

**On the Right Entry into the Spiritual World:  
The Responsibility Incumbent on Us  
*Lecture and words of farewell by Rudolf Steiner*  
1 JANUARY, 8.30 IN THE EVENING**

My dear friends!

We are gathered together for the last time in this Conference from which much that is strong and important is to go forth for the Anthroposophical Movement. So now let me shape this final lecture in a way that connects it inwardly, in its impulse, with the various prospects thrown open to us by this series of lectures as a whole, [ **Note 79** ] but also in a way that will allow us to gain a sense for the future, especially the future of anthroposophical endeavour.

When we look out into the world today we see something that has already been there for many years: a tremendous amount of destructiveness. There are forces at work that give us an inkling of the abysses into which western civilization is still to plunge. Looking at those individuals who externally are the cultural leaders in the various fields of life, we notice how they are enmeshed in a terrible cosmic sleep. They think, and until recently most people thought, that until the nineteenth century mankind was childlike and primitive in its insights and views, and that now that modern science has entered into all the various fields truth has at last arrived, truth that must be upheld forever.

People who think like this are, without knowing it, living in a state of tremendous arrogance. On the other hand, here and there amongst mankind today there are some inklings that things are perhaps not as the majority would like to imagine.

Some time ago I was able to give a number of lectures in Germany organized by the Wolff agency. [ **Note 80** ] The audiences were exceptionally large, so that people here and there began to notice that Anthroposophy was something for which people were looking. All kinds of foolish voices were raised in antagonism, among them one which was not much more intelligent than any of the others but which nevertheless expressed a kind of presentiment. It consisted of a note in a newspaper referring to one of the lectures in Berlin. This notice in the newspaper said: Listening to stuff like this you get the impression — I am quoting the article approximately — that something is happening not only on the earth but also in the whole of the cosmos that is calling mankind to a form of spirituality that is different from what has existed so far; even the forces of the cosmos, not merely earthly impulses, are demanding something of mankind; a kind of revolution in the cosmos which must lead man to strive for a new spirituality.

So there was this voice, which was in its way quite remarkable. For it is true: The proper impulse for what must now go forth from Dornach must, as I have emphasized from various angles over the last few days, be an impulse arising not on the earth but in the spiritual world. Here we want to develop the strength to follow the impulses coming

from the spiritual world. In the evening lectures during this Christmas Conference I have spoken about manifold impulses present in historical development so that your hearts might be opened to take in spiritual impulses which still have to stream into the earthly world and are not taken from the earthly world itself. Everything that has hitherto borne the earthly world in the right way has had its source in the spiritual world. And if we are to achieve something fruitful for the earthly world, we must turn to the spiritual world for the appropriate impulses.

My dear friends, this encourages me to point out that the impulses we are to bear away with us from this Conference must be linked to a great sense of responsibility.

Let us spend a few minutes on the great responsibility that is now incumbent on us as a result of this Conference. In recent decades it has been possible for someone with a sense for the spiritual world to wander, in spiritual observation, past many personalities, gaining bitter sensations with regard to the future destiny of mankind on earth. It has been possible to wander past one's fellow human beings in the manner available to spiritual insight, observing how they lay aside their physical and etheric bodies in sleep and live in the spiritual world with their ego and astral body. Wandering among the destinies of those egos and astral bodies while human beings slept has, in recent decades, given rise to experiences which can point to a heavy responsibility incumbent on the one who can know such things. These souls, having left behind their physical and etheric bodies between going to sleep and waking up, were often to be seen approaching the Guardian of the Threshold.

The Guardian of the Threshold has entered the awareness of human beings in many and various ways during the course of human evolution. Many a legend and many a saga — for this is the form in which the most important things are preserved, rather than that of historical records — many a legend and many a saga tells of the approach by one personality or another to the Guardian of the Threshold in order to receive instruction on how to enter the spiritual world and then return once more to the physical world. Entering rightly into the spiritual world must bring with it the possibility of returning to the physical world at any moment with the full ability to stand on both feet as a practical and thoughtful human being, not as a dreamer, not as a dreamy mystic.

Throughout all the thousands of years during which human beings have striven to enter the spiritual world, this has been the fundamental stipulation of the Guardian of the Threshold. But especially in the final third of the nineteenth century hardly any human beings were to be seen approaching the Guardian of the Threshold in a state of wakefulness. And even more so in our own time, when mankind as a whole has the historical task of passing by the Guardian of the Threshold in one way or another, do you find, when wandering in the spiritual world, that souls are asleep when they approach the Guardian of the Threshold as egos and astral bodies. This most significant picture meets us today: There stands the Guardian of the Threshold surrounded by

groups of sleeping human souls who do not have the strength to approach him in a waking state but who approach him instead while they are asleep.

Witnessing this scene, you become aware of a thought which is bound up particularly with what I would like to call the germination of a necessary great responsibility. The souls who thus approach the Guardian of the Threshold in a state of sleep demand entry into the spiritual world. They demand to be allowed to wander across the threshold in a state of sleep; their consciousness is that of a sleeping human being — which so far as the waking state is concerned remains unconscious or subconscious. And countless times the voice of the grave Guardian of the Threshold is heard: For your own good, you may not cross the threshold; you may not gain entrance to the spiritual world. Go back! For if the Guardian of the Threshold were to allow them to enter without more ado, they could come over into the spiritual world with all the concepts passed on to them by today's schools, today's education, today's civilization; with all those concepts and ideas with which human beings have to grow up nowadays from their sixth year onwards right, you could say, until the end of their earthly lives.

These concepts and ideas have a particular characteristic: If you enter into the spiritual world with them, with the way you have become with them through present-day civilization and schooling, you become paralyzed in your soul. And on returning to the physical world you would be void of thoughts and ideas. If the Guardian of the Threshold did not gravely reject these souls, if he were not to reject many, many of today's human souls but were to let them step over into the spiritual world, then, waking up on their return, waking up at the decisive moment on their return, they would have the feeling: I cannot think; my thoughts do not grasp my brain; I have to live in the world without thoughts. For the world of abstract ideas which human beings today attach to everything is such that one can indeed go into the spiritual world with them but one cannot bring them out again. And when you watch this scene, which is experienced today by more souls than you would ordinarily imagine, you say to yourself: If only these souls could be successfully protected from experiencing also in death what they are now experiencing in sleep. For if the inner condition experienced before the Guardian of the Threshold were to endure for a sufficiently long period of time, if human civilization were to remain for a long time under the influence of what can be taken in in schools by way of what is traditionally passed down by civilization, then sleep would become ordinary life. Human souls would pass through the portal of death into the spiritual world and then be incapable of bringing any strength of ideas with them into their new life on earth. For though you can enter the spiritual world with today's thoughts, you then cannot leave it with them. You can only leave it in a state of soul paralysis.

You see, present-day civilization can be founded on the kind of cultural life that has been nurtured for so long. But life cannot be founded on it. It would be possible for this

civilization to endure for a while. During their waking hours, the souls would have no inkling of the Guardian of the Threshold; then while they slept they would be turned away by him so that they should not become paralyzed; and the final consequence would be that a human race would be born in the future without any understanding, without any possibility of applying ideas to life when they were born in this future time, so that the faculty of thinking and living in ideas would have disappeared from the earth. A sick human race, living only in instincts, would have to populate the earth. Terrible feelings and emotions alone, without orientation through the force of ideas, would come to dominate human evolution.

Indeed, the soul failing to gain entry into the spiritual world, and being turned away by the Guardian of the Threshold in the way I have just described, is not the only sad sight to meet the one who has spiritual vision. If such a one were to take with him a human being from eastern civilization on his journeyings to where the sleeping souls can be observed approaching the Guardian of the Threshold, then such an eastern human being would be heard to utter spirit words of terrible reproach towards the whole of western civilization: See, if this goes on, then the earth will have fallen into barbarism by the time those living today return for a new incarnation; people will live by instincts alone, without ideas; this is what you have brought about by falling away from the ancient spirituality of the orient.

Thus a glimpse like this into the spiritual world bears witness to a strong sense of responsibility for the task of man. And here in Dornach there must be a place where it is possible to speak, to those who wish to listen, about every important direct experience of the spiritual world. Here there must be a place where the strength is found to point to those little traces of the spirit not only in the cleverly put together dialectical and empirical scientific manner of the present time. If Dornach is to fulfil its task, then it must be a place where human beings can hear openly about what is going on historically in the spiritual world and about the spiritual impulses which then enter into the world of nature and govern it. Human beings must be able to hear in Dornach about genuine experiences, genuine forces and genuine beings of the spiritual world. This is where the School of true Spiritual Science must be. And we must henceforth not shy away from the demands of modern scientific thought which causes human beings to approach the earnest Guardian of the Threshold in a state of sleep in the way I have described. In Dornach it must be possible to win the strength, spiritually, to look the spiritual world in the eye, to learn about the spiritual world.

Therefore we shall not let loose a tirade of dialectics on the inadequacy of present-day scientific theory. Instead I had to draw your attention to the position in which this scientific theory, and its consequences in ordinary schools, places the human being with regard to the Guardian of the Threshold. If we can face up to this in our soul in all earnestness during this Conference, then this Christmas Conference will send a strong

impulse into our souls which can carry them away to do strong work of the kind needed by mankind today, so that in their next incarnation human beings will be able to encounter the Guardian of the Threshold properly, or rather so that civilization as a whole will measure up to the Guardian of the Threshold.

Compare today's civilization with that of former times. In all former civilizations there were ideas, concepts, which were turned first of all towards the super-sensible world, towards the gods, towards the world which engendered, which created, which brought forth. Then with those concepts, which belonged above all to the gods, it was possible to look down onto the earthly world in order to understand it with concepts and ideas which were worthy of the gods. And if souls then approached the Guardian of the Threshold with these ideas which had been formed in a manner that was worthy of the gods and that had a value for the gods, then the Guardian said: You may pass, for you are bringing with you into the super-sensible world something that is directed towards this super-sensible world even during the time of your life on earth in a physical body; therefore when you return to the physical, sense-perceptible world sufficient strength will remain to prevent you from becoming paralyzed through having seen the super-sensible world. Nowadays human beings elaborate concepts and ideas which, in accordance with the genius of the times, they want to apply solely to the physical, sense-perceptible world. These concepts and ideas deal above all with anything that can be weighed and measured, but they are not at all concerned with the gods. They are not worthy of the gods and they are of no value to the gods. That is why the souls who have fallen entirely under the spell of the materialism of these ideas which are unworthy of the gods and valueless for the gods are met, when they cross the threshold in sleep, by the thundering voice of the Guardian of the Threshold: Do not step across the threshold! You have misused your ideas for the sense-perceptible world; therefore you must remain with them in the sense-perceptible world; if you do not want to become paralyzed in your soul, you cannot enter with them into the world of the gods.

Such things have to be said, not because it is necessary to brood upon them but so that heart and mind and soul may become filled to the brim with them. Then we may come into the mood that will be the right mood to bear away from this solemn Christmas Conference of the Anthroposophical Society. The most important thing of all is the mood of soul we bear away with us, a mood of soul for the spiritual world that gives us the certainty: In Dornach a central point for spiritual knowledge will be created.

That is why it was so good to hear Dr Zeylmans speak this morning about a field which is to be cultivated here in Dornach, the field of medicine, and to hear him say that it is no longer possible to build bridges from ordinary science to what is to be founded here in Dornach. If we have the ambition to make what grows in the soil of our own medical research into something that can stand the scrutiny of present-day clinical requirements, then we shall never achieve any definite goal in the things that really

make up our task, for then other people will simply say: Well, yes, here is a new method; we too have initiated new methods once in a while.

The important thing is that a branch of practical life, such as medicine, should be taken up into anthroposophical life. I think I understood rightly this morning that this is what Dr Zeylmans longs for. Did he not say in connection with this goal that someone who today becomes a doctor longs for impulses from a new corner of the universe. Let me tell you that in the field of medicine the work here in Dornach is to be carried on just as has that in a number of other fields of anthroposophical work which have remained within the bosom of Anthroposophy. With Dr Wegman as my helper, work is already in train on a system of medicine based entirely on Anthroposophy, a system which is needed by mankind and which will be presented to mankind quite soon. Equally it is my purpose to bring about the closest ties between the Goetheanum and the Clinic in Arlesheim which is working so beneficially. In the very near future such ties are to be brought about so that all that is flourishing there may be truly oriented towards Anthroposophy, which is indeed the intention of Dr Wegman.

In what he said, Dr Zeylmans was indicating with reference to one particular field what the Vorstand in Dornach will make its task in all the fields of anthroposophical work. Thus in future the situation will be clear. No one will say: Let us first show people eurhythmy; if they hear nothing about Anthroposophy, then they will like eurhythmy; and then, having taken a liking to eurhythmy, if they hear that Anthroposophy stands as the foundation for eurhythmy, they will take a liking to Anthroposophy as well. No one will say: First we must show people how the medicines work in practice so that they see that they are proper medicines, and will buy them; then, if they later hear that Anthroposophy is behind the medicines, they will also approach Anthroposophy.

We must have the courage to regard such a method as dishonest. Not until we have the courage to regard such a method as dishonest, not until we inwardly detest such a method will Anthroposophy find its way through the world. So in future here in Dornach we shall fight for the truth, not fanatically but simply in an honest, straightforward love of the truth. Perhaps this will enable us to make good some of what has so sinfully been made bad in recent years.

With thoughts which are not easy but which are grave we must depart from this Conference that has led to the founding of the General Anthroposophical Society. But I do not think that it will be necessary for anybody to go away with pessimism from what has taken place here this Christmas. Every day we have had to walk past the sad ruins of the Goetheanum. But as we have walked up this hill, past these ruins, I think that in every soul there has also been the content of what has been discussed here and what has quite evidently been understood by our friends in their hearts. From all this the thought has emerged: It will be possible for spiritual flames of fire to arise, as a true spiritual life for the blessing of mankind in the future, from the Goetheanum which is being built

anew. They shall arise out of our hard work and out of our devotion. The more we go from here with the courage to carry on the affairs of Anthroposophy, the better have we heard the breath of the spirit wafting filled with hope through our gathering. For the scene which I have described to you and which can be seen so frequently, that scene of present-day human beings, the products of a decadent civilization and education, approaching the Guardian of the Threshold in a state of sleep, is actually not one which is found amongst the circle of sensitive anthroposophists. Here on the whole the circumstance is such that only a warning, one particular exhortation, resounds: In hearing the voice from the land of the spirit you must develop the strong courage to bear witness to this voice, for you have begun to awaken; courage will keep you awake; lack of courage alone could lead you to fall asleep.

The exhortation to be awake through courage is the other variation, the variation for anthroposophists in the life of present-day civilization. Those who are not anthroposophists hear: You must remain outside the land of the spirit, you have misused ideas for merely earthly objects, you have not gathered ideas which have value for the gods and which are worthy of the gods; you would be paralyzed on your return to the physical, sense-perceptible world. But those souls who are the souls of anthroposophists hear: Your remaining test is to be that of your courage to bear witness to that voice which you are capable of hearing because of the inclination of your soul, because of the inclination of your heart.

My dear friends, yesterday was the anniversary of the day on which we saw the tongues of flame devouring our old Goetheanum. Today we may hope — since a year ago we did not allow even the flames to distract us from continuing with our work — today we may hope that when the physical Goetheanum stands here once more we shall have worked in such a way that the physical Goetheanum is only the external symbol for our spiritual Goetheanum which we want to take with us as an idea as we now go out into the world.

We have here laid the Foundation Stone. On this Foundation Stone shall be erected the building whose individual stones will be the work achieved in all our groups by the individuals outside in the wide world. Let us now look in spirit at this work and become conscious of the responsibility about which I have spoken today, of our responsibility towards the human being who stands before the Guardian of the Threshold and has to be refused entry into the spiritual world.

Certainly it should never occur to us to feel anything but the deepest pain and the deepest sorrow about what happened to us a year ago. But let us not forget that everything in the world that has any stature has been born out of pain. So let us transform our pain so that out of it may arise a strong and shining Anthroposophical Society by dint, my dear friends, of your work.

For this purpose we have immersed ourselves in those words with which I began, in those words with which I wish to close this Christmas Conference, this Christmas

Conference which is to be for us a festival of consecration not merely for the beginning of a new year but for the beginning of a new turning point of time to which we want to devote ourselves in enthusiastic cultivation of the life of spirit:

Soul of Man!

Thou livest in the limbs  
Which bear thee through the world of space  
In the spirit's ocean-being.  
Practise spirit-recalling  
In depths of soul,  
Where in the wielding will  
Of world-creating  
Thine own I  
Comes to being  
Within God's I.  
And thou wilt truly live  
In the World-Being of Man.

For the Father-Spirit of the heights holds sway  
In depths of worlds begetting being.  
Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones!  
Let there ring out from the heights  
What in the depths is echoed  
Speaking:

Ex Deo nascimur.  
The spirits of the elements hear it  
In East, West, North, South,  
May human beings hear it.  
Soul of Man!

Thou livest in the beat of heart and lung  
Which leads thee through the rhythm of time  
Into the realm of thine own soul's feeling.  
Practise spirit-awareness  
In balance of the soul,  
Where the surging deeds  
Of the world's becoming  
Thine own I  
Unite  
With the World-I.  
And thou wilt truly feel  
In the Soul-Weaving of Man.



For the Christ-Will in the encircling round holds sway  
In the rhythms of the worlds, bestowing grace on the soul.  
Kyriotetes, Dynamis, Exusiai!  
Let there be fired from the East  
What through the West is formed  
Speaking:  
In Christo morimur.  
The spirits of the elements hear it  
In East, West, North, South,  
May human beings hear it.  
Soul of Man!  
Thou livest in the resting head  
Which from the grounds of eternity  
Opens to thee the world-thoughts.  
Practise spirit-beholding  
In stillness of thought,  
Where the eternal aims of Gods  
World-Being's Light  
On thine own I  
Bestow  
For thy free willing.  
And thou wilt truly think  
In the Spirit-Foundations of Man.  
For the world-thoughts of the Spirit hold sway  
In the being of worlds, craving for light.  
Archai, Archangeloi, Angeloi !  
Let there be prayed from the depths  
What in the heights will be granted  
Speaking:  
Per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus. [ See [footnote 1.](#) ]  
At the turning of the time  
The Spirit-Light of the world  
Entered the stream of earthly being.  
Darkness of night  
Had held its sway,  
Day-radiant light  
Streamed into souls of men:  
Light that gives warmth  
To simple shepherds' hearts,

Light that enlightens  
The wise heads of kings.  
Light Divine  
Christ-Sun  
Warm thou our hearts,  
Enlighten thou our heads,  
That good may become  
What we from our hearts would found  
What we from our heads would direct  
In conscious  
Willing.

And so, my dear friends, [ See **footnote 2.** ] bear out with you into the world your warm hearts in whose soil you have laid the Foundation Stone for the Anthroposophical Society, bear out with you your warm hearts in order to do work in the world that is strong in healing. Help will come to you because your heads will be enlightened by what you all now want to be able to direct in conscious willing. Let us today make this resolve with all our strength. And we shall see that if we show ourselves to be worthy, then a good star will shine over that which is willed from here. My dear friends, follow this good star. We shall see whither the gods shall lead us through the light of this star.

Light Divine  
Christ-Sun,  
Warm thou  
Our hearts,  
Enlighten thou  
Our heads!

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Footnotes:

**1.** According to the shorthand report, the final words of the verse were not spoken on this occasion.

**2.** In the following sentences, as in the gathering on 25 December 1923 at which the Foundation Stone was laid in members' hearts, Rudolf Steiner once again changed from the formal mode of address to the more intimate 'Du'. (Tr.)