In the last lecture we tried to consider how a planetary system depends on the various spiritual beings of the three hierarchies, layered, as it were, one above the other. We gained an idea of all that is involved in a planet, and we saw how a planet receives its enclosed form as a result of the activity of the spirits of form. We also saw that the inner life, the inner mobility of the planet, is the result of the activity of the spirits of motion. What we may call the lowest consciousness of a planet, which can be compared with the consciousness present in the human astral body, we assign to the spirits of wisdom. And the impulse by which a planet changes its place in space we allot to the spirits of will, the thrones. The regulation of the individual movements of a planet—so that instead of taking an isolated course in space, it moves in harmony with the whole system—is an activity of the cherubim. Finally, we ascribed to the seraphim what we may call the inner soul life of a planet, whereby the planet comes into connection with the other heavenly bodies, like a human being enters into relation with other people by means of speech. Thus we must see a sort of coherence in the planet; and in this, what comes from the spirits of form is but a kind of kernel. On the other hand, every planet has something like a spiritual atmosphere—we might even say something like an aura—in which the spirits who belong to both of the higher hierarchies that are above the spirits of form do their work. Now, however, if we want to understand all this rightly,
we must make ourselves acquainted with yet other ideas than those I have just recapped for you in a couple of sentences. These are ideas that we shall attain most easily if we begin with the beings of the hierarchy that stands, so to speak, nearest to humanity in the spiritual world: namely, the beings of the third hierarchy.

We have said that the characteristic of the beings of the third hierarchy is that what is perception in human beings is manifestation in them; and what is inner life in human beings is being filled with spirit in them. We already find this characteristic in the beings who are immediately above the human being in the cosmic order, in the angels or angeloi: namely, that they actually perceive what they manifest from out of themselves. When they return to their inner being, they have nothing independent, nothing self-enclosed like the inner life of human beings. Rather, they then feel the forces and beings of the higher hierarchies above them shining and springing forth in their inner being. In short, they feel themselves filled and inspired by the spirit, by the beings above them. Thus, what we call our independent inner life really does not exist in them. If they wish to develop their own being and if they wish, so to speak, to feel, think, and will what they are, as a human being does, it is all immediately manifested externally. These beings are not like human beings, who can shut up their thoughts and feelings within themselves and can allow their will impulses to remain unfulfilled. What lives as thought in these beings, insofar as they themselves bring forth these thoughts, is also simultaneously revealed externally. If they do not wish to manifest externally, they have no other means of returning into their inner being than by once again filling themselves with the world above them. Thus, the world above them dwells in the inner life of these beings, and when they live a life of their own, they project themselves externally, objectively.

Thus, as we have seen, these beings can hide nothing within themselves as the product of their own thought and feeling, for whatever they bring about in their inner being must show itself externally. As we mentioned in one of the earlier lectures, these beings cannot lie: they cannot be untrue to their nature in such a way that their thoughts and feelings do not harmonize with the external world. They cannot
have an idea within them that does not agree with the external world. For any ideas they have in their inner being are perceived by them in their own manifestation. Let us just suppose that these beings had a desire to be untrue to their own nature. What would be the result? Well, in the beings we have designated as angels, archangels, and time spirits or archai, we find throughout that everything that reveals itself to them, everything that they can perceive is, so to speak, their own being. If they were to wish to be untrue, they would be obliged to develop something in their inner being that would not be consistent with their own nature. Every untruth would be a denial of their nature. That would mean nothing less than a deadening, a damping-down of their own being. Now suppose that these beings had nevertheless the desire to experience something in their inner nature that they would not manifest externally. To do this, they would have to take on another nature.

What I have just described as the denial of their own nature by beings of the third hierarchy, the taking on of another nature, did actually take place. We shall see in future lectures why this had to happen, but to begin with I want to draw your attention to the simple fact that it did happen. Among the beings of the third hierarchy there were some who had this desire to have experiences in their inner nature that they need not manifest outwardly. That is, they had the wish to deny their own nature. What did this bring about in these beings? The beings of the third hierarchy can have no inner independence such as we have. If they wish to live in their inner being, they must immediately be filled with the spirit world above them. A certain number of the beings of the third hierarchy had the desire to develop something within their inner being that they would not immediately encounter in the external world as perception or as the revelation of their own being. Hence the necessity arose of denying their own nature and taking on another. To develop an inner life of their own, to attain inner independence, a number of beings of the third hierarchy had to give up their own nature, to deny it.

Now, let us ask what were the reasons that moved these beings of the third hierarchy to develop such a desire within themselves. If we
fix our attention upon the nature of the beings of the third hierarchy, with their manifestation and their being filled with spirit, we see that these beings are in reality wholly at the service of the beings of the higher hierarchies. Angels have no life of their own. Their own life is manifestation and is such for the whole world. As soon as they do not reveal or manifest themselves, the life of the higher hierarchies radiates into their inner being. What induced a number of them to deny their nature was a feeling of power, of independence, and of freedom. At a certain time, an impulse or urge came over a number of beings of the third hierarchy. This was an impulse to not be merely dependent upon the beings of the higher hierarchies, but to develop within themselves an inner life of their own. The result of this was very far-reaching for the whole evolution of our planetary system. These beings, which we may call the rebels of the third hierarchy, brought about nothing less than humanity’s actual independence, making it possible for human beings to develop an independent life of their own—a life that does not immediately reveal or manifest itself outwardly, but can be independent of external manifestation.

I am intentionally using many words to describe this circumstance, because it is extremely important to grasp accurately what is in question here: namely, that an impulse arose in a number of the third hierarchy to develop an inner life of their own. Everything else was simply the result, the consequence of this impulse. What, then, was this result? It was, in fact, a terrible one: the betrayal of their own nature—an untruth, a lie. You see, it is important that you should understand that the spirits of the third hierarchy who had this impulse did not do what they did for the sake of lying, but in order to develop an independent life of their own. However, in so doing, they had to take the consequence; they had to become “spirits of untruth.” They had to become spirits who betrayed their own being—in other words, spirits of lies. It is as though someone were to take a journey on foot and meet with a wet day. Such a person must of necessity make the best of it and put up with getting wet, which they did not at all intend. In the same way, the spirits of whom we are speaking had no intention of doing something in order to sink into untruth. Their action arose from their wish to develop an inner life, an inner
activity; but the result, or consequence, was that at the same time they became spirits of untruth.

Esoterically, these spiritual beings, who arose as a second category beside the spirits of the third hierarchy by betraying their own nature are called the *Luciferic spirits*. The concept of the Luciferic spirits consists essentially in the fact that these beings wish to develop an inner life. Now, the question is: what did these spirits have to do, in order to attain their goal? We have just seen what they had to develop as a result. We shall learn through further examination what they had to do in order to attain this goal of an inner independent life. What did these spirits wish to surmount? They wished to prevent themselves from being filled wholly with the substance of the higher hierarchies. They wished to be filled not only with the beings of the higher hierarchies, but also with their own being. They could accomplish this only in the following way. Instead of filling themselves with the spirit of the higher hierarchies, and, as it were, leaving themselves open to looking freely outward toward the higher hierarchies, they cut themselves off and detached themselves from the higher hierarchies in order to create substance of their own from the substance of the higher hierarchies.

We can gain a correct idea of this if we think of the beings of the third hierarchy in the following way: we represent them symbolically, graphically, in such a way that they manifest their own being outwardly, as though it were their skin. Hence, each time they develop inner thought or feeling, a manifestation arises like a shining-forth of their own being. The moment they do not manifest themselves, they take up the light of the higher hierarchies flowing into them; they fill themselves with the spirit of the higher hierarchies and, as it were, open their whole being to them.

These Luciferic spiritual beings of the third hierarchy did not wish to be filled with the spirit, nor to be connected with the spiritual substance of the hierarchies. They wanted an independent spiritual life. Therefore, they cut themselves off; they detached themselves, so that the beings of the higher hierarchies were above them. They cut the connection and detached themselves as independent beings, retaining the actual light in their inner being. Thus they retained
what should only have filled them and then returned to the higher hierarchies. They stole it for themselves, filled their own inner being with it, and thereby developed an independent side of their nature. This picture can provide an explanation of events in the cosmos, without which we would be quite unable to grasp a stellar system, or the constitution of the stars in general as we know them, with our ordinary consciousness. Without these ideas, we cannot possibly grasp the life of the stars, the life of the heavenly bodies.

I have now tried to indicate to you how certain beings of the third hierarchy have become quite different beings, the Luciferic spirits. What took place in these beings of the third hierarchy cannot, of course, take place in the same way in the beings of the other hierarchies. Yet, something similar takes place also with these. What takes place in the beings of the other hierarchies, especially when applied to an examination of the spirits of form, will give us an idea of how a planetary system is actually formed. At the conclusion of the last lecture it was said that what our vision first perceives in the planets proceeds from the spirits of form, but it is not quite accurate to represent it thus. If you consider the planets—Mars, Saturn, or Jupiter, for instance—which are outside in cosmic space, the way you see them with your physical eyes or with the telescope, you do not have in the form revealed to you just simply the spirits of form. For example, let us take Saturn, the planet that has been reckoned as the
outermost one in our solar system for a long period of time. Uranus and Neptune were added later, as we shall see, but to begin with we will consider Saturn as the outermost.†

If we look at Saturn with physical vision, we find it outside in cosmic space as a kind of luminous globe (leaving the rings out of the question). You know that astronomy describes the orbit of Saturn as the path of Saturn around the Sun. We will not now discuss the accuracy of that statement, but if you take this accepted idea and imagine the Sun here in the center and the outer circle as the orbit of Saturn, as astronomy conceives it, then everything that is within this orbit of Saturn—within the ellipse of Saturn—is Saturn to the esotericists. For the esotericists who follow spiritual events in the cosmos, this globe that we see out there is not what the esotericists call Saturn; for esotericists, Saturn is what fills the whole space that is enclosed within the boundary of the apparently elliptical orbit of Saturn.

To esotericists, Saturn is not only what the physical eye sees as the most external, physical matter. It is not only what gleams in the heavens. The esotericists know, as spiritual vision reveals, that, in fact, a kind of accumulation of substance exists, extending from the Sun to the orbit of Saturn.

So if we observe this orbit of Saturn with spiritual sight, we have a kind of etheric filling in the whole space [the widely spaced diagonal lines]. We must imagine what lies within this orbit as filled with etheric substance, however, not in the form of a globe, but rather like a kind of flattened ball, or like a lens. Looked at from the side, if we had the Sun at the center, we would have to draw the Saturn of the esotericist as a very flattened ball, and here [at Saturn in the diagram] we would have what is designated as the physical Saturn. We shall
understand still better what is in question if we add an idea regarding Jupiter that we can gain in a similar way from esoteric science. Outer, physical astronomy calls Jupiter this shining body [at Jupiter in the diagram] revolving around the Sun. To the esotericists, that is not Jupiter. What the esotericists call Jupiter is all that lies within the orbit of Jupiter [narrowly spaced diagonal lines]. Looked at from the side, we would have to draw Jupiter in such a way that, if we draw widely spaced diagonal lines for Saturn, we draw narrowly spaced diagonal lines for Jupiter. What physical astronomy describes is only a body that is, so to speak, on the outermost limits of the true esoteric Jupiter.

What I am saying here is not a mere theoretical idea or fancy. It is a fact that substance—not coarse physical matter but fine etheric substance—fills the space within the orbit of Saturn in its lenticular, flattened, ball-like form, as represented here. It is just as much a fact that the second, smaller space for Jupiter is filled with a different etheric substance, which permeates the first [Saturn], so that there is a single etheric substance only between the two orbits. Within [in the overlapping of Saturn and Jupiter in the diagram], the two etheric substances permeate one another mutually.

Now let us ask: what is the task of the spirits of form in this whole arrangement? The spirit of form that is the basis of Saturn sets a boundary and gives a form to the etheric substance we call Saturn in the esoteric sense. Thus, this outermost lens has been shaped by the spirit of Saturn, which is a spirit of form. In the same way, the lens of Jupiter was shaped by the spirit of form allotted to Jupiter; and the lens of Mars was shaped by the spirit of Mars, another spirit of form. Now, we may ask: Where then do the spirits of form corresponding to Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars actually dwell? If we can speak of a place in which these beings are, where is this place? Actually, in the ordinary sense of the word, we cannot speak of a place. We can only say that the spiritual beings that we call the spirits of form work as forces within the etheric substance we have just mentioned. Yet, they all have a common center, and this center is none other than the Sun. Thus, if we seek for the starting point from whence the spirits of form work—the spirits of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, and so forth, as
well as the spirit of form belonging to our Earth—we find it in the Sun. This means that the spirits of form corresponding to our planets comprise, as it were, a collegium or council of spirits, having its seat in the Sun. From there these spirits of form set boundaries or limits to certain etheric substances, certain etheric masses, so that what we call, for instance, esoteric Saturn or esoteric Jupiter comes into being. Now, let us ask how it would be if only the spirits of form were to work.

The whole meaning of these observations can show you that the physical planets would not be in existence if only the spirits of form were to work. They would indeed have, as it were, their abode in the Sun, where they form a sort of collegium; and we would have around us the planetary spheres as far as the orbit of Saturn. Concentric globes or flattened balls, so to speak, would exist as the esoteric planets; the most external of these flattened globes being of the finest etheric matter, the next somewhat denser, and the innermost of the densest etheric matter. Therefore, the physical planets would not exist if only the spirits of form were to work; rather there would be globe-shaped, accumulated masses bounded by what physical astronomy today calls the orbits of the planets. However, within the cosmos there are certain other spiritual beings corresponding to the spirits of form, but which are, so to speak, rebels against those of their own class. Just as we find Luciferic spirits among the beings of the third hierarchy that, in order to set up their own independent life, cut themselves off from the spiritual substance of the higher hierarchies, so we find also, within the category of the spirits of form, that some separated off and would not go through the regular development of a spirit of form. These beings went through an evolution of their own. These beings oppose the regular spirits of form; they are in opposition to them. What then happens is as follows.

Let us suppose that we had at this point [S in the diagram on the following page] the center point of the spiritual council of the spirits of form. The spirit of form working upon Saturn would call forth an etheric globe, so that by the agency of this spirit a flattened globe would arise. At an outermost point of this etheric globe there works a rebel, a kind of Luciferic spirit of form in opposition to the spirit
of form working from the center of the Sun. This spirit works in opposition from without inward. Thus we have the regular spirit of form working centrifugally outward from the Sun, bringing about the esoteric Saturn, which is then to be seen as a mighty etheric globe with its center point in the Sun. At the periphery, working inward from cosmic space, is an irregular spirit of form that has cut itself off from the regular evolution of the others. Then at this point [a]—through the combined working of the forces working inward from cosmic space and those working outward from the Sun—an “in-turning” occurs that finally becomes detached. That is the physical planet Saturn.

Thus we should imagine that there are two forces working together where our physical eyes see the planet Saturn. One is the regular force of the spirit of form working outward from the Sun; the other is the detached spirit of form that, at a definite point, works in opposition. This produces an “in-turned” structure. The etheric turns inward, and what is turned in appears to the physical eye as the physical planet Saturn. The same occurs with the physical Jupiter and with the physical Mars. So, by this example, you see how in individual cases what we call maya, the great illusion, actually arises. In truth, where physical astronomy places a planet, there is a combined working of two forces. The appearance of the physical planet arises only because a great and mighty etheric heavenly body is truly there that through the contact of
these opposing forces has a cavity and a turning-in formed in one place.

For truly here we have actually to do with a turning-in; and to be really accurate, the matter must at first be described in this way. The spirits of form extended the etheric substance from the Sun to a certain boundary. The irregular spirits of form, working in opposition, caved the substance in, so that in reality a cavity was made in the etheric substance. As regards the original etheric substance of a planet, where the physical eye believes it sees the planet, there is really nothing. The actual planet is there where the physical eye sees nothing. That is the peculiarity of maya. Where the physical planet is seen, there is a hole or a cavity. You will perhaps say that it is a very strange idea that where the physical planet is to be seen, there is a hollow or hole, because you will want to refer to the Earth [as not being a hollow or cavity]. According to what we have been saying, our Earth too must be a sort of flattened ball, having its center-point in the Sun. It must likewise be such a cavity, such a sort of hollow on the outermost rim. “A fine thing that!” you can say, “We know quite well that we are walking on the firm, solid Earth!” Similarly, we might take for granted that where Saturn, Jupiter, or Mars is, there would naturally have to be solid filling, not a hollow. Yet, nevertheless, where you walk about on the Earth—where, in the sense of maya perception, you believe yourselves to be walking on solid, firm ground—even there, in reality, you are walking about on a hollow. Our Earth itself, insofar as it is an accumulation of matter, is a hollow in cosmic space, a hole bored into cosmic space. All physical matter comes into being through the meeting together of forces coming from the spirits of form. In the present case, we have the meeting of the forces of the regular and irregular spirits of form. These collide with one another and, in reality, an indentation is produced, and consequently, at this point, a simultaneous breaking-up of the form—but only of the form. The form breaks up, and this hollow space is bored into it. Broken spiritual form, shattered form, is, in reality, matter. In a physical sense, matter exists only when spiritual forms are broken up. Thus, the planets out there are also shattered forms.

In our planetary system, the spirits of form have helpers, as our previous considerations have made evident. The spirits of form
themselves determine the boundaries, as we have described. But above the spirits of form stand the spirits of motion; above these stand the spirits of wisdom; above these, the spirits of will; above these, the cherubim; and above these, the seraphim. However, in all ranks of these spiritual beings there are also those who can be likened to what we have described as Luciferic spirits. So, on the outermost border wherever a planet forms, the spirits of form do not work alone. What goes out from the Sun from the activities of the regular hierarchies that work from within outward is always being opposed by the forces that come from the irregular, rebellious hierarchies.

The cherubim and seraphim belong to the whole play of forces as much as do the spirits of form. The cherubim and the seraphim have the task of bearing the power of the light outward from the center point of the planetary system, from the center of the Sun. Inasmuch as the beings of the higher hierarchies—the seraphim and cherubim—become the bearers of light, they then have the same relation to the light as the forces of the spirits of form have to the etheric substance. Just as the forces of the regular spirits of form pass
outward and encounter the forces of the irregular spirits working in opposition, by means of which a cavity or hollowed arises, so also do the forces that carry the light, in filling the whole etheric space, meet with opposition. The irregular forces work in opposition to them, with the result that the planet arrests the light. Just as the planet arrests the forces of the spirits of form, so does it also arrest the light and throw it back. Hence, it appears as a reflector, throwing back the light that the spirits we call the cherubim and seraphim carry to it from the Sun.

The planets have no light of their own, instead, they claim for themselves the force of the light that would be due to them as beings if they were to open themselves to the regularly developed cherubim and seraphim; and they veil themselves, cut themselves off from the whole. Every planet has a cut-off, separated light. It is incorrect to say that the planets only have light borrowed from the Sun. Every planet has its own light, but it has cut it off, keeps it hidden within itself, and develops it for its own independent inner life of light. We shall see that each planet shares this light only with its own beings of the kingdoms of nature that exist on that planet. The light to which they ought to open themselves, which they ought to take up from outside, is brought to them by the cherubim and seraphim from the Sun, but to this light they close themselves and throw it back. For cosmic space, they are stars that have no light of their own. Thus, as it were, a cavity or notch is formed in the light that flows from the Sun, and the planet throws itself against the light that flows from the Sun, arresting it and throwing it back.

For spiritual vision, therefore, what we observe in the stellar world is absolutely different from what it appears to physical astronomy. What exists for the latter is nothing but a description of a maya, and only behind this maya does the truth lie. The truth behind the material world is the spiritual world. In reality, the material world does not exist at all. What is called the material world is the interplay of the forces of the spiritual world.

Today we have tried to describe how a planetary system such as ours actually arises. Very little is really known in the outer world, in the world of physical science, of the origin of such a system; for
though physical science imagines that a planetary system arises from a sort of amassing of etheric substance, the fundamental principle, which ought to hold good in all of natural science, is omitted. How often are children told at school—I do not know whether it is done here, but at least in Central Europe they are always told—that, according to the Kant-Laplace system of the origin of the world, a mass of original matter was in rotation and from this then the separate planets split off.† These things may be somewhat amended today, but the principle is the same. And, in order that this may be quite clear and comprehensible, the children are shown by means of a little experiment how easily a planetary system can be formed. A large drop of some oily substance that floats on water is taken, and a circle ingeniously made in the line of the equator that is pierced through with a card. Then a needle is passed through from pole to pole, which one begins to turn—and behold! a pretty little planetary system arises out of the drop of oil. Quite in accord with the Kant-Laplace theory of the origin of the world, little drops separate off and rotate, while the big drop, the Sun, remains in the center. What is more natural than to represent this to young people as a visible proof that this was also once enacted in the great cosmic spaces! But in so doing, a significant error is made that ought never to be made in natural science. There are certain conditions that ought never to be forgotten in making experiments. A scientist who forgets the conditions essential for experiments to come about does not describe it accurately according to natural science. If you omit any essential condition, you are not describing it correctly according to natural science. The essential condition in the origin of this planetary system is, however, that the teacher stands there and makes it rotate. Otherwise the whole system could not originate! The Kant-Laplace theory would thus only be possible if those who believe in it could at the same time supply a gigantic teacher in cosmic space who would rotate the whole etheric mass. Just as people do not always notice small errors in logic, capital errors—such errors of logic as those that in their effects extend to the whole conception of the cosmos—are often not noticed.

Now, there is no great teacher outside, making the axis of the world rotate, but there are the individual beings of the various
hierarchies that, through the interplay of their forces, bring about the
distribution and regulation of the movements of the different heavenly
bodies. This should be the answer to those who would believe that
the ordinary materialistic theory—as expressed in Kant-Laplace, or in
later hypotheses—is sufficient to explain the cosmic system, and that
it is unnecessary to consider anything else, such as the esotericists do.
To those people who, from a materialistic standpoint, object to this
living interplay of the hierarchies, we must reply that with the capital
error in logic that must be made by all materialistic hypotheses, one
cannot reach the goal, because it is impossible to explain a planetary
system without calling to our aid what spiritual vision can actually
see. Certainly it is shown abundantly clear to spiritual vision that
what must be described with the physical senses is, indeed, considered
in its reality, something quite different. What the eye sees is really
nothing but the reflected light, which is thrown back because, when
the seraphim and cherubim carry the light of the Sun into cosmic
space, the Luciferic cherubim and seraphim throw themselves against
them, so to speak, and insert darkness into the substance of the
sunlight, cutting off the light within and claiming for each of the
planets a light of its own.

These thoughts, now given on the basis of spiritual observation and
spiritual investigation, were first expounded in the post-Atlantean
period in a sublime way by the great Zarathustra to his pupils.†
Everything that is rayed down by the beings of the higher hierarchies
centered in the Sun—rayed down from the Sun into cosmic space in
the way just described—all this was ascribed by Zarathustra to the
spirit whom he named Ahura Mazda, or Ormuzd. This spirit, who
carried the forces of his being from the center point of the Sun into
the periphery, was everywhere opposed by the irregular spirits of the
different hierarchies, which in their totality form the kingdom of
Ahriman. We shall see, certainly, that—with regard to the planetary
system—we must separate the kingdom of Ahriman from that of
Lucifer. I shall have more to say about this; but at the conclusion of
this lecture, attention must be drawn to the fact that Zarathustra, in
his own way, symbolically pointed out to his pupils this connection
of the light of Ahura Mazda streaming out from the Sun and of the
kingdom of Ahriman embedded within it. Zarathustra said: “What proceeds from the Sun was present symbolically as what the seraphim and the cherubim carry out through the light. What is hurled against the light in opposition by all the irregular spirits of the higher hierarchies, the cavity or notch thus hollowed out, we represent as what is accepted as darkness.” That is, an individual light imprisoned within, manifesting externally as darkness. This darkness Zarathustra represented as the kingdom of Angramanyu, or Ahriman. Thus we see how this teaching that originated in Asia Minor, and is in a sense given to us once more today, was met first in the civilization of Zarathustra. What always fills us with significant feelings with regard to the evolution of humanity is that we ourselves come upon certain things that, even if they are not traditional and may not be observed in the akashic records, are furnished by the results of contemporary esoteric research and can then be rediscovered in the great teachings of antiquity. Through this rediscovery we become properly familiar with these great, ancient teachers. And when we permeate ourselves with the truth to be found today in spiritual investigation—and when this same truth shines toward us from the old teachers and leaders of humanity—only then do we acquire a right relation to these leaders of humanity; only then do they become living to us; only then do we understand them rightly. Then the evolution of humanity reveals itself to us as a mighty discourse held by the spirits who now not only resound forth to one another in space, but also interpret one another in the successive periods of time, completing one another and leading the stream of civilization on into the future.