



Retrospect

**Important* –Please Print Out Before Reading–*

If at all possible also read away from strong WiFi transmitters etc, as the subject matter touched upon requires a certain amount of intuitive understanding which is not really possible when exposed to high levels of EMF radiation.

In the evening, before going to sleep, we should prepare ourselves to enter the spiritual worlds, yet not by egotistic petitions for happiness and so on, but by a mood of gratitude that we shall again be taken into the bosom of the Spiritual Beings. Here the practice of retrospection plays a great role. The past day is to come again before us in picture

form, yet in the reverse order of its events, that is, in a backward direction. And with each experience that we had in the day we must ask ourselves: Did I do that right, could I not have done it still better? It is very important to learn to look on ourselves as a stranger, as if we observed and criticized ourselves from outside. We must try to get as clear a picture as possible of the day's events. It is far more important to be able to remember little details than striking events. A general who has fought a great battle will have the whole picture of the fight before his eyes in the evening; this is impressed upon his mind, yet he will no longer be aware of how he put on his boots or took them off. We must get as complete a picture as possible. We see ourselves, for instance, cross the street. Try to remember how the rows of houses went, what shop windows we passed, what people met us, how they looked, how we ourselves looked. Then we see ourselves enter a shop and remember which assistant came forward, what she wore, how she spoke, etc. These details require a great effort, but that is just what strengthens the forces of the soul. There is no need to think it will take an hour. At first one will remember very little. Finally, however, the whole course of the day will pass in five minutes through the soul like moving pictures, clear in every detail.

Nevertheless one must strive for it with patience; one who merely lets the day's events pass before him superficially gains no benefit from this exercise. Its purpose is the following. If a man has walked some distance, and at the end of the road would like to recognize the portion he has covered, he can do this in two ways. He can stand with his back to the road and try to remember what lies behind him, or he can turn round and actually look at it. After passing through a period of time we can at first only remember it in our memory, not as yet actually

look back on it. But the retrospect which we only apply to space can also be applied to time. In this way we learn to read the Akasha Chronicle in which every event is inscribed. At first one can only recognize in it things concerning oneself. Later one learns to read other things too.

This is also connected with the transforming of memory which disappears in its abstract form in an esoteric student and something else takes its place. We acquire the faculty of seeing the past directly, and no longer need the ordinary memory. The following is a good exercise. Before going to sleep read about seven lines from Occult Science, impressing the contents upon one's mind without learning it by heart, and then recall it the next morning. One soon acquires a certain skill, with practice, that benefits and strengthens the memory. This retrospection is the means by which spiritual pictures are created and taken over with us into the spiritual world. That it must be taken in the backward direction is connected with the passage of time in the spiritual world which moves in a direction opposite to the order in the physical world. By our usual thinking forwards we set ourselves, as it were, against the spiritual worlds and repulse them. Many students lament that they go to sleep in the evening meditation, but this fact too can mean an advance. One should of course take pains to stay awake, yet it need not always be a failure to go to sleep. For it would appear that the exercise is continued after falling asleep. If one wakes in the night one should try to remember the exercise at the very place where it was broken off. One can then have the feeling that it had meanwhile gone on working in one. If this is so we should try to remember what has worked on in us unconsciously in the interval. This can gradually bring about a conscious entry into the spiritual world.

Before one begins a meditation one should make sure that there is time to carry it through to the end. It is not well to break it off, because Ahriman can then make it his own possession. And going through it without full thought will also give him this opportunity. Sooner or later we shall learn through our meditation to know the spiritual worlds, but we must always take care that this comes about with the right intention. It must not be out of curiosity, but in order to help humanity. To take nothing relating to sympathies and antipathies and our petty cares over into the spiritual world will open it for us in the right way and let us enter. Even merely fulfilling the customary moral code, however conscientiously, is not enough for the esoteric student. For here egotism can easily enter and someone may for instance say to himself: I will be good so that people will think me good. The esoteric pupil does not do right in order to be considered good, but because he gradually recognizes that good alone brings the evolution of the world forward, while evil and the thoughtless and base put hindrances in the path of evolution. All meditation and concentration and other exercises become worthless, in fact in a certain sense even harmful, if a person's life is not in keeping with these conditions.

One cannot provide a man with forces, one can only bring to development those already lying within him. Nor do they evolve of themselves, because there are outer and inner hindrances. The external hindrances are removed through definite rules of life, and the inner through the special instructions on meditation and concentration, etc. We can make what we think so inwardly alive, so full of power, that we have our own thoughts before us like a living thing that becomes as concrete to us as what we hear and see. That is a middle condition. In the mere thought that underlies brooding there lies the approach to man of Lucifer; in mere listening, whether through perception or through outer authority, lies the ahrimanic element. If one inwardly strengthens and awakens the soul so that one almost hears and sees one's thoughts, then this is true meditation. Going through our exercises with devotion and earnestness is the esoteric means for the loosening of our body. Through the withdrawal of

the etheric body the physical body begins to resemble a plant from which the sap is for a time withdrawn. The plant dries up and so too, though one does not see it physically, the physical body partially dries, and where it has a tendency to illnesses these appear. But when the etheric body has rightly saturated itself with spiritual truths it draws new forces to itself and these work again in a healing way upon the physical body. We are to reach the point where the 'lotus flowers' unfold in the etheric body through the imprint of the astral body.

We should feel the words of the meditation to be as much as possible filled with colour, light and sound. We should feel them through and through, live right into them. Spiritual beings live in colours and tones and by uniting ourselves with definite sense perceptions, definite beings flow into us. Through esoteric work we should assimilate a new thinking, new feeling and new willing. We must let a thought that we have thought pass over into our feeling and fully permeate this with it. The fluctuating thinking that comes at the moment of waking is the cosmic thinking that lives in us. We can be in it if our dream is not merely experienced as a reflection, as most are, but as if we were actually in it, moved in our soul, present in our spirit. Concepts gained on the physical plane are of absolutely no assistance in penetrating into the spiritual worlds. All that we may retain is power of forming concepts, and sense of truth and logic — moreover, the faculty to form new concepts and the sense for the new truths that one will learn to know.

What is experienced inwardly in meditation and concentration acts on the astral body as the light on the physical eye, sound on the ear, for these were developed through light and sound. The astral body is reorganized through these inner experiences of meditation; the organs of knowledge for the higher worlds are drawn out of it just as were the physical sense organs through sound and light.

These organs, however, will only become permanent in the astral body if they are impressed, imprinted in the etheric or life-body. Now as long as the etheric body is within the physical body it is very difficult for the experiences of the astral body to impress themselves upon it. In former ages it was impossible for what had evolved in the astral body through meditation and concentration to be imprinted into the etheric body if this remained united with the physical body. When we consider that the sense-world actually only exists for us because the organs of the physical body have been chiselled out in it, it will not seem particularly astonishing to hear that such higher organs are also built into man's higher members, the etheric and astral bodies. Today man's physical body is organized, but not yet his higher bodies. The higher organs become formed in one who strives for initiation. And in order to form them the astral body must be taken where it exists in purity. The lifting out of the etheric body is by no means easy today.

Man will increasingly recognize the need for real thought-concentration in order to hold the entire soul life together in these thoughts. He must direct his whole soul life upon sharply outlined thoughts that he places before his consciousness, whereas he would otherwise let his senses stray from one thing to another, one fact to another. Thus he will more and more, even if for a short time only, direct the thought life upon definite things that he chooses for himself.

Through the vitalizing of the concepts of spiritual science one can resemble a man who sits in a train or on a ship and who must exert himself inwardly against the noises and rattle so as to hear nothing of it but be entirely enclosed in himself. One can only do this today with the concepts of spiritual science. But one must bear in mind that it requires continually renewed

recapitulation, for it is this that gives the strength. Then one remains in oneself, by oneself, calm and assured. The powers of the spiritual world can enter if we meet them rightly with this composure. This alone can give us the consciousness that through such conceptual life as has been described we come towards these powers.

The important thing is to feel that, independent of our reasoning life, something thinks in us of which we can say: Not I, but it thinks in me. Although such thoughts mean little to us at first, yet we can strengthen and further them through a feeling of gratitude to the Higher Powers. If we say after each such moment, however, short, 'I think you, ye Powers of the Higher Hierarchies, that you have let me perceive this,' then through the feeling of gratitude and awe these moments increase in which higher worlds will reveal themselves. We shall be able to hold in memory what at first moved through our soul dim as a dream and ultimately we shall be able to summon such conditions as well. Then we shall gradually become clear that this thinking in us is always independent of our intellectual thought.

Gratitude is the vessel that we lift to the Gods that they may fill it with their wonder-gifts. If in all earnestness we foster the feeling of thankfulness, then gratitude, loving devotion must be there to the invisible spiritual givers of life; and it is the most beautiful way to be led from one's personality to the supersensible if this guidance goes through gratitude. Gratitude ultimately brings us to veneration and love of the life-bestowing spirit of man. It gives birth to love and love makes the heart open for the spirit-powers pervading life. If after every meditation we arouse in ourselves the feeling of gratefulness and reverence — a feeling that we can call a mood of prayer — and be aware in what grace we are taking part, we shall realize that we are on the right path for the spiritual worlds to approach us.

We must form a different idea about the experiences that come to us at first. We complain, for instance, that thoughts storm into our meditation which trouble and disturb us. If we were to consider it more closely we should recognize that it is an advance, that we have become more sensitive since we perceive that these thoughts are stronger than ourselves. They oblige us to exercise more force in our meditation, for it is luciferic beings who are drawing up our own thoughts. These luciferic beings are always in us but they are submerged by the fluctuations of our everyday life. In the stillness we create in our meditation, we are able to notice what otherwise the stir of daily life conceals. The whole constitution and condition of our bodily nature changes when we meditate. However badly and incapably we meditate, we nevertheless draw the ego and astral body and a portion of the etheric out of our physical body, and hence in the moments after meditation we may have remarkable experiences in our etheric body. Inspirations from the higher worlds can also come to us for the material world. It is a matter of our efforts. Through these exercises we really become different beings, and this happens inevitably, even if we are not aware of it. For in all the exercises, whether they are given in books or verbally, there lie the forces which loosen the etheric body and lift it out of the physical body. It is another matter, however, to become aware of these alterations.

The soul may already possess organs — but there is a decided difference whether it sleeps or wakes, in its spiritual environment. In order to awake and become conscious, the soul needs strong forces and preparation. Many people make this becoming conscious more difficult because they always picture the spiritual world like a second physical world, only finer, more penetrable. That is a great hindrance, for then we do not observe the delicate symptoms of awakening. He who assimilates esoteric explanations rightly, can, however, conceive how the spiritual world is experienced when the soul awakes. In order to succeed in this one must first ask oneself: What is the actual nature of thinking? It is supersensible; one is always in the

super-sensible world with human thinking. We live in the thinking but we have no direct experience of it. What we experience in it are its mirrorings on the physical body. *The brain is the mirror*. Now, through esoteric training one should come to an experience of the thinking itself, not merely of the thoughts. It is a great step to this experience. And a further one follows, that is, man feels all that is good, right, true in his thinking stream out of him. He feels it as a growing into the future, as forming the seed for his future. But the false, wrong, unlovely things that he thinks and feels also grow out in the same way. He feels them out-streaming quite concretely and he knows that the bad thoughts streaming from him will serve as nourishment to the good in the future. He therefore learns to understand why so many distorted, unlovely thoughts and feelings beset him in meditation. The evil powers like people who make progress through meditation better than the ordinary person, and fasten upon them all the more strongly in order to do them harm. If one sets before one's soul the black wooden cross with the seven roses, the evil powers must give way and yield.

Thoughts in meditation should be formed clearly, sharply, distinctly, a purely spiritual act taking its course in full self-possession. The physical and etheric organism must remain completely undisturbed during meditation. With correct meditation one comes to the point of living with the developed content of thought forces outside one's physical and etheric organism. One looks at it and it radiates back in thought-forms what one experiences in the ether. One has the etheric experience in one's own organism, one has attained personal experience in the relationship of a relative objectivity.

One must meditate in pictures if one would actually enter one's inner being. Hence the effect of ceremonial, filling one with real enthusiasm; all of a ritual nature has this effect, not only external ceremonial but the understanding of the world in pictures. As long as one tries to come to inner self-knowledge through abstract ideas and concepts, no effect is produced. As soon as one submerges into one's inner being with pictures that illuminate the soul's experiences, one grasps oneself inwardly.

In the course of higher development the pupil, though only for a short time in the day, forsakes the lower self of his ordinary life through which he confronts the outer world. During meditation he leaves it to itself; he takes away its guardian, as it were, who is otherwise in continuous control, who regulates the peculiarities of character, perhaps repressing them or at least keeping them in check. Now since this lower ego is left to itself, though only for a short time, there creep from all sides out of hidden corners of our nature, qualities that we thought we had already overcome, the repression of which had seemed to us quite easy. In a certain way a man can thus become worse, unless he continually exercises the strictest control over himself. But we should also be grateful to the Gods for our faults, since battling with them makes us strong and free. Not for a moment, however, should we on this account approve of them. If we struggle and strive earnestly and incessantly we shall feel that the faulty element in us dies away.

No deterioration, however, is possible if the student pays enough heed to himself and to his life and surroundings. Above all, the esotericist should keep before him in his daily meditation that his whole aim is to reach his higher Self, and he should ponder over its nature. He must not think that he is to bring something towards it, but should maintain an attitude of expectation, as if awaiting all from it. The higher Self must draw us in our meditation over into the spiritual worlds like a magnetic fluid.

All words from *Guidance in Esoteric Training* by Rudolf Steiner