

# THE BEING OF MAN AND HIS FUTURE EVOLUTION

## EVOLUTION, INVOLUTION AND CREATION OUT OF NOTHINGNESS

17th June 1909

Today we intend adding something to round off the many facts and views we have been studying here this winter. We have often emphasised the way in which spiritual science should take hold of human life, and how it can become life, action and deed. Today, however, we want to give a few concluding aspects on the subject of the great evolutionary processes of the cosmos, as these are expressed in man. And to start with I should like to draw your attention to a fact that can tell you a great deal about the nature of cosmic evolution, if only you are prepared to look at it in the right way.

Consider, in a purely external way to begin with, the difference between the evolution of the animal and that of man. You need only say one word and hold one idea before you, and you will soon notice the difference between the concept of animal and human evolution. Think of the word 'education'. Actual education is impossible in the animal world. To a certain extent you can train the animal to do things that are foreign to its natural instincts and inborn way of life. But only an extremely enthusiastic dog-lover would want to deny that there is a radical difference between the education of a human being and what can be undertaken with animals. We need merely bear one particular anthroposophical insight in mind, and we shall understand the basis for this apparently superficial fact.

We know that man's development is a gradual and very complicated process. We have repeatedly emphasised that in the first seven years of his life, up to the change of teeth, man develops in quite a different way from the later period up to fourteen, and again from the fourteenth to the twenty-first year. We will only touch on this today, for you already know it. According to spiritual science man passes through several births. The human being is born into the physical world when he leaves his mother's body and frees himself of the physical maternal sheath. But we know that when this has happened he is still enclosed in a second maternal sheath, an etheric one. During the first seven years of his life the child's etheric body is completely enveloped in external etheric currents that come from the outer world, just as the physical body is enveloped until birth in a physical maternal sheath. At the change of teeth this etheric sheath is stripped off, and not until now, at the age of seven, is the etheric body born. Then the astral body is still enclosed in the astral maternal sheath that is stripped off at puberty. After this the astral body develops freely until the twenty-first or twenty-second year, which is the time when strictly speaking the actual ego of man is born. Not until then does the human being awaken to his full inner intensity and the ego that has evolved through the course of his earlier incarnations work its way free.

To clairvoyant consciousness a very special fact becomes apparent here. If you watch a very young child for several weeks or months, you will see the child's head surrounded by etheric and astral currents and forces. However, these currents and forces gradually become less distinct and vanish after a while. What is really taking place there? You can actually discover what is happening, even without clairvoyant vision, although clairvoyant vision confirms what we are about to say. Immediately after the birth of a human being his brain is not the same as it will be a few weeks or months later. The child already perceives the outer world, of course, but its brain is not yet an instrument capable of connecting external impressions in a definite way. By means of connecting-nerves running from one part of the brain to another, the human being learns by degrees to link

together in thought what he perceives in the external world, but these connecting nerve-strands develop only after birth. A child will hear and see a bell, for instance, but the impression of the sound and the sight of the bell do not immediately combine to form the thought that the bell is ringing. The child learns this only gradually, because the part of the brain that is the instrument for the perception of sound and the part that is the instrument for visual perception become connected only in the course of life. And not until this has happened is it possible for the child to reach the conclusion: 'What I see is the same thing that is making the sound'. Connecting-cords like this are developed in the brain, and the forces that develop these connecting-cords can be seen by the clairvoyant in the first weeks of the child's development as an extra covering round the brain. But this covering passes into the brain and subsequently lives within it, no longer working from outside but from within. What works from outside during the first weeks of the child's development could not go on working at the whole development of the growing human being were it not protected by the various sheaths. For when that which has been working from outside passes into the brain, it develops under the protecting sheath first of the etheric body then of the astral body and only when the twenty-second year has been reached does that which first worked from outside become active from within. What was outside the human being during the first months of his existence and then slipped inside, is active for the first time independently of sheaths in the twentieth to the twenty-second year; then it becomes free and awakens into intense activity.

Now let us consider the gradual development of the human being and compare it with that of the plant. We know that the plant only has its physical and etheric body here in the physical world, whereas its astral body is outside it; but only the physical and etheric body within it. The plant emerges from the seed, forms its physical body, and then the etheric body gradually develops. And this etheric body is all that the plant has in addition. Now we have seen that man's etheric body is still enveloped in the astral body until puberty, and that man's astral body is not actually born until then. But the plant, after reaching its puberty, cannot give birth to an astral body, for it has none. Therefore the plant has nothing further to develop after puberty. It has accomplished its task in the physical world when puberty occurs, and after it has been fertilised, it withers. You can even observe something similar in certain lower animals. In these lower animals the astral body has quite evidently not penetrated into the physical body to the same extent as in the higher animals. Lower animals are characterised by the very fact that their astral body is not yet entirely within their physical body. Take the may-fly; it comes into being, lives until it is fertilised, and then dies. Why? Because it is a creature which, like a plant, has its astral body for the most part outside it, and therefore it has nothing further to develop when puberty has occurred. In a certain respect man, animal and plant develop in a similar way until puberty. Then the plant has nothing else to develop in the physical world, and so it dies. The animal still has an astral body, but no ego. Therefore after puberty certain possibilities of development remain in the animal. The astral body becomes free, and as long as it develops freely and possibilities of development remain, further development continues in the higher animal after puberty. But the astral body of the animal has no ego within it in the physical world. The animal's ego is a group ego; it embraces a whole group and exists as group ego in the astral world, where its possibilities of development are quite different from those of the single animal here in the physical world. What the animal possesses as astral body has a limited possibility of development, and the animal already has this possibility within it as a natural tendency when it comes into the world. The lion has something in his astral body that expresses itself as a sum of impulses, instincts and passions. And this tendency continues to live itself out to the full until an ego might be born; but the ego is not there, it is on the astral plane. Therefore when the animal has just reached the stage when man attains his twenty-

first year, its possibilities of development are all used up. The length of life varies according to circumstances, of course, for animals do not all live to be twenty-one. But up to the age of twenty-one, when the ego is born in man, his development is comparable to that of the animal. This must not lead to the conclusion that human development up to the age of twenty-one is identical to that of an animal, for that is not the case. The ego is already within the human being from the beginning, right from conception, and it now becomes free. Hence, because there is something within man from the beginning that becomes free at the age of twenty-one, he is from the outset no animal being, for the ego, although not free, is nevertheless working in him from the start. And it is essentially this ego that can be educated. For it is this ego, together with what it has accomplished in the astral, etheric and physical bodies, that passes from one incarnation to another. If this ego received nothing new in a further incarnation, man would not be able to take anything with him at his physical death, from his last life between birth and death. And if he were not able to take anything with him, he would be at exactly the same stage in the following life as he was in the previous one. Through the fact that you see man going through a development in life, and acquiring what the animal cannot acquire, because the animal's possibilities of development do not go beyond its inborn capacities, man is constantly enriching his ego, and reaches higher levels from one incarnation to another. It is because man bears within him an ego that has already been at work, although it only becomes free at his twenty-first year, that education is practicable, and something further can be done with him beyond his original possibilities. The lion brings its lion nature with it and lives it out. Man not only brings with him his nature as a member of the general human species, but also what he has attained as an ego in his Previous incarnation. This can be transformed more and more by education and life, and it will have acquired new impetus by the time man passes through the portal of death and has to prepare for a new incarnation. The point is that man acquires new factors of development and is constantly adding to his store.

Now let us ask what actually happens when man adds to his store from outside? To answer this we must reach three very important, rather difficult concepts. But as we have been working for some years in this group, we ought to be able to understand them. Let us start by taking a fully developed plant, for instance a lily of the valley. Here you have the plant before you in another form, as a small seed. Imagine holding the seed; there you have a minute structure. When you lay it in front of you, you can say: Everything that I shall see later on as root, stalk, leaves and blossom is in this seed. So here I have the plant in front of me as a seed and there as a fully grown plant. But I could not have the seed in front of me if it had not been produced by a previous lily of the valley. The case is different for clairvoyant consciousness. When clairvoyant consciousness observes the fully grown lily of the valley, it sees the physical plant filled with an etheric body, a body consisting of streams of light permeating it from top to bottom. In the lily of the valley, however, the etheric body does not extend very far beyond the physical body of the plant and does not differ from it very much. But if you take the small seed of the lily of the valley you will find that although the physical seed is small it is permeated by a wonderfully beautiful etheric body raying out all round in such a way that the seed is situated at one end of the etheric body like a comet with a tail. The physical seed is really only a denser point in the light or etheric body of the lily of the valley. When a spiritual scientist has the fully grown lily of the valley in front of him then, for him, the being that was hidden to begin with is developed. When he has the seed in front of him where the physical part is very small and only the spiritual part is large, he says: the actual being of the lily of the valley is rolled up in the physical seed. So when we look at the lily of the valley we have to distinguish two different states. One state is where the whole being of the lily of the valley is in involution: the seed contains the being rolled up, involved.

When it comes forth it passes over to evolution, and then the whole being of the lily of the valley slips more into the newly developing seed. Thus evolution and involution alternate in the successive states of a plant. During evolution the spiritual disappears further and further and the physical grows great, whilst in involution the physical will disappear further and further and the spiritual become greater and greater.

In a certain respect we can speak of evolution and involution alternating in man to an even greater extent. In the human being between birth and death a physical body and an etheric body interpenetrate to form the physical, and the spiritual interpenetrates them too in a certain way, as an earthly being man is in evolution. But when man is seen clairvoyantly passing through the portal of death, he does not leave behind in physical life as much as the lily of the valley leaves in the seed; the physical disappears so completely that you no longer see it, it is all rolled up in the spiritual. Then man passes through Devachan, where he is in involution as regards his earthly being. For this earthly being of man, evolution is between birth and death, involution between death and a new birth. Yet there is a tremendous difference between man and the plant. In the plant we can speak of involution and evolution, but in the case of man we have to speak of yet a third factor. If we were not to speak of a third factor, we should not comprise the whole of human development. Because the plant always passes through involution and evolution, every new plant is an exact repetition of the last one. The being of the lily of the valley is perpetually going into the seed and out again. But what is happening in the case of man?

We have just realised that man receives new possibilities of development during his life between birth and death. He adds to his store. Hence it is not the same with man as it is with the plant. Each evolution of man on the earth is not a mere repetition of the previous one, but a raising of his existence on to a higher level. What he takes into himself between birth and death is added to what was there previously. That is why no mere repetition occurs, for what is evolving appears at a higher stage. Where does this new element actually come from? In what way are we to understand the fact that man receives and takes in something new? I beg you to follow very closely now, for we are coming to a most important and most difficult concept. And not without reason do I say this in one of the last sessions, for you will have the whole summer to ponder over it. We should ponder over such concepts for months if not years, then we gradually begin to realise their depth. Where does all that is constantly being added to man come from? We will make this comprehensible by taking a simple example.

Suppose you see a man standing opposite two other people. Let us take into consideration everything that belongs to evolution. Let us take the one who is observing the other two, and say to ourselves that he has passed through earlier incarnations and has developed what has been planted in him in these previous incarnations. The same applies to the other two people. Then let us suppose that the first man thinks to himself: The one person looks splendid beside the other. He is pleased to see just these two particular people standing together. Another person might not feel this satisfaction. The satisfaction the man feels in seeing the two standing side by side has nothing whatever to do with the possibilities of development in the other two, for they have done nothing that deserves the pleasure their standing together gives him. It is something quite different, and it depends entirely on the fact that it is *he* in particular that is standing opposite the two people. The point is that the man develops a feeling of joy over the two men in front of him standing together. This feeling is not caused by anything to do with development. There are things like this in the world that arise simply through coincidence. It is not a question of the two men being karmically connected. Our concern is the joy the man feels because he likes seeing the two people standing together.

Let us take a further example. Imagine a man standing here at a certain spot on the

earth and looking up at the sky. He sees a particular constellation of stars. If he were to stand five paces away he would see something else. This looking at the sky creates in him a feeling of joy that is something quite new. Man experiences a number of totally new things that have nothing to do with his previous development. Everything that comes forth in the lily of the valley is determined by its previous development; but this is not the case with what works on the human soul from the environment. Man is concerned with a lot of affairs that have nothing to do with any previous development, but which are there because various circumstances bring him into contact with the outer world. Because he feels this joy, however, it has become for him an experience. Something has arisen in the human soul that is not determined by anything preceding it but which has arisen out of nothingness. Such creations out of nothingness are constantly arising in the human soul. These are experiences of the soul not experienced through given circumstances but through the relationships we ourselves create connecting the circumstances one with another. I want you to distinguish between the experiences produced by given circumstances and those produced by the relationships between the various circumstances.

Life really falls into two parts, with no distinguishing line between them: those experiences strictly determined by previous causes, by karma, and those not determined by karma but appearing on our horizon for the first time. There are whole areas in human life that come under these headings. Suppose you hear that somewhere someone has stolen something. What has happened is, of course determined by something karmic. But suppose you only know something about the theft and not the thief — therefore there is a particular person in the objective world who has done the stealing, but you know nothing about him. The thief is not going to come to you, though, and say: 'Lock me up, I have committed a theft', on the contrary, it is up to you to line up the facts so as to produce the evidence as to who is the thief. The ideas you put together have nothing to do with the objective facts. They depend on quite different things, even on whether you are clever or not. Your train of argument does not make the person a thief, it is a process taking place entirely within you that gets associated with what is there outside. Strictly speaking, any kind of logic is something added to things from outside. And all opinions of taste, as well as judgments we make about beauty, are additions. Thus man is constantly enriching his life with things that are not determined by previous causes, but which he experiences by bringing himself into a relationship with things.

If we make a rapid survey of human life and visualise man's development through ancient Saturn, Sun and Moon as far as our Earth evolution, we find that on Saturn there could be no question of man being able to relate to things in this way. Everything was pure necessity then. It was the same on old Sun and also on old Moon, and the animals are still in the situation today that man was in on the Moon. The animal experiences only what is determined by preceding causes. Man alone has entirely new experiences, independent of previous causes. Therefore in the truest sense of the word man alone is capable of education; man alone can continually add something new to what is determined by karma. Only on Earth did man attain the possibility of adding something new. On the Moon his development had not reached the point where he would have been capable of adding anything new to his innate capacities. Although not an animal, he was then at the stage of animal development. His actions were determined by external causes. To a certain extent this is still so today, for those experiences that are free experiences are only slowly making their way into man. And they appear to a greater and greater extent the higher the level at which man is. Imagine a dog standing in front of a Raphael painting. It would see what is there in the picture itself, in so far as it is a sense object. But if a man were to stand in front of the picture, he would see something quite different in it; he would see what he is capable of creating through the fact that he has already

developed further in previous incarnations. And now imagine a genius like Goethe; he would see even more, and he would know the significance of why one thing is painted like this and the other like that. The more highly developed a man is the more he sees. And the more he has enriched his soul the greater his capacity to add to it the soul experiences from soul relationships. These become the property of his soul and are stored up within it. All this, however, has only been possible for humanity since Earth evolution began. But now the following will take place.

Man will develop in his own way through the subsequent ages. We know that the Earth will be succeeded by Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan. During this evolution the sum of man's experiences over and above those resulting from previous causes will become greater and greater, and his inner being become richer and richer. What he has brought with him from ancient causes, from the Saturn, Sun and Moon stages, will have less and less significance. He is developing his way out of previous causes and casting them off. And when, together with the Earth, man will have reached Vulcan, he will have stripped off all he received during the Saturn, Sun and Moon evolution. He will have cast it all off

Now we come to a difficult concept which shall be made clear by an analogy. Imagine you are sitting in a carriage that has been given or bequeathed to you. You are taking a ride in this carriage when a wheel becomes faulty, so you replace it with a new one. Now you have the old carriage but a new wheel. Suppose that after a while a second wheel becomes faulty. You replace that, and you now have the old carriage and two new wheels. Similarly you replace the third and fourth wheels, and so on, until you can easily imagine that one day you will actually have nothing left of the old carriage, but will have replaced it all with new parts. You will have nothing left of what you received as a gift or inheritance; you will still drive about in it, but strictly speaking it will be an entirely new vehicle. And now transfer this idea to human evolution. During the Saturn period man received the rudiments of his physical body, on the Sun his etheric body, on the Moon his astral body and on the Earth his ego, and he has been gradually developing these principles. But within the ego he is increasingly bringing experiences of a new kind into being and stripping off what he inherited, what he was given on Saturn, Sun and Moon. And a time will come — the Venus evolution — when man will have cast off all that the gods gave him during the Moon, Sun and Saturn evolution and the first half of the Earth evolution. He will have discarded all this, just as in our analogy the single parts of the carriage were discarded. And he will have gradually replaced all this by something he has taken into himself from relationships, something previously nonexistent. Thus on reaching Venus, man will not be able to say: Everything from Saturn, Sun and Moon evolution is still in me — for by then he will have cast it all off. And at the end of his evolution he will bear within him only what he has gained through his own efforts, not what he was given, but what he has created out of nothingness. Here you have the third thing in addition to evolution and involution: creation out of nothingness. Evolution, Involution and creation out of nothingness are what we must have in mind if we are to picture the whole magnitude and majesty of human evolution. Thus we can understand how the gods have first of all given us our three bodies as vehicles, and how they built up these vehicles stage by stage, and then endowed us with the capacity to surmount them again stage by stage. We can understand how we may throw away the parts, piece by piece, because the gods wish to make us member by member into their image, so that we may say: The rudiments of what I am to become were given me, and out of them I have created for myself a new being.

Thus what man sees before him as a great and wonderful ideal in the far distant future, of having not only a consciousness of himself but a consciousness of having created himself, was already developed in earlier times by mighty spirits on a higher level than man. And certain spirits already engaged in the past in our evolution are

developing at the present time what man will experience only in a distant future. We have said that during the Saturn evolution the thrones poured forth what we call the substance of mankind, and that into this human substance the spirits of personality poured what we call the forces of personality. But the spirits of personality, who at that time were sufficiently powerful to let the character of their personality flow into this substance poured out by the thrones, have since then ascended higher and higher. Today they have reached the point where they no longer need any physical substance for their further development. On Saturn, in order to be able to live at all, they needed the physical substance of Saturn which was at the same time the rudiment of human substance; on the Sun they needed the etheric substance that poured forth for man's etheric body; on the Moon they needed the astral substance, and here on Earth they need our ego. Henceforth, however, they will need what is formed by the ego itself, man's new creation out of pure relations, which is no longer physical, etheric or astral body or even ego as such, but that which the ego produces out of itself. This the spirits of personality will use, and they are already using it to live in today. On Saturn they lived in what is now our physical body, on the Sun in what is now our etheric body, on the Moon in what is now our astral body. Since the middle of Atlantean times they have begun living in the higher elements that man can bring forth out of his ego.

What are these higher elements man produces from out of his ego? They are of three kinds. First, what we call thinking in accordance with law, our logical thinking. This is something that man adds to things. If man does not merely look at the external world or merely observe it, or merely chase after the thief to find him, but observes in such a way that he sees the law inherent in the observation, availing himself of thoughts that have nothing to do with the thief and yet they catch him, then man is living in logic, pure logic. This logic is something that is added to things by man. When man devotes himself to this pure logic, the ego creates something beyond itself.

Secondly, the ego creates beyond itself when it develops pleasure or displeasure in the beautiful, the exalted, the humorous, the comic; in short, in everything that man himself produces. Let us say you see something in the world that strikes you as silly, and you laugh at it. This laughter has nothing whatever to do with your karma. A stupid person might come along, and the very thing you are laughing at could strike him as clever. That is something that arises out of yourself in that particular situation. Or, let us say, you see people attacking a brave man who for a time holds his own but eventually comes to a tragic end. What you witness was determined by karma, but the feeling of tragedy you have about it is something new.

Though necessity is the first thing, pleasure and displeasure are the second, and the third is the way you feel the urge to act under the influences of relationships. Even the way you feel compelled to act is not determined solely by karma, but by your relationship to the matter. Supposing two people are on the one hand so situated with regard to their relationship with one another that they are karmically destined to pay off something together, but at the same time one is further advanced in his development than the other. The more advanced one will pay up, the other will hold it back for later payment. The one will develop kindness of heart, the other's feelings will not be touched. That is something new coming into evolution. You must not look on everything as determined, rather it depends on whether or not we allow our actions to be guided by the laws of justice and fairness. New things are constantly being added to our morality, to the way we do our duty and to our moral judgment. Particularly in our moral judgment there lies the third element by means of which man goes beyond himself and then advances further and further. The ego puts this into our world, and what is thus put into the world does not perish. What men have introduced into the world from epoch to epoch, from age to age, as the result of logical thought, aesthetic judgment or the fulfillment of duty,

forms a continuous stream, and provides the substance in which, in their phase of evolution, the spirits of personality take up their abode.

That is the way you live and evolve. And whilst you are evolving, the spirits of personality look down upon you, asking continually: Will you give me something, too, that I can use for my development? And the more man develops his thought content, his treasures of thought, the more he tries to refine his aesthetic judgment, and carry out his duty beyond the requirements of karma, the more nourishment there is for the spirits of personality; the more we offer up to them, the more substantial these spirits of personality become. What do these spirits of personality represent? Something which from the point of view of our human world conception we call an abstraction: the spirit of the age, the spirit of the various epochs. To anthroposophists this spirit of the age is a real being. The spirits of the age, who are actually the spirits of personality, move through the ages. When we look back into ancient times, the Indian, Persian, Chaldean-Babylonian, Greco-Latin times and right into our own time, we find that apart from the nations and apart from all the other differences among men, what we call the spirit of the age is always changing. People thought and felt quite differently five thousand years ago than they did three thousand years ago and from the way they do today. And it is the spirits of the age or, according to spiritual science, the spirits of personality who change. These spirits of personality are going through their evolution in the super-sensible world just as the human race is going through its evolution in the sense world. But all that the human race develops of a super-sensible nature is food and drink for these spirits of personality, and they benefit from it. If there were an age in which men were to spend their lives without developing any treasures of thought, without pleasure or displeasure, nor any feeling for duty beyond the limits of karma — in such an age the spirits of personality would have no nourishment and they would become emaciated. Such is our connection with the beings who are invisibly interwoven with our life.

As I told you, man adds something new to development, creates as it were something out of nothingness in addition to involution and evolution. He could not create anything out of nothingness, however, had he not previously received the causes into which he has placed himself as in a vehicle. This vehicle was given him during the Saturn evolution, and bit by bit he is discarding it and developing on into the future. He had to receive the foundation for this, however, and if the gods had not provided this foundation for him in the first place, he would not have been able to perform any action that can be created out of nothingness. That relationships in the surrounding world affect us in such a way that they really help our further development is due to this laying of a good foundation.

For what has become possible through the fact that man can create something new out of relationships, and that he can make use of the connections into which he is placed so as to form the foundation for something new that he himself creates? And what does it mean that man has become capable of extending his thoughts beyond the things he experiences in the surrounding world, and feeling more than what is objectively there in front of him? What has come about as a result of man being able to work beyond the dictates of karma, and live in duty towards truth, fairness and kindness of heart?

By becoming capable of logical thinking, of developing thought in accordance with its necessity, the possibility of error has been created. Because of the pleasure man can take in what is beautiful, the possibility has also been created for him to introduce the element of ugliness and impurity into world evolution. Because man is capable of both setting himself the concept of duty and of fulfilling it beyond the extent of karma, the possibility of evil and of resistance to duty has been created. So it is this very possibility of being able to create solely out of relationships that has placed man in a world in which he can also work on his own spiritual part, so that it becomes full of error, ugliness and evil. And not only had the possibility to be provided for man altogether to create out of

these relationships, but the possibility had to be given for him by dint of struggle and striving gradually to create out of these relationships what is right, what is beautiful and those virtues that really further his evolution.

Creating out of relationships is called in Christian esotericism 'creating out of the spirit'. And creating out of right, beautiful and virtuous relationships is called in Christian esotericism 'The Holy Spirit'. When a man is able to create out of nothingness the right or true, the beautiful and the good, the Holy Spirit fills him with bliss. But for a man to be able to create in the sense of the Holy Spirit, he had first to be given the foundation, as is the case for all creation out of nothingness. This foundation was given him through the coming of Christ into our evolution. Through experiencing the Christ Event on earth, man was able to ascend to creating in the Holy Spirit. Thus it is Christ Himself Who creates the greatest, most profound foundation. If man becomes such that he stands firmly on the basis of the Christ experience, and the Christ experience is the carriage he joins for his evolutionary progress, then the Christ sends him the Holy Spirit, and man becomes capable of creating the right, beautiful and good in the course of his further evolution.

So we see the coming of the Christ to the Earth as a fulfillment as it were of all that had been put into man through Saturn, Sun and Moon. And the Christ Event has given man the greatest thing possible, the power that makes him capable of living on into the perspectives of the future and of increasingly creating out of relationships, out of all that is not predetermined, but depends on how man relates to the facts of the world around him, which is in the widest sense the Holy Spirit. This again is an aspect of Christian esotericism. Christian esotericism is connected with the profoundest thought in the whole of our evolution, the thought of creation out of nothingness.

Therefore no true theory of evolution will ever be able to leave out the thought of creation out of nothingness. Supposing there were only evolution and involution, there would be eternal repetition like there is with the plant, and on Vulcan there would be only what originated on Saturn. But in the middle of our development creation out of nothingness was added to evolution and involution. After Saturn, Sun and Moon had passed away, Christ came to Earth as the enriching leaven which ensures that something quite new will be there on Vulcan, something not yet present on Saturn. Whoever speaks of evolution and involution only, will speak of development as though everything were merely to repeat itself in circles. But such circles can never really explain world evolution. Only when we add to evolution and involution this creation out of nothingness, that adds something new to existing relationships, do we arrive at a real understanding of the world.

Beings of a lower order show no more than a trace of what we called creation out of nothingness. A lily of the valley will always be a lily of the valley; at most the gardener could add something to it from outside to which the lily of the valley would never have attained of itself. Then there would be something which with regard to the nature of the lily of the valley would be a creation out of nothingness. Man, however, is himself capable of including in his being this creation out of nothingness. Yet man only becomes capable of doing so, and advancing to the freedom of individual creativity through the greatest of all free deeds, and one which can serve him as an example. What is this greatest deed of freedom? It is that the creative and wise Word of our solar system Himself resolved to enter into a human body and to take part in Earth evolution through a deed unconnected with any previous karma. There was no preceding karma forcing the Christ to His resolution to enter a human body; He undertook to do it as a free deed entirely based upon foreseeing mankind's future evolution. This deed had no precedent, having its origin in Him as a thought out of nothingness, out of His pre-vision. This is a difficult concept, but it will always be included in Christian esotericism, and everything

depends on our being able to add the thought of creation out of nothingness to those of evolution and involution.

When we are able to do this we shall acquire great ideals which, although they may not extend to what may be called cosmic dimensions, are essentially connected with the question: Why, for instance, do we join an anthroposophical society? To understand the purpose of an anthroposophical society we must return to the thought that we are working for the spirits of personality, for the spirits of the age. When a human being comes into the world at birth, to start with he is educated by all manner of circumstances; these influence him and form the first step of his own creative activity. If only it could be clearly understood that the place where a man is born is only the first step, and that the prevailing circumstances work upon him with overwhelming suggestive power. Let us try to imagine how different a man's circumstances would be were he to be born in Rome or Frankfurt instead of in Constantinople. Through his birth he would be placed in different circumstances, into different religious affiliations. Under these influences a certain fanaticism could develop in him for Catholicism or Protestantism. If, through a slight turn of the wheel in karmic connections, he had been born in Constantinople, might he not also have turned out to be quite a good Turk? Here you have an illustration of the suggestive force with which environmental conditions affect man. But man is able to extricate himself from the purely suggestive nature of conditions and unite with other people in accordance with principles he himself chooses and acknowledges. Then he can say: "Now I know why I am working with other people". In this way there arise out of human consciousness those social groups in which material is created for the spirits of the age, the spirits of personality. And the anthroposophical society is a group of this kind in which this connection is created on a basis of brotherhood. This means nothing else than that each individual is active in the group in such a way that he acquires in himself all the good qualities that make him an image of the whole society. Thus all the thoughts, wealth of feeling and virtues he develops through the society he bestows as nourishment upon the spirits of personality. Hence in a society like this all that creates communal life is inseparable from the principle of individuality. Each single member becomes capable through such a society of offering what he himself produces as a sacrifice to the spirits of personality. And each individual prepares himself to reach the level of those who are the most advanced, and who, as the result of spiritual training have progressed to the point where they have the following ideal: "When I think, I do not do so for my own satisfaction, but in order to create nourishment for the spirits of personality. I lay upon the altar of the spirits of personality my highest and most beautiful thoughts; and what I feel is not prompted by egoism, I feel it because it is to be nourishment for the spirits of personality. And what I can practise in the way of virtue, I do not practise for the sake of gaining influence for myself, but in order to bring it as a sacrifice to provide food for the spirits of personality." Here we have placed before us as our ideal those whom we call the masters of wisdom and the masters of harmony and feeling. For thus do they think and prepare for the development which will bring man nearer and nearer to the point where he will always be creating what is new until he will finally develop a world from which the workings of the old causes will have disappeared, and out of which new light will stream forth into the future. The world is not subject to perpetual metamorphosis into different forms, but the old is perfected and becomes the vehicle of the new. Then even this will be thrown off and will disappear into nothingness, so that out of this nothingness something new may arise. This is the tremendous idea of progress, that new things can perpetually arise.

But the worlds are complete in themselves, and you will have seen in the example given that we cannot speak of anything actually coming to an end. It has been shown how on the one hand the spirits of personality lose their influence over man, but on the

other hand how they again pursue their own evolution. Thus ours is a world that is constantly being rejuvenated by new creations, yet it is also true that what is stripped off would hinder progress, and it is passed on so that others for their part can progress. Nobody should believe that he must allow something to sink into nothingness, for we have been given the possibility of creating out of nothingness. What on Vulcan will prove itself to be something new, will continually build new forms and discard the old, and what is thrown off will seek its own path.

Evolution, involution and creation out of nothingness are the three concepts we have to apply in order to understand the evolution of world phenomena as it really is. Only by this means shall we arrive at accurate concepts that both enlighten man about the world and engender in him inner warmth of feeling. If man had to admit his incapacity to do anything except create in accordance with impulses implanted into him, this would not steel his will nor kindle his hopes to the same extent as being able to say: "I can create my own life values and constantly add something new to what has been given me as a foundation. My ancient heritage will in no way hinder me from creating new blossoms and fruits which will live on into the future." This, however, is part of what we can describe by saying that the anthroposophical conception of the world gives man strength, hope and confidence in life, for it shows him that he can, in the future, have a share in working at creations which, today, not only lie in the womb of causality but in nothingness. It shows him the prospect that, through his own efforts, he is working his way in the true sense of the word from being a 'creature' to being a 'creator'.