it not so that another might come and say something further: that if we look only at these contemporary events externally, pointing out that countless bullets are destroying human lives, if we look only at these events and no meaning results, then precisely because of this we must seek for this meaning in a deeper way. It is precisely events such as these that show us we cannot amply look for and believe in meaning by looking just at what is going on now on the earth — by seeing only that these human souls vanish like their bodily natures. Instead we must look at what they are now beginning as they pass through the portal of death. In short, another person could come and say that precisely because no meaning can be found in the outer events, the meaning must be looked for outside the outer, the meaning must be looked for in the super-sensible.

Is this any different from looking at the same matter in a completely different realm? For one who thinks the way Haeckel thinks today, Haeckel's science can become a refusal to recognize any meaning in earthly existence. It can happen that a person wants to prove out of the events that are taking place so painfully today that earthly life as such has no meaning. But, if one takes hold of the problem in our way — we have done this frequently — precisely this same science takes as its starting point the deep and great meaning that can be unraveled by us in world phenomena. For this to happen, however, something spiritual must be active in the world; we must be able to unite ourselves with the spiritual. It is impossible for people to find a meaning for the earth, a real meaning, because our educated people do not yet understand that it is necessary to permit the power to work upon them that once so wonderfully conquered hearts, souls: the power that arose on looking at the Christmas mystery, from which a profane comprehension evolved into a sacred comprehension. Scholars are unable to grasp this yet; they cannot yet unite the Christ impulse with what they see in the outer world, and thus it is impossible for them to find a meaning for the earth.

Thus one must say that science, for all its great progress of which people are so proud today — and justifiably so - is not in a position out of itself to lead to a view that satisfies the human being. As it goes its way, it can lead in the same way either to meaninglessness or to the meaning of the earth, just as in any other domain. Consider this outer science so proudly developed in the last few centuries, especially from the nineteenth century until today, with all its wonderful laws. Consider everything that surrounds us today. It has been brought forth by this science. We no longer burn light at night in the same way that Goethe burned his. We burn light in a completely different way, and we illuminate our rooms in a completely different way. Consider everything that lives in our souls today out of our science; it has arisen through the great progress of science, of which humanity is justifiably proud. What is the effect of this same science? It is a blessing if man develops it as such. But today, especially since it is such a complete science, it produces indomitable instruments of death. Its progress serves destruction just as well as construction. Just as the science acknowledged by Haeckel can lead to either meaning or meaninglessness, so the science that can achieve such great things can serve either construction or destruction. And if the main thing is this science, science will bring forth evermore horrible and frightful works of destruction out of the same source that leads to constructive ends.

Science does not directly have an impulse to bring humanity forward. If only this were seen once, this science would be evaluated in the right way! Only then would it be known that something else must be an integral part of humanity's evolution than what the human being can achieve through this science. For what is this science, after all? In reality it is nothing but the tree that grows out of the grave of Adam. And the time is fast approaching when people will recognize that this science is the tree growing out of Adam's grave. And the time will come when people will recognize that this tree must become the wood that is the Cross of humanity. This wood can lead to a blessing only if that which unites in the right way with what lies beyond death, but lives already here in the human being, is crucified on the Cross: that which we behold on the holy Christmas night if we experience it in the right way, in its true mystery, that which can be presented in a childlike way but that bears the highest mysteries. Isn't it actually wonderful that in the simplest way it can be said to the people: something entered which is active through human life on earth, something that actually may not go beyond childhood. It is related to what the human being belongs to as a super-sensible being. Isn't it wonderful that this super-sensible-invisible element, in the most eminent sense, can come so near to human souls in such a simple picture? Simple human souls!

Yes, those who are educated must also undertake the path taken by those simple human souls. There was a time when the Child was not presented in the manger. The Child in the manger was not presented, but instead the Child sleeping on the Cross was presented. The Child sleeping on the Cross! A wonderfully profound picture, bringing the entire thought to expression that I have wanted to let arise before your souls today.

And is it not basically very simple to express this thought? Yes, it is. Indeed, let us look once for the origin of those impulses that oppose each other in the world today in such a horrible way. Where do these impulses originate? Where does everything originate that makes the life of humanity so difficult today? Where is the origin of all this? It lies in everything we become in the world only after that point of time at which we can recollect ourselves. If we go back beyond

this point of time, if we go back to the point in time at which we are called the “little children who are able to enter the kingdom of heaven” — this is not where it originates. At that point nothing of what today is in battle and dispute resides in human souls. The thought can be expressed this simply, but spiritually we must consider the fact that there is something so original in the human soul that it goes beyond all human strife, beyond all human disharmony.

We have often spoken of the ancient mysteries that wanted to awaken in human nature that which permits the human being to look up into the super-sensible. And we have spoken of the fact that the Mystery of Golgotha, perceptible for all human beings on the stage of history, has presented the super-sensible mystery. There is something that fundamentally unites us with the true Christ thought. We have this by virtue of the fact that we are able to have moments in our life (I am now speaking directly, not in a pictorial way) in which, despite everything we are in the outer world, we can bring alive in us what we received as a child. We can do this by going backward, feeling ourselves back at the child's standpoint: We can do this by looking toward the human being as he develops between birth and death, so that we are able to sense within us what we received as a child.

In the public lecture about Johann Gottlieb Fichte which I gave last Thursday, I could have added something, but at the time it would not have been understood. I could have said something that would have clarified a great deal that lives in this devout man in such a peculiar way. I would have spoken about *why* he actually developed the very particular way he did, and I would have had to say that this was because, more than other people, he retained the childlike quality in himself despite growing old. He retained more of the childlike quality in himself than other people do. Such people actually grow less old. It is really true that what existed in childhood remains more in such people than in others. This is generally the secret of many great human beings, that right into their oldest age they are able to remain children in a certain way; even when they die, they die as children, though this must be expressed only partially, since one must be connected with life.

The Christmas mystery thus speaks to what lives in us as a childlike quality, it speaks with a view to the divine Child who was selected to take up the Christ. It speaks with a view to the one who was already overshadowed by the Christ, who went through the Mystery of Golgotha in reality to heal the earth.

Let us become conscious of the fact that when we surrender the imprint of our higher self, when we surrender our physical body to the earth, it is not a merely physical process. Something spiritual is also taking place. But this spiritual aspect takes place in the right way only by virtue of the fact that the Christ being has streamed into the earth aura, the Christ being who went through the Mystery of Golgotha. We cannot see the earth in its completeness if we do not see that since the Mystery of Golgotha the Christ has been united with the earth. We can bypass the Christ, just as we can bypass everything super-sensible, if we feel ourselves constituted only of earthly matter and only able to relate to it. But if the earth is to have a real and true meaning for us, we can not bypass Christ. For this reason everything depends on our being able to awaken in ourselves something that will open the view into the spiritual world.

Let us make our Christmas festival into something that it must be especially for us. Let us make it into a festival that serves not only the past but the future, the future that little by little is to bring to birth the spiritual life for all humanity. We want to unite ourselves with the prophetic feeling, the prophetic intimation, that such a birth of the spiritual life must be brought to humanity, that presiding over humanity's future a great holy night must be active, coming to birth out of what gives meaning to the earth from human thoughts. The earth received this meaning objectively through the fact that the Christ being united Himself with the earth aura through the Mystery of Golgotha. In the holy night let us think of how, out of the depths of darkness, light must enter human evolution, the light of spiritual life. The old light of spiritual life that was there before the Mystery of Golgotha had to pass away, gradually it had to be extinguished. The light must arise again, must be reborn after the Mystery of Golgotha through the consciousness in the human soul, that this human soul is connected with what Christ became for the earth through the Mystery of Golgotha.

If there are more and more people who come to know how to conceive of Christmas in such a spiritual scientific sense, this Christmas night will develop a force in human hearts and human souls that will have its meaning in all times. It will have meaning in times in which people surrender themselves to feelings of joy, but also in times in which people have to surrender themselves to the feelings of pain that must penetrate us today when we think of the great misery of our time.

Since looking up to the spiritual gives meaning to the earth, I would like to share with you today the words of one who expressed this so beautifully:

What gave my eye this force,
That all misshapen forms have dissolved,
That the nights become like brilliant suns.
Disorder becomes order, decay life?

What intricate weaving through time, through space,
Guides me surely to the eternal well
Of the Beautiful, the True, the Good, and of all delight,
And in destroying immerses all my striving?

It is this: into Urania's eye, the deep,
Itself clear, blue, still, pure
Lightflame, I myself have quietly gazed.

Since then, this eye rests in my depths
And is in my being — the eternal
One, *Lives* in my life, *sees* in my seeing.

And in a second small poem:

Nothing is but God, and God is nothing but life,
You know it, you and I know it together,
But how would knowing be there
If it were not knowing of God's life?

“How gladly would I surrender myself to this,
Yet where do I find it? Somehow it flows
Into knowing, then transforms itself into seeming,
Mingling with it, surrounded by its sheaths.”

Quite clearly the sheath rises up before you,
It is your I, what is destructible dies,
And henceforth only God lives in your striving.

See through what survives this striving,
Then the sheath becomes visible to you as sheath.
And unveiled you see divine life.

Certainly people do not always know what they ought to do with those who point to perceiving the spiritual that gives meaning to the earth. It is not only materialists who do not know what to do. Others who believe they are not materialists because they are always saying, “God! God! God!” or “Lord! Lord! Lord!” often do not know what to make of these individuals who guide us to the spiritual. For what can one do with a person who says, “There is nothing but God! Everything is God! Everywhere, everywhere is God!” He was seeking for God in everything, the one who said:

See through what survives this striving,
Then the sheath becomes visible to you as sheath.
And unveiled, you see divine life!

An individual who wants to see divine life everywhere could be accused of not allowing the world to exist, of denying the existence of the world. Though one could call him a world-denier, his contemporaries called him a denier of God, and they therefore chased him away from the colleges and universities. The words I have read to you are those of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. If the Mystery of Golgotha continues to live on in the human soul through earthly existence — amid what is connected with this Mystery of Golgotha in the Christmas mystery — it can serve as an impulse resounding in the soul. Fichte is a perfect example of how, when this is the case, a path is opened on which we can find the consciousness in which our own “I” flows together with the earth “I” — for this earth “I” is the Christ. Through this, we develop something in the human being that must become greater and greater if the earth is to move toward the development for which it was destined from the beginning.

Therefore we especially wish, out of the spirit of our spiritual knowledge renewed in the sense it has been today, to let the Christmas thought become an impulse in us. By looking up to this Christmas thought, we wish to attempt to see from what surrounds us not the meaninglessness of earthly evolution; rather, in the suffering and pain, in the strife and hate, we hope to see

something that ultimately helps humanity forward, something that really brings humanity a bit forward.

It is not so important to look for causes, which anyway are so easily concealed in partisan strife. It is much more important for what happens today to focus on the possible effects, those effects that we must picture to ourselves as healing, as bringing healing for humanity.

The nations and people who are in a position to shape something that can be healing for humanity of the future out of what is able to sprout from the blood-drenched soil will be led to the right approach. What can be healing for humanity, however, can develop only if people find the way into the spiritual worlds, if people do not forget that there was not only one Christmas but that there must be an everlasting Christmas, an everlasting coming-to-birth of the divine-spiritual in the physical, earthly human being.

Especially today we wish to enclose the sacredness of this thought in our souls, we wish to hold it for the time surrounding Christmas, which can be a symbol for the evolution of light also in its outer course. In these days, at this time of year, darkness, earth darkness, will be here to the greatest degree possible on earth. When the earth lives in this deepest outer darkness, however, we know that the earth soul experiences her light, beginning to awaken to the highest degree. The time of Christmas, then, is connected with the time of spiritual awakening. And with this time of spiritual awakening, the memory of the spiritual awakening for earthly evolution through the Christ Jesus shall be united. We therefore have the institution of the Christmas festival especially at this time.

Let us unite the Christmas thought with our soul in this cosmic, and at the same time earthly, moral sense. Then, reinforced and strengthened with this Christmas thought as best we can, let us look upon everything surrounding us to want what is right for the progress of events, also wanting what is appropriate in the development of deeds of the present time.

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