

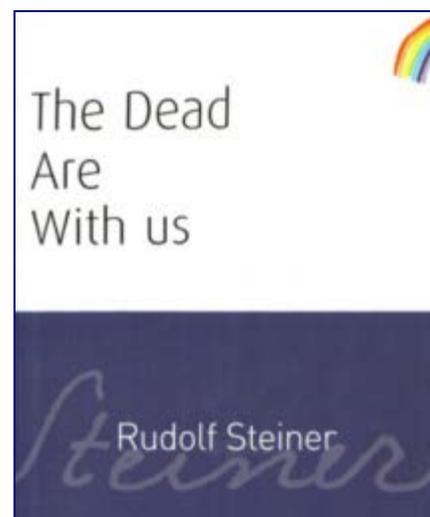
Site Map: [MAIN](#) / [A Reader's Journal, Vol. 2](#) [Webpage](#) [Printer Ready](#)



A READER'S JOURNAL

The Dead Are With Us
One Lecture in Nuremberg on 10 Feb
1918
by
Rudolf Steiner

Translation by D. S. Osmond
ARJ2 Chapter: Spiritual Science
Published by Sophia Books/UK in 2006
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne
©2014



In this one lecture, Rudolf Steiner tells us that the spiritual world is closer than most people realize. What things might that be which are closer to us than we think? Our dearly departed who disappeared from our view, for example: they seem to us impossible to reach. We cannot talk to them, see them, and we often mourn in our hopelessness for them. In our misery, we are like the Sufi trickster Nasruddin who was searching out under the street light for his keys and a friend joined him. After an hour, his friend said, "Nasruddin, where were you when you dropped your keys?" "In the house." "In the house? Then why are you looking for them out here?" "Because there is more light here than inside." We are looking *outside* for something which exists *inside* of us but, unaware of that reality, we search where there is more light to our way of thinking, up until now.

[page 1] In our study of spiritual science there is a great deal that we cannot, perhaps, directly apply in everyday life, and we may at times feel that it is all rather remote. But the remoteness is only apparent. The knowledge we gain about the secrets of the spiritual world is at every hour, at every moment, of vital and profound significance for our souls; what seems to be remote from us personally is often what the soul inwardly needs. In order to know the physical world we must make ourselves acquainted with it. But to know the spiritual world it is essential that we ourselves shall think through and master the thoughts and conceptions imparted by that world. These thoughts then often work quite unconsciously within the soul. Many things may seem to be remote, whereas in reality they are very near to the higher realms of the soul's life.

The concept of eternity presents us with something which seems so remote, an existence spreading endlessly into the future. Who can comprehend such a concept? Change your way of thinking and eternity becomes simple to grasp and understand: "We are each living in the middle of eternity at this very moment." Our soul inwardly needs to feel the reality of eternity, but our dead abstract concepts of eternity lead us astray, and we wander outside under the streetlight of science, rather than inside our soul where the key can be found. Similarly our concepts of where souls go in their time between death and a new birth needs updating to spiritual science realities which reveal that the souls of our loved ones are within us at the very moment we think of them. The deepest truths are often the simplest truths, but they take a spiritual joker like Nasruddin or a spiritual scientist like Steiner to reveal them to us.

"If they are within us, how can we communicate with them?" — that would be logical question to ask and

Steiner answers the question in the course of this lecture. Here is a hint to the answer he provides. Have you ever held the unanswered question, "Why is it so helpful to sleep on an important decision?" So many people do this; they respond to an important question with, "I'd like to sleep on it." What happens during sleep that makes this such a good thing to do that almost everyone does it?

[page 4] We must assimilate the thought that life between death and a new birth is so constituted that everything [souls] do awakens an echo in the environment.

In the material world we stand upon the soil of physical matter, but souls in the spiritual soil are two levels higher and neither matter nor plants have any reality to them; their soil begins with animal nature and upon it they find "solid ground". The animal world we know from the outside now, we then know intimately from the inside.

[page 5] The most external activity of the life between death and a new birth consists in acquiring a more and more intimate and exact knowledge of the animal world. For in this life between death and a new birth we must prepare all those forces which, working in from the cosmos, organize our own body.

We organize our body using the forces of the cosmos and plan our own birth in detail as to our choice of parents and the time and place of our birth. By harmonizing the arrangement of the cosmos with our plan for our new life on Earth, we have provided ourselves a guidebook to our life mapped out in the heavens. This is the spiritual reality of astrology, rightly understood.

Scientists, who understand that a compass needle points to north because of the cosmic influence of the Earth upon the needle, laugh at the idea that a human egg or a chicken egg experiences a cosmic influence, an influence which can be deciphered in the arrangement of stars and planets at the moment of its birth. A human soul chooses to descend into a physical body at a time when the positions of stars and planets in the cosmos correspond to its plan for its new life on Earth. Similarly to the way a compass needle corresponds with the position of the Earth's magnetic poles, a human life works itself out according to the plan laid down by the soul before birth, plan which is necessarily written in the heavens at the moment of birth. This is the spiritual reality behind astrology, a science which is scoffed at today because so few understand its spiritual underpinnings.

In the time between death and a new birth, a human soul can make contact with all of animal nature, but it is restricted in its connection with other human souls. To make contact, it must have already established some contact with those souls in a previous incarnation. Since a soul lives through a succession of incarnations, the number of contacts can be quite large, even for someone who was a solitary hermit in an immediately previous incarnation.

[page 8, 9] Other souls pass him by; they do not come within his ken. He becomes aware of the animal realm as a totality; only those human souls come within his ken with whom he has had some karmic connection here on earth, and with these he becomes more and more closely acquainted.

When we say we have rapport with someone, we mean that we feel as though we are inside of them, feeling what they are feeling. In the time between death and a new birth, the process of rapport becomes literally true.

[page 10] When the deceased becomes acquainted with a soul, he gets to know this soul as if he himself were within it. After death, knowledge of another soul is as intimate as knowledge here on earth of our own finger, head or ear — we feel ourselves within the other soul. The connection is much more intimate than it can ever be on earth.

We also maintain a relationship with other hierarchies, especially the angelic ones.

[page 11] The higher the kingdoms, the more intensely does the human being feel bound to them after death; he feels as though they were bearing him, sustaining him, with great power. The Archangeloi are a mightier support than the Angeloi, the Archai again mightier than the Archangeloi, and so on.

Is communication with the souls of those who are in their time between death and a new birth possible? Isn't communication with the dead forbidden?

The answer is yes to both questions. In Moses I. Ch 18 and in Samuel I. Ch 28 we are warned against such communication. Steiner explains that this prohibition was necessary because such communication is via the blood and nervous system and will arouse lower passions.

[page 14] Naturally, there is only danger for those who have not purified their natures through discipline and control. . . . It is not the dead who arouse these passions but the element in which the dead live. For consider this: what we feel here as 'animal' in quality and nature is the basic element in which the dead live. The kingdom in which the dead live can easily be changed when it enters into us; what is higher life in yonder world can become lower impulses when it is within us on earth.

When communicating with a living person, we know when we are asking a question and know when they are replying to our question. When communicating with the dead, the question we think we are asking is in fact provided by a dead soul, and then the answer seems to come out of our own soul. This curious reverse way of communicating is why we do perceive the dead around us. The dead are with us, as the title of this book proclaims, but we are clueless as to their presence, up until now.

[page 19] The phenomena I have described to you are going on all the time. All of you sitting here now are in constant communication with the dead, only ordinary consciousness knows nothing of it because it lies in the subconscious. Clairvoyant consciousness does not initiate anything new but merely brings to consciousness what is present all the time in the spiritual world. All of you are in constant communication with the dead.

In all the places we have lived during this lifetime, we have interacted with people, and many of those people are now dead. When we return to such a place, we are reminded of those people we interacted with there, our grandparents, uncles and aunts, schoolmates, teachers, employers, etc, and by that reminding we call those souls into us. We feel the way we felt back then with them, in other words, we recover a part of ourselves.

In a wonderful movie, "Night Train to Lisbon" (2013) there is a marvelous quote which expresses this process, "We leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place. We stay there even though we go away. And there are things in us that we can find again only by going back there. We travel to ourselves when we go to a place where we have covered a stretch of our life, no matter how brief it may have been." If we allow ourselves to *feel* when we return to a place, this will happen. If instead, we focus on what has changed in the place and have judgmental reactions to the changes, we will not feel good, we will not "recover a part of ourselves" there; we will only feel bad about the changes to the place. Things change, but if you focus only on the changes, you will not feel the parts of your experience in a place which remain the same.

If you wish to communicate with the spiritual world, there are two times each day when this is best done, during the morning when awakening, and at night before going to sleep. If you have noticed how restful it is to wake up in the country where there is no city noise, no sirens, no clanging trolleys, no horns blowing, etc? In those rural settings, the people there had a custom of remaining in bed for awhile in the dark after awakening; they would never rush to open the curtains to let the bright light of day in. They knew that this was a time to maintain contact with the spiritual world which "sweeps with such power through the human soul at the moment of waking." (Page 22)

When we say "Let me sleep on this" we are in effect putting the question to spiritual world while we are asleep, and the next morning an answer will arrive to us if we slowly awaken in a receptive mood.

[page 25, 26] The moment of going to sleep is especially favorable for us to turn to the dead. Suppose we want to ask the dead something. We can carry it in our soul, holding it until the moment of going to sleep, for that is the time to bring our questions to the dead. . . . On the other hand, the moment of waking is the most favorable for what the dead have to communicate to us. And again there is no one — did people but know it — who at the moment of waking does not bring with him countless tidings from the dead. . . . At the moment of waking the dead speak with us, give us the answers.

It is important that the question we pose be in the form of feeling and not posed as some abstract logical problem.

[page 27] You must remind yourself of your love for the person when he was alive and address yourself to him with real warmth of heart, not abstractly. This feeling can take such firm root in the soul that in the evening, at the moment of going to sleep, it becomes a question to the dead without your knowing it.

Steiner wants us to eschew any thoughts of our dead as being far away, to avoid thinking that when a person "has passed through the gate of death, his activity ceases as far as the physical world is concerned. But indeed it is not so!" (Page 38) That communication between us and the dead goes on endlessly, and it is important for us to realize it.

[page 38] *There is nothing more important for life, even for material life, than the strong realization of communication with the spiritual world.*

If we understand Steiner rightly, we should always say of the dead whom we have loved, "They are with us, they are in our midst." (Page 39) They are alive and can understand our innermost feelings. They can accept our feeling-based questions when we drop off to sleep and provide answers to us when we awaken, if we but remain receptive as we slowly awaken.

