

LECTURE 1

MATERIALISM AND SPIRITUALITY—  
LIFE AND DEATH

*Berlin, February 6, 1917*

Let us turn our thoughts, dear friends, as we continually do, to the guardian spirits of those who are absent from us, taking their place where the great destinies of the time are being fulfilled:

Spirits ever watchful, Guardian of their souls!  
May your vibrations waft  
To the Earth human beings committed to your charge  
Our souls' petitioning love:  
That, united with your power,  
Our prayer may helpfully radiate  
To the souls it lovingly seeks!

And to the spirits of those who have passed through the gate of death:

Spirits ever watchful, Guardians of their souls!  
May your vibrations waft  
To human beings of the spheres committed to your  
charge  
Our souls' petitioning love:  
That, united with your power,  
Our prayer may helpfully radiate  
To the souls it lovingly seeks!

## COSMIC AND HUMAN METAMORPHOSES

And that Spirit, Who for the healing of the Earth  
and for her progress, and for the freedom  
and salvation of humankind, passed through  
the Mystery of Golgotha;

The Spirit whom in our spiritual science we seek,  
to whom we would draw near,  
May he be at your side in all your difficult tasks!<sup>1</sup>

Let me first express the deep satisfaction I have in being able to be once more in your midst. I would have come earlier, but for an urgent need, that kept me in Dornach until the work on “The Group” had reached a point at which it could be continued without me. You have often heard me speak of “The Group,” which will stand in the east end of the Goetheanum and presents the Representative of Humanity in relation to ahrimanic forces on the one hand, and on the other to luciferic forces. These days, one needs forethought for the future, and it seemed to me absolutely necessary, considering what may happen, to make that progress with “The Group” before leaving Dornach, which has now been possible. Furthermore, the times are certain to bring home to us with particular intensity the fact that meeting with one another here on the physical plane is not the only thing that sustains and strengthens us in the impulse of spiritual science. Rather, we must be born up through this difficult time of sorrow and trial by coming together in our anthroposophic efforts, even if together only in spirit. And indeed, this very thing is to be the test for our anthroposophic efforts.

Since we were together here previously, we have had to lament the loss from the physical plane of our dear Ms. Motzkus, as well as other dear friends who have left the physical plane because of the current terrible events. It is especially painful to see Ms. Motzkus no longer among the friends who have shared our anthroposophic efforts here for so many years. She had been

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1 These meditations were repeated at the beginning of each lecture in the series.

a member of our movement since its beginning. From the first day, from the first meeting of a very small circle, she always showed the deepest and most heartfelt devotion to our movement and participated intimately and earnestly in all the phases it went through, in all its times of trial and testing. Above all, through the events and changes through which we had to pass, she preserved an invincible loyalty to the movement in the deepest sense of the word—loyalty through which she set an example to all those who would wish to be worthy members of the anthroposophic movement. Thus, with our gaze we follow this beloved and pure soul into the spiritual worlds to which she has ascended, still feeling toward her the bond of trust and confidence that has grown stronger and deeper over the years, knowing that our own souls are linked with hers forever. . . .

Recently, Ms. Motzkus herself suffered the loss of a dear friend, whom she quickly found again in the spiritual world. She bore that sad blow in such a way that it could be received and born by one who is conscious of an actual hold on the spiritual world. It was marvelous to witness Ms. Motzkus's ardent and intense interest in the great events of our time, right up to the last days of her life. She told me repeatedly that she would like to remain here on the physical plane until the momentous events, in the midst of which we are living, have reached a decisive conclusion. Now she will be able to follow these events to which she has been so closely and intimately linked with even freer vision and firmer impulse for the evolution of humanity. May it be laid on all our hearts to unite ourselves whenever we can in thought and in soul activity with this faithful spirit, a faithful and well-loved member of our movement. In this way, we who have been so remarkably united with her here on the physical plane will continue to know that we are united with her in the years to come, when she will be among us in another form.

The times in which we live are such that it is becoming increasingly an urgent matter to understand the struggle for spiritual knowledge and its significance for the humanity today

and in the immediate future. The events in the midst of which we now stand cause a sort of numbing in many today, though it is little noticed. The souls who survive the catastrophe on the physical plane will not awake until later to recognize fully what is happening and realize how deeply this catastrophe has cut into human evolution. Moreover, we should feel the need to evoke illuminating thoughts in our souls that can shed light on the objects and aims of the spiritual movement so needed by humanity. In addition, since we have come together now after so long, it may be useful to specify the views of our spiritual science in a few short thoughts—or rather the views that naturally arise as a result of the spiritual science we have had before our souls for some years. It is clear that in all parts of the world there are some members of humanity who are developing a longing to approach the spiritual world, despite the fact that materialism is unfortunately not decreasing, and because of the various forms that such longing for the spirit is taking. Consequently, we must specify and bring our own search for spiritual life before the soul. In England today, research into the spiritual world by one of the most prominent and learned individuals is making a great impression in large circles, even those of cultured people.

It is an extraordinary phenomenon that a man considered to be among the first scientists of that country should have written a comprehensive book about the relationship between human beings on Earth and the spiritual world, and that this should have taken such a remarkable form. In this book, Sir Oliver Lodge<sup>2</sup> (who for some years has worked in various ways to extend the scientific knowledge he acquired so that it may be applied to the spiritual world) describes a series of episodes in which he asserts that he has come in touch with the spiritual world. The case is as follows. Sir Oliver Lodge had a son, Raymond, who in 1915 took part on the English side during the war in Flanders. At a

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2 Sir Oliver Joseph Lodge (1851–1940) was a physicist and writer who helped develop key patents in wireless telegraphy.

time when his parents knew him to be at the front, they received remarkable news from America, which to those having what I might call “materialistic spiritualistic” tendencies must certainly have seemed very striking. The message supposedly came from the English psychologist Frederick Myers (1843–1901), who before his death many years ago had studied the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds, and who himself, now in the spiritual world, pronounced that world would soon be prepared to receive young Lodge. At first, it was not clear to what the message referred. There was some delay before the message reached Sir Oliver—only after his son had fallen. I think it was two weeks later, but I am not certain.

Then other messages came, given through mediums in America, advising the parents to go to an English medium. Consequently, Sir Oliver did visit one, though he maintained a skeptical attitude toward her. (I will have more to say on the significance of this.) Sir Oliver is a scientist, trained for the scientific testing of such cases. He went to work as he would in his laboratory, and what follows was given not through one but several mediums. The soul of Raymond wanted to communicate with the Lodge family. All sorts of communications followed through automatic writing and table turning communications. It was so surprising that not only Sir Oliver himself, but also the rest of the family became quite convinced, though they had been extremely skeptical in such matters.

Among other statements, the soul of Raymond stated that Myers was with him and acting as a guardian. He told them several things about his final days on Earth, and much that was significant to the parents and family, making a great impression upon them, especially as various things communicated by Raymond through mediums were intended for the family, particularly for Sir Oliver. The way the sittings were held afforded great surprise to the family, and strangely enough, they also caused great surprise to a wide public. They would not have surprised anyone who had experience of such things, since, in reality, the

nature of the communications concerning the dead that comes through mediums and the manner of the communication is quite familiar to the investigator.

One thing, however, made a profound impression in England, and was well calculated to impress and convince the civilized world of England and America and to bring conviction thus far lacking to many in our skeptical age. This fact, which converted many and will convert many more, made a very strong impression on the Lodge family, particularly Sir Oliver, and impressed much of the public. It was the following incident.

A description was given through a medium of some photographs taken while Raymond was still alive. Raymond himself described them to the medium by means of rapping.<sup>3</sup> In this way, a photographic group was described—that is, by means of the medium the soul of Raymond was evidently trying to describe the photograph taken of him in a group shortly before he passed through the gates of death. From the other side, he told them that he had sat in two groups with his companions and that these were taken one after the other, describing his position in the groups. Furthermore, he described the differences in the two different photographs, saying that he sat on the same chair and in the same attitude in both, but that the position of the arm was a little different and so on.

All this was described in detail. Now the family knew nothing of these photographs; they did not know that any such had been taken. Thus, indirectly through the medium, the fact was made known that there was a photographic group in existence representing Raymond Lodge with several companions. Some few weeks later, a photograph was sent to Sir Oliver from France, corresponding exactly to the one described by the soul of Raymond through the medium. This would naturally make

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3 The Spiritualism movement began with what was termed *typtology*, a mode of spirit communication in which spirits lift and tilt a table during a séance to produce rapping sounds. See, for example, Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritualism, Madame Blavatsky and Theosophy*.

a strong impression on anyone who approaches such things in a superficial way, as all those concerned clearly did. It was an experimental test.

The case in point is that of a soul from the other side who described photographs, several copies of which reached the family some time later. They were then found to correspond in every detail to the description given. It was quite impossible that either the medium or anyone present at the sittings could have seen the photographs. We have a case that must be addressed both scientifically and historically; not only might we say that such a case would naturally make a great impression, but also that it really did occur and made an enormous impression. As far as could be seen, this photographic proof, which has nothing to do with thought transference, was very convincing.

It is necessary for us to bring the whole of this case before our mind's vision. We must be quite clear about the fact that, when a human being passes through the gate of death, the human individuality is at first briefly enshrouded in the astral and ether bodies; and that the latter after a more or less brief period—varying in different cases, but never lasting more than a few days—passes out into the etheric world and there pursues its further destiny; so that the individuality enters the spiritual world with the astral body only, and continues its further wanderings in that world. The ether body is severed from the human individuality just as the physical body was on Earth.

Now we must clearly understand that in spiritualistic séances (and the whole work of Sir Oliver Lodge is based on these), only a person who has real knowledge can determine whether the communications come from the actual individuality or merely from the castoff, forsaken etheric corpse. This etheric corpse remains in continual communication with the individuality. However, when one makes a connection with the spiritual world in a roundabout way through a medium, one comes in touch with the etheric corpse first, and so can never be sure of reaching the actual individual in this way. It is certain in our age that

there is an effort to find some sort of proof for spiritual existence, such as is found by experiments in the laboratory, something that can be grasped with hands and that one can actually see in the material world. Our materialistic age does not care about following the inner path that the soul must take in the spiritual worlds, the purely spiritual path; it wants the spirit to descend into the material world and be discovered there. We are experiencing all kinds of materialistic spiritualism, a materialistic turning to the worlds of the spirit.

Now, it is quite possible for the ether body, which has been separated from the actual human individuality, to manifest a certain life of its own which, to the uninitiated, may easily be mistaken for the life of the individual himself. We must not think that the ether body when given over to the etheric world only manifests reminiscences and recollections, mere echoes of what the human being passes through here; it manifests a real continuous individuality. It can relate incidents and say quite new things, but we should be going quite off the track if we thought that because a connection is established with the ether body, we are necessarily in connection with the individual himself. It is very possible in the case of people sitting in a small circle—all being members of the family as was the case with the Lodges, all thinking in one way or another about the dead human being, and all filled with thoughts and memories of him—that their thoughts may be conveyed to his ether body through the medium, and that this ether body may occasionally give striking replies, which may actually produce the impression of being spoken by the individuality of the dead. Yet, perhaps, they may only proceed from his etheric corpse. Those who are acquainted with such things actually find this to be the case, and when Raymond Lodge was supposed to come to his family through the medium, in reality it was the etheric corpse speaking. Raymond Lodge had not really held communion with the circle at all. Hence, as I have said, to those accustomed to the course of events in such séances, the communications do not appear very remarkable.

It is likely that the whole story would not have made such an impression on a wider public, nor would it continue to do so, had it not been for the incident of the photographs. This story of the photographs is remarkable, indeed exceptionally so, because here it was impossible that any transference of thoughts should take place—passing through the medium to the ether body of Raymond, as might have been the case in the other instances. No one in England could have known of the photographs; they had not yet come over at the time of the communications. Nonetheless, it is still very strange that such a learned scientist as Sir Oliver Lodge, who had for so long been interesting himself in these matters, should not know how such a circumstance is to be regarded.

I have taken particular trouble to look into this case more minutely. Sir Oliver Lodge is an educated man and a scientist, upon whose descriptions one can rely. We are not dealing with any ordinary document produced by ordinary spiritualistic séances, but with the communications of a person describing with the certainty of a scientist, who has developed the conscientiousness customary to a scientist in the laboratory; therefore, it is possible to form a complete picture of what happened from his descriptions. It is remarkable that a learned man such as Sir Oliver Lodge was interested in the subject for so many years (although in this case he was specially interested because it was a question of his own son), yet would not have known what has often been mentioned in our spiritual science when describing atavistic forms of clairvoyance that manifest as presentiments. For this is none other than a very special case of deuteroscopia,<sup>4</sup> as follows.

We have a medium, and the spiritual world is in a certain sense accessible to this medium. Of course, as we know (through atavistic forces), such mediums can reach beyond space in their vision, but not only does their so-called second sight extend beyond space,

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4 *Deuteroscopia* = second sight, or spiritual vision.

it also extends beyond time. Let us consider a special case—one quoted hundreds of times. You may read descriptions of it if you have not experienced it yourself through your acquaintances.

The case I refer to is when someone who has that tendency sees one's coffin or funeral, as in a dream or half in a vision. Then this individual dies two weeks later. One saw in advance what was to occur fourteen days later. Or, perhaps, one may see not one's own funeral or coffin, but that of a complete stranger, an event in which the dreamer has no interest. In a particular case, one may see oneself leaving the house and falling off a horse. This thing did occur—someone saw that happen and tried to avert it—but, notwithstanding all precautions, it nonetheless happened. That is a case of a vision extending in time, and what Sir Oliver Lodge describes is precisely this second sight in time. His descriptions are given so accurately that it was possible to investigate the case. Through her forces, the medium was able to see an event still in the future. At the time she spoke, the photograph was not present but arrived about two weeks later. It was then shown around to friends and relatives. This happened some time later, but the medium saw it in advance; it was a prophetic vision, a case of deuteroscopia. It was a prevision; that is the explanation. It had nothing to do with a communication between those on the physical plane and someone in the spiritual world.

You see how greatly one may be misled by striving to give a materialistic explanation of spiritual circumstances in the world, and how blind one may be to the actual facts; of course, such a vision is nonetheless a proof of the reality of a world behind the ordinary world of sense. The case is an interesting one; only it should not be quoted as proving a connection between the dead and the living. We must seek for the dead—if indeed we should or ought to seek for them at all—by following a truly spiritual path. In the near future I shall have many things to say on this subject; for it is my intention to give much consideration to the subject of the relation between the living and the dead.

I have brought up the subject of this book of Sir Oliver Lodge to show you how, although the longing after the spiritual world does exist, it may here be said to have taken a materialistic form. Sir Oliver Lodge is a learned scientist; although he strives after the spiritual world, he tries to gain knowledge of it by methods of the chemical world or of physics. Just as he experiments in his laboratory according to the laws of chemistry, so he wants visual proof of what relates to the spiritual world. But the way we must recognize as the right one is very far from his; our way leads the soul by an inner method to the spiritual world, as we have often described, and no less often have we described what the soul first becomes acquainted with there and which immediately concerns us at the present time and underlies the world of physical sense, in which we live. We learn to recognize the whole materialistic character of our age, in the materialistic efforts that are directed to the spiritual world. If our movement is to have any meaning at all, a meaning which it should eventually have in accordance with the necessary evolutionary laws of humankind, it must sharply define and emphasize the spiritual inwardness of true spirituality, as compared with these materialistic and absurd efforts after a world of spirit.

Now, such an event as this cannot come quite suddenly, even as the event of Golgotha did not come suddenly but was prepared for during thirty-three years. The point of time when the event is to occur—this time spiritually—is very near and will have a like significance for humanity as the event of Golgotha on the physical plane. Hence, if you consider the facts alluded to above, you will not find it difficult to believe me when I say that He is already present in the form in which He will be seen in the great moment of evolution in the twentieth century, that the great moment is being now prepared. You will not consider it incredible, when I say that moment is now being prepared. Yes, we may say that although humanity seems as regards its present actions far from being permeated with the Christ spirit on the physical plane, yet if human souls will but open themselves

to him, the Christ, who is now approaching, is very near. The occultist is able to point out that since the year 1909 or thereabouts what is to come is being distinctly and perceptibly prepared for, that since the year 1909 we are inwardly living in a very special time. It is possible today, if we do but seek him, to be very near to Christ, to find Him in a quite different way than has been hitherto possible.

Why is it necessary in the present age that an entirely new method should hold human hearts, a purely spiritual method, one very different from the materialistic methods? This question must be considered in connection with the fact to which we have often alluded in the course of past years, and which must closely concern us at this time of sorrow and trial. We have indicated that this twentieth century must bring to humanity the vision of the etheric Christ. It truly happened (as we have often said) that at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, Christ walked among humanity in a physical form in one known part of the Earth. Likewise, the etheric Christ will walk among human beings over the whole Earth during the twentieth century. This event must not pass unobserved by humanity, for that would be sinning against the salvation of the world. Humanity must have its attention roused, so that a sufficient number of persons may actually be ready to see the Christ who will come and who must be seen.

There is one thought that occurs to me, and simple as it may seem I must give words to it, from a profound feeling for the times. People do not, alas, as a rule, think with sufficient clearness on the events of the past; especially with respect to what took place in human souls in bygone centuries; they no longer have any concept of the strength of the impression made by the Gospels in their existing form upon a circle that was then quite small. People now have no concept of how powerfully these ideas filled human souls at that time. As the centuries rolled by, the impression made by the inner substance of the Gospels grew continually weaker. Today, if we see things as they are, we can say

that, although individuals who possess certain powers of intuition and forces of divination may be permeated by the words of the Gospels enough to form some idea of what took place at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, the immense force once possessed by the Gospel words themselves is nevertheless growing weaker and weaker, and we have to see that the Gospels now make only a minor impression on most people.

This is not readily accepted, but it is the truth, so it would be better if people could realize it. How did this condition come about? Just as it is true that what pulsed in the Gospels is not an earthly language but cosmic words, heavenly words, possessing an immeasurably greater force than anything else on Earth, likewise it is also true that humankind in our time has become estranged from the form of these words as laid down in the Gospels at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha. Just consider how enormously difficult it is to understand when you encounter the language of even four or five hundred years ago. It is impossible to draw out its true content. The Gospels, as we find them today, are not actually the original Gospels; they do not possess their original force. It is possible to penetrate them, as I have said, by means of a kind of intuition, but they no longer have the same force. Christ spoke the word that should be deeply engraved in the human soul: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the Earth time" (Matt. 28:20). That is a truth, a fact. He will be with us in various forms close to the human soul during the time indicated in the twentieth century.

From what I have said, you will understand that those who feel they are standing in the center of these matters, those who are esotericists, should say that Christ is here; he makes his presence felt in such a way that we know clearly that he will now expect more of his human children than in bygone centuries. Until now, the Gospels have spoken an inner language to human beings. They had to take hold of the soul; people should therefore be satisfied with faith alone and need not progress to knowledge. That time is now over; it lies behind us. Christ has

something different in view for his human children. His present purpose is that the kingdom to which he referred when he said "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36) should really draw the part of the human being that is not of this world but of another. In each of us, there is a part that is not of this world. The part of human beings that is not of this world must seek with intensity the kingdom of which Christ spoke and described it as not of this world.

We are living at a time when this must be understood. Many such things in human evolution announce themselves through contrasts. In our own age something great and significant is announced by a great contrast. With the coming Christ, with the presence of Christ, will come the time when people will learn to inquire of him, not only concerning their souls, but concerning their immortal part on Earth. Christ is not merely a ruler of humankind, but also our brother, who, particularly in the near future, wishes to be consulted on all the details of life. In anything we undertake today, we act in the opposite way. Events seem to be accomplished today, in which people seem to be removed as far as possible from any appeal to Christ.

We must ask, who stops today to ask: What would Jesus Christ say about what is taking place now? Who asks themselves such a question? Many say they do, but it would be sacrilegious to believe that they put the question in this form, addressing it directly to Christ himself. Yet, the time must come and cannot be far when human souls will, in their immortal part, inquire of Christ when they think of some undertaking: "Should we do this or not?" Then human souls will see Christ standing by them as the beloved companion, and they will not only obtain consolation and strength from the Christ being, but will also receive instruction from him about what to do.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world, but it must work in this world and human souls must be instruments of the Kingdom that is not of this world. From this point of view, we must consider the fact of how few today have asked themselves

the question that, regarding individual acts and events, must be put to the Christ. Humanity must, however, learn to ask of him.

How is that to come about? It can become possible only if we learn his language. Those who comprehend the deeper purpose of our spiritual science realize that it not only gives theoretical knowledge about the various problems of humanity, the principles of human nature, reincarnation and karma, but also that it contains a quite special language, that it has a particular way of expressing itself about spiritual matters. The fact that through spiritual science we learn to inwardly converse with the spiritual world in thought is much more important than the merely acquiring theoretical thoughts. Christ is with us always, even to the end of the earthly epochs, and we must learn his language. Through the language (no matter how abstract it seems) in which we hear of Saturn, Sun, Moon, and Earth and the various periods and ages of the Earth, as well as the many other secrets of evolution, we teach ourselves a language by which we can frame the questions we ask of the spiritual world. When we really learn inwardly to speak the language of this spiritual life, the result is that Christ will stand by us and give us the answers himself.

This is the attitude that our work in spiritual science should bring about in us, as a sentiment, a feeling. Why do we occupy ourselves with spiritual science? It is as though we were learning the vocabulary of the language through which we approach the Christ. If we take the trouble to learn how to think the thoughts of spiritual science and make the mental effort needed to understand the cosmic secrets taught by spiritual science, then, out of the dim, dark foundations of the cosmic mysteries, will arise the figure of Jesus Christ, which will draw near to us and give us the strength and force in which we shall then live. The Christ will guide us, standing beside us as a brother, so that our hearts and souls may be strong enough to grow up to the necessary level of the tasks awaiting humanity in its further development.

Let us then try to acquire spiritual science, not as a mere doctrine but as a language, and then wait until we can find in

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that language the questions we may venture to put to the Christ. He will answer—yes, indeed, he will answer! Plentiful indeed will be the soul forces, the soul-strengthening, the soul impulses that students will carry away with them from the gray spiritual depths through which humanity in its evolution is now passing, if they are able to receive instructions from Christ himself. In the near future, he will give instructions to those who seek.