



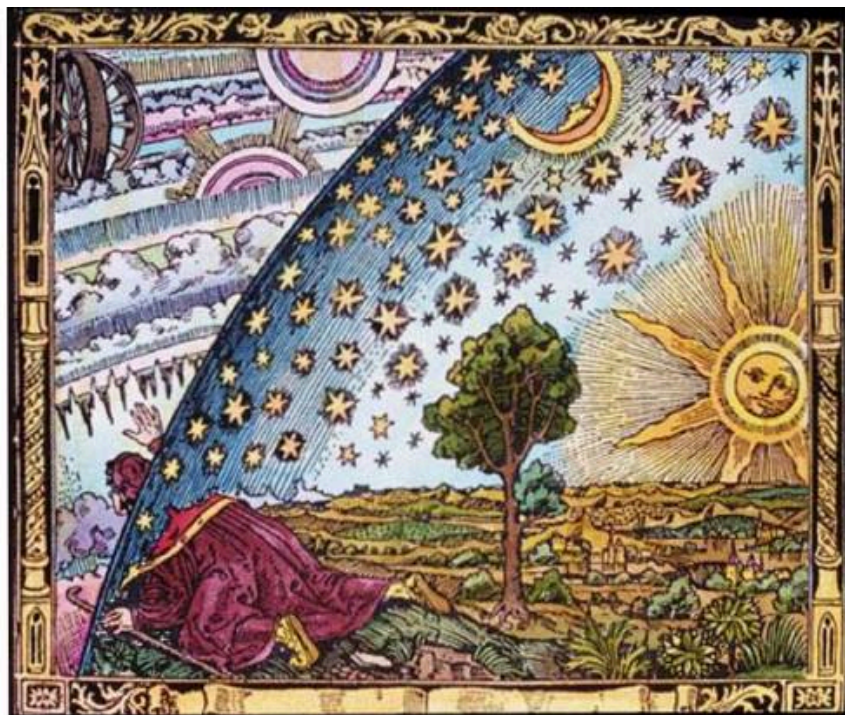
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# THE PATH TO KNOWLEDGE

BY

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Spiritual scientific knowledge is quite different to teachings of outer science. When we allow spiritual knowledge to really work into us, it becomes transformed in us as feelings, as soul impulses, as a way of thinking and in no other way can we acquire courage, certainty and power than through the deepening of this knowledge. It is quite different to merely recognize and know sense perceptible things and pioneering events, how things come about, than it is to penetrate behind the sensual things into the preceding spiritual events. When we allow spiritual events to work through the soul, we become warm, healthy and strong. We recognize the connections between us and that which weaves throughout the entire world as spirit and soul, the originators of all appearances. Consequently we want to come to grips with the relationship between the outer sensual world, outside, and our soul. On looking at our own souls, we find so to speak those things closest to us — suffering, joy, pain and pleasure — and now the question arises: When spiritual sciences says that everything in the world is spirit-penetrated, then we can argue that suffering, joy, pain and pleasure can also be found in those things which surrounds us, as well as in those things which we also meet as being callous, painless and insensitive. — We need to acquire the right way of thinking about things around us, through Anthroposophy.

We see for instance the various plants, animals and minerals around us. Not only do animals equally give us joy and suffering, pleasure and pain; that no one doubts. With plants and the apparently lifeless world of stones we can come to doubt that feelings, pleasure, joy and pain can be inherent in them. It is exactly this, which we acquire as experiences related to the entire surrounding world, that all beings are not only physically linked to us but that these beings link to us in such a way as to have soul content, just as we have soul content. Now we need to deepen within us, in the right way, what spiritual research and spiritual knowledge has to say about it. It is even understood in our time, from more sensory thoughts, that the plants could possess something spiritual, yes, one may be tempted to admit that an apparently lifeless stone could contain something spiritual.

When you consider you can still easily make mistakes if you don't take into account spiritual scientific research, you can easily say: If I cut the physical body of a person then I cause hurt, the same with animals; but when I cut a plant, will it also feel hurt? — Hence I can infer that if I crush a stone, I'm hurting it also. As a result, when people think about these things they



come to believe that everything happening to other beings is experienced in the same way as to human beings, and because of this belief, they find it so difficult to enter with their thoughts into knowledge of spiritual knowledge. Occult science offers us quite a different way of recognizing the soul nature of plants and stones, for instance. It appears, when we contemplate the plant, that certainly, when the plant is partly damaged where it grows out of earth towards the heights, no feeling of pain penetrates the plant, that it doesn't hurt but that the opposite is the case. That which comprises the actual soul of the plant feels pleasure, almost joy, when over the surface of the earth sensitive parts of plants are destroyed. Pain only starts for the plant soul when the plant is pulled out of the earth, uprooted; a similar pain is experienced when we or animals for instance have hair pulled out. This is something which a soul can gradually experience when on the so-called way or path of knowledge.

These things only allow us to experience them in our own souls when we transform our souls in such a way as to wake the slumbering, true powers of knowledge. Then the ability begins for the soul not only to feel compassion towards other people but to have compassion for the whole of the rest of nature, and the rest of nature becomes understandable in a wonderful way.

Now we could say: what do we get from spiritual scientific research if we ourselves can't feel such things? — It is an incorrect objection if we believe Anthroposophy has no meaning. It already has an account of spiritual-soul facts of great value. When such knowledge for example speaks about the relationship of plant suffering to plant joy then we really need to think about this knowledge and should allow such thoughts to work on us. Through our mere reflection regarding this knowledge we lure out contained forces and we will soon feel that it is indeed so, what is said by spiritual science. We learn however through knowing that when we look into the wisdom of nature, the plant soul experiences pleasure when we pick it. From this we can get the notion that we can think what is going to happen should the plant have been able to experience pain. Just think about it, what a large part of the earth's beings are nourished through plants, and how, through the nourishment of people and animals the pain could increasingly be spread over the earth. That isn't the case, but pleasure and joy spreads over the earth when an animal grazes in a pasture. Whoever has knowledge about this, feels entire streams of joy weave over the earth when in autumn the sickle cuts through the blades of grain. When the young animal sucks milk from its mother it does not mean there is pain, but a definite feeling of pleasure. Thus we see into the wisdom of nature when we go through life this way.



Against these things one should never turn your back: yes, it can appear gentler under the circumstances when a plant is dug out with its roots and replanted, instead of picking flowers. — Certainly, but this doesn't change the facts that uprooting causes actual pain to the plant soul. Deliberate ripping off blossoms can naturally from a certain point of view be rebuked, but even that changes nothing about the plant soul undergoing pleasure. From various points of view it looks different. A person may consider for example, from a standpoint of beauty, that pulling out the first grey hairs seems quite justified, even though it causes pain. Something else comes to our notice when we take this comparison of the uprooting of plants and the uprooting of human hair. We start to understand what it means when spiritual science considers not a single plant, but so to speak looks at the plant growth over the entire earth. Just as hair belongs to all human beings, so plants and earth create a unity, and we understand and can also think that, what we call the “I” (Ich) in spiritual science regarding a person, we can't find in a single plant but in the central point of the earth. The plant is absolutely not a single being, but becomes part of the great living being, existing out of many single living beings, but which has their “I” in the center of the earth.

No one dares ask the question: Is there a place for this “I” everywhere? — Certainly, because it is spirit and can penetrate all. So our earth becomes a living being. So every single plant becomes something which grows out of a large supersensible being and, on the surface, becomes what nails or hair is to the human being. When we take such a fact seriously then we no longer argue about dry cerebral concepts regarding a physical planet on which we are living but then we feel that not only are we living beings but that we are linked to a great living being which is our planet. We learn to take cognizance of this spiritual being and we learn that it concerns more than just a comparison, when, in the sap flowing through the plant something happens similar to when blood courses through the human body. We learn to transform these things in our feelings by understanding them spiritually.

When we touch a plant we experience the soul-spiritual, we feel safe within the soul-spiritual. Gradually it becomes possible to add the thought given in spiritual science: The earth has gone through divers metamorphosis. We discover, when we go back in the most distant past, that the earth appeared quite different, that for example such solid rock masses as we have today, were not present then. There had been a time when the earth existed of only air and water and a certain condition of warmth. Only gradually solidity developed from the fluid and soft conditions. On contemplating this whole development, the activity within the entire



development appears to us as one of growing and thriving. At one time the earth was young and in time it will become old and aged.

If we apply all imaginings which we relate to ourselves, to the earth, then we will understand that during our earth development certain extraordinary important stages were reached. We will bring such important stages in our earth development before our souls when we contemplate the following: Already from our earth's plant growth we realize, by considering the earth as a whole, that it is a living being. Similarly various other heavenly bodies are living beings which stand in a certain relationship to us. Let us look at our sun and moon. Consider the sun. You all know what we owe to the sun. You all know that when you have rested for the night, when you had been in a state of consciousness which had brought about the astral body and the ego ("Ich") leaving the physical and ether bodies — you know, when the astral body and ego return, that it so to speak expects everything which the earth owes to the sun. What would the earth be without the sun? The sun surrounds our entire earthly mass with warmth and light. But we have to consider the activity of such a heavenly body on another not only as merely substantial and materialistic but we need to be clear that this sun does not only have a physical body floating in space but the sun is inhabited by spiritual beings and that in each ray of sunshine not only physical light but also spiritual activity streams to us.

A spiritual exchange between sun and earth was always there, but it has essentially changed in the course of earthly development. While no great difference in the physical exchange between sun and earth has come about during many, many millions of years, a spiritual and meaningful stages were reached. High beings these are, who live in the light and warmth of the sun and who work into the earth from there, flooding us with light and warmth.

A Sun Being, who had up to a specific moment in time his stage in the sun, which man could through long, long earthly cycles only observe clairvoyantly, this Being descended at a specific moment from the sun down to the earth. This is something which allows us to see in depth into spiritual development: through the event which we call the Mystery of Golgotha, or in other words, through the passage of Christ on earth, the spiritual Being who had been up to that point on the sun, united himself with the earth. He connected himself with the earth. Humanity's division of earthly time into pre-Christian and post-Christian has its origin in this: that this living being, which we call the earth, underwent through this deed an important





development through the appearance of Christ on earth. What was previously only found in the sun, since then can be found in the astral body of the earth. The astral body of the earth changed through the Mystery of Golgotha: at the very same moment the blood flowed out of the wounds of the Redeemer, at that moment the Christ-Soul felt itself uniting with the body of the earth.

This has to be understood in order for us to consider the reported story of Christianity in the correct light. We can ask ourselves: what then was one of the most important events with reference to the spreading of Christianity? When one looks at the propagation of Christianity one can say: firstly more had been accomplished by Paul than those who were the physical companions of Christ Jesus in Palestine; Paul who was no physical companion of Christ Jesus, who had even persecuted the Christ. Paul didn't become a believer through sharing the life and suffering of the Christ, but he became a warrior for Christ through the Event of Damascus.

In theology much dust is raised over the Event of Damascus. Yet no one comes to an understanding of the Events of Damascus but through spiritual science. Let's try to bring this into harmony in only a few words — which will be uttered now. The moment Paul's reasoning consciousness changed into the higher consciousness, what did he see? He saw in that moment this spirit in the astral world, who had become the earth spirit; he saw the living Christ, who since the Event of Golgotha had united with the earth. One can well ask: what was this light which he saw, which people could not see before? — Paul first learnt to know the Christ from the time Christ united with the earth. Thus we may point out this important moment of the earth by saying: the earth prepared itself for this, to become a worthy body for the Christ-Spirit and while the earth was preparing for the uniting of itself and the Christ-Spirit, during this time the Christ-Spirit worked into it. Christ said according to the St John's Gospel: “Whoever eats my bread, treads me with their feet.” People who walk on earth step on the earth with their feet. “Whoever eats my bread, treads me with their feet,” is an expression for the mystery which lies in this important stage of earthly development.

How endlessly profound this becomes with the inauguration of Communion with this in mind, that the earth became from then on the body of Christ! How meaningful this becomes with reference to the words: “This is my body” and that which flows through the plants: “This is my blood.” We learn to take literally what we only dared pronounce in words. So we come,



when we consider the earth as alive, as a living being which gradually matures, to the right moment, ready for the acceptance of the Christ-soul.

So from all sides it appears that we encounter the physical planet as spiritual; it appears penetrated by spirit. We then learn to understand connections between that which we meet daily and the super-sensible. When we turn our attention from the plant kingdom to the stone realm then it will not appear through clairvoyant consciousness that we inflict pain when we crush a stone to dust; by contrast, when a stone is turned into dust, what we could call the stone-soul, experiences pleasure and joy. Those who have the sight know that with crushing the stone world, joy streams out of the rock. When, for example, salt is dissolved in a glass of water, pleasure spreads through the water as the salt particles move apart. The opposite is the case when through cooling the solution of salt crystallizes; through the crowding together of the stone particles pain takes place. We look again deeply into the way in which the Initiates speak to us, when they want to tell humankind something like this.

These things are not simply said. We must go through them in a spiritual way to reach an understanding of the great religious documents. It has already been said that originally no hard rock kingdom existed, that the earth was fluid. Its solidity came into existence through the gathering of parts and by hardening. What does man and animal owe to the earth's condensing? Surely so man and animal can live in the present state? Without solid ground and land the earth couldn't offer a base for man and animal. Now bring this imagination into our souls as actual spiritual history. This is hardly understood when only considered with the mind of a physicist. Only when we, with our hearts and minds, explore the earth's coming into being, then we can become conscious of what lies in the stone kingdom, that soul processes are at play, while the earth was solidifying. Pain and suffering was involved — through this, man and animal owe the possibility to live on the earth.

These are the facts that lie at the basis of Paul's words after his Initiation and perception into these things: "All creatures suffer and sigh under the gradual solidification, all creatures sigh and wait for the spiritualization." He points with these deep words to the innermost, to the soul of the earthy beings. Now we may en-soul everything, by looking through the eyes of spiritual science, and only through glimpsing the soul and spirit in everything, will we gradually find the world around us becoming more and more comprehensible. We come to an understanding that the world which surrounds us, as in physiognomy, is an outer expression



of an inner life. Then we will learn to grasp that the world looks exactly as it appears to people. Further we will learn to understand that behind all physicality is the soul-spiritual which has to be the origin of everything physical, and when the spiritual researchers take us back they show us how in the far, distant past, everything gradually developed out of the spiritual. The human being gradually descended from the spiritual world into the physical, and we must not imagine this descent as something as materialistic as is usually done these days, but rather ask: where does this actual material world which surrounds us, originate from, which is spreading ever more around us?

Mankind was for some time through and through spiritual, embedded in the soul-spiritual. Mankind developed only gradually out of this soul-spiritual. If we glance back to a relatively short time ago — when the realms of time were long, but for the spiritual researcher they are short to name — we find that our earth didn't appear as it does today, that her countenance has thoroughly changed, above all things through the event of the Flood, which in spiritual science goes under the name of the Atlantean Flood. Under this Atlantean flooding we may consider that through air and water activity the face of the earth was completely transformed. Previously the people lived in an area of the earth where the Atlantic Ocean is today. Land existed and there our souls actually lived in previous embodiments in Atlantean bodies. If we look spiritual scientifically at these people at the beginning of this Atlantean time, they appear quite differently to our souls from today. They appear in the early Atlantean times as if they perceived everything in a different way to later. Today, when one of us, during our waking hours glances around, we perceive objects in color and light. When in the night, the physical and ether bodies are released from the ego and astral bodies, this world disappears. We call this unconsciousness.

During early Atlantean times it was not the case that unconsciousness surrounded people when they entered into another condition during night time. Everything emerged at that time that was soul and spirit in the physical world. People for instance saw flowers before they fell asleep. During sleep they perceived the soul-spiritual of the flower in the soul-spirit world. Therefore these things were, what we call physical outer objects today, not sharply defined as today, because the people saw these as if in a mist surrounded by edges of color. So we see how the soul too has gradually changed its look. When we go back even further, we will find that the souls only perceived the spiritual, because the physical had not solidified out of the soul yet.





Now the people on our earth were subject to an important point in their development and this moment lay in the middle of their Atlantean development. At this midpoint the people would, if a certain achievement hadn't already been reached, not have ceased perceiving the spiritual world with their nocturnal consciousness. If a certain event hadn't intervened, the people of the middle Atlantean time would for instance not have seen some or other object, like a flower, as yellow, but as it were the spirit of the plant would have appeared to them. That this happened differently was due to people allowing Lucifer and his supporters to exert their influence earlier. The Atlantean was so to speak unaware of the outer physical world; it would have appeared transparent. He had perceived the spiritual world behind everything.

What now happened for the physical world to be not spread under a transparent crystal blanket but to become opaque? Through the spiritual world becoming concealed, yet another possibility, the influence of Ahriman, or as Goethe called him, Mephistopheles, could be expressed. As a result this spirit, which we call the ahrimanic, could penetrate, and after a certain time error and illusion stepped in. That which we call Maya, illusion, could mix into the conception of the world. So behind everything which we take as the physical world, stand the principals of this world, as we call them in the Bible. Their influence penetrates everywhere. Without these influences, matter would appear transparent and reveal the underlying spiritual. As a result an enormous change came about through these events within the souls of people. When we consider how human beings developed on the earth, we see how at a certain time the Luciferic and at another time the Ahrimanic influences made themselves effective.

When we look back at that time when the human being was still spiritual, when solidity hadn't crystallized, we see how the forces of nature and humanity were not as separate as they are today. They were in that time much closer while the earth was still penetrated by the watery element. The softer the earth was, the more spiritual were the people — human thoughts and human feelings influenced forces of nature. When we go even further back behind the Atlantean times, we find: As human will impulses turned to anger it had quite a definite influence on fire, and thus a large portion of the earth was destroyed in order for the human being to go through the Luciferic influence and stimulate evil instincts, through which in an alternate hindsight mankind acquired his freedom and independence. Thus, what we call forces of nature, were linked to human thinking during the Atlantean time.



Now it happened, through humanity's so called Luciferic influence granting them independence, that it was given the possibility to influence the forces of nature through the will. Gradually human beings withdrew from the influence of nature forces. This went hand in hand with the influence of Ahriman who wanted to mask the spiritual world from the human being. People who could still see the spiritual world were able to influence nature's forces. Single people were able to withdraw from these influences, the majority of mankind not. Even today actually very few individuals have a direct influence on the forces of nature, in comparison to humanity as a whole, and when we consider humanity in its entirety then we will see accordingly that besides individual karma there exists earth karma for the whole of humanity.

This is a result of what once were a Luciferic and then an Ahrimanic influence. This being we call Ahriman stands in a mysterious connection to the powers of earth fire which goes back to the direct influence of a few single people. These fire powers of the earth is a life element of Ahrimanic spirits and through the Ahrimanic influence the collective karma of the whole human race is bound in a certain extent to Ahriman. When specific soul attitudes of mind and events enter into human development, then again the relationship between people and Ahriman is valid, and that, which enabled people to influence forces of nature, still takes place today through Ahriman and his spiritual horde.

Every time Ahriman stirs, it indicates nothing other than that something had happened in human history which attracted Ahriman and brought him into turmoil and rage. In the soul of man something happens, something which for instance lets the largest part of mankind fall into materialism. This enables Ahriman to work in his own element — he then has a living element — because human materialism attracts him more than people who become spiritual. Ahriman awakens storms, volcanic outbursts and earthquakes. Here we really have something which shows how nature and spirit are connected. Nothing happens on earth without a spiritual connection. Our soul is connected to its good and evil deeds as a result of what is going on, on earth. When the earth rages during an earthquake, we will never say it is as a result of a single person's karma, but mankind's karma. Everyone can thump his heart and say his individual karma is included here, the single must perish, because right here the valve of the earth had to open up. He will be recompensed in future. — A materialistic point of view will say this is superstitious but whoever says this doesn't realise how childishly the argument is. How can a flower grow without a spiritual basis, how can it be an expression of spirit and



soul, just so no earthquake, no volcanic eruption can be without a spiritual origin, without a spiritual cause. When we, as we said, stare karma in the face, then we make it valid for the entire life of humankind.

Only when we don't bring spiritual scientific teaching into movement, it appears cold and calculated by the mind. When we however allow our feelings, our attitude of mind and our experiences to be penetrated, then we will see the earth as a living being, through and through soul and spirit, and then you will see that this earthly body is bound to spiritual beings of the most various kinds and that a very important event has come to the fore, whose effectiveness is only beginning: the appearance of Christ on earth. Through Christ alone are the consequences of Ahriman's power driven out.

As a result of spiritual science's infusion into the human heart with this Christ-Spirit, that which spreads out on earth as the entire spirit of humanity now enables the earth right into its nature elements to come to peace and harmony.

When all human hearts in the true sense experience the Christ-Spirit then the power which will stream from this will be so strong, it will calm fire and water. Then the Christ-Spirit would bring peace and harmony into the elements of nature, and the earth itself become an expression of the spirit. The earthly body, which is a living being, would become soft and mild and rise with the human spirit and human soul towards its spiritualization. To a higher spiritual existence the earth will rise. We can place this as a higher, further ideal and can allow this to penetrate us each moment. No moment is lost in the development of humanity which is applied in such a way that knowledge and will impulses are inter-penetrated by spirit.