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(Surlignés en jaune : les passages où il est question de Nostradamus)

Prophecy: Its Nature and Meaning  
GA 61

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Translated by D. S. Osmond

Words spoken by Shakespeare's most famous character: "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy" are, of course, perfectly true; but no less true is the saying composed by Lichtenberg, a great German humourist, as a kind of rejoinder: "In philosophy there is much that will be found neither in heaven nor earth." Both sayings are illustrations of the attitude adopted nowadays to many things in the domain of Spiritual Science. It seems inevitable that widespread circles, especially in the world of serious science, will repudiate such matters as prophecy even more emphatically than other branches of Spiritual Science. If in these other branches of Spiritual Science—in many of them at least—it is difficult to draw a clear line between genuine research and charlatanism, or maybe something even worse, it will certainly be admitted that wherever super-sensible investigation touches the element of human egoism, there its dangers begin. And in what realm of higher knowledge could this be more apparent than in all that is comprised in the theme of prophecy as it has appeared through the ages! Everything covered by the term 'prophecy' is closely connected with a widespread, and understandable, trait in the human mind, namely, desire to penetrate the darkness of the future, to know something of what earthly life in the future holds in store.

Interest in prophecy is connected not only with curiosity in the ordinary sense, but with curiosity concerning very intimate regions of the human soul. The search for knowledge concerning the deeper interests of the human soul has met with so many disappointments that earnest, serious science nowadays is unwilling to listen to such matters—and this is really not to be wondered at. Nevertheless it looks as though our times will be obliged at least to take notice of them, and also of the subjects of which we have been speaking in previous lectures and shall speak in the future. As will be known to many of you, the historian Kemmerich has written a book about prophecies, his aim being to compile facts which can be confirmed by history and go on to show that important happenings were pre-cognised or predicted in some way. This historian is driven to make the statement—at the moment we will not question the authenticity of his research—that there are very few important events in history that have not at some time been predicted, conjectured and announced in advance. Such statements are not well received in our time; but ultimately, in the sphere where history can speak with authority, it will not be possible to ignore them

because proof will be forthcoming, both in respect of the past and of the present, from outer documents themselves.

The domain we are considering today has never been in such disrepute as it is nowadays, nor regarded as so dubious a path of human endeavour. Only a few centuries ago, for instance in the 16th century, very distinguished and influential scholars engaged in prognostication and prophecy. Think of one of the greatest natural scientists of all time and of his connection with a personage whose tendency to be influenced by prophecies is well known: think of *Kepler*, the great scientist, and his relations with Wallenstein. Schiller's deep interest in this latter personality was due in no small measure to the part played in his life by prophecy. The kind of prophecy in vogue in the days of Kepler—and only a couple of centuries ago leading scientific minds all over Europe were still occupied with it—was based upon the then prevailing view that there is a real connection between the world of the stars, the movements and positions of the stars, and the life of man. All prophesying in those times was really a form of astrology. The mere mention of this word reminds us that in our day too, many people are still convinced that there is some connection between the stars and coming events in the life of individuals, even, too, of races. But prophetic knowledge, the prophetic art as it is called, was never so directly connected with observation of the movements and constellations of the stars as was the case in Kepler's time.

In ancient Greece an art of prophecy was practised, as you know, by prophetesses or seeresses. It was an art of predicting the future induced by experiences arising perhaps from asceticism, or other experiences leading to the suppression of full self-consciousness and the presence of mind of ordinary life. The human being was thus given over to other Powers, was in an ecstatic condition and then made utterances which were either direct predictions of the future or were interpreted by the listening priests and soothsayers as referring to the future. We need only think of the Pythia at Delphi who under the influence of vapours rising from a chasm in the earth was transported into a state of consciousness quite different from that of ordinary life; she was controlled by other Powers and in this condition made prophetic utterances. This kind of prophecy has nothing to do with calculations of the movements of stars, constellations and the like. Again, everyone is familiar with the gift of prophecy among the people of the Old Testament, the authenticity of which will certainly be called into question by modern scholarship. Out of the mouths of these prophets there came not only utterances of deep wisdom, which influenced the life of these Old Testament people, but fore-shadowed the future. These predictions, however, were by no means always based upon the heavenly constellations as in the astrology current in the 15th and 16th centuries. Either as the result of inborn gifts, ascetic practices and the like, these prophets unfolded a different kind of consciousness from that of the people around them; they were torn away from the affairs of ordinary life. In such a condition they were entirely detached from the circumstances and thoughts of their personal lives, from their own material environment. Their attention was focused entirely on their people, on the weal and woe of their people. Because they experienced something *superhuman*, something reaching beyond the individual concerns of men, they broke through the boundaries of their personal consciousness and it was as though Jahve Himself spoke out of their mouths, so wise were their utterances concerning the tasks and the destiny of their people.

Thinking of all this, it seems evident that the kind of divination practised at the end of the Middle Ages, before the dawn of modern science, was only one specific form and that

prophecy as a whole is a much wider sphere, connected in some way with definite states of consciousness to which a man can only attain when he throws off the shackles of his personality. Astrological prophecy, of course, can hardly be said to be an art in which a man rises above his own personality. The astrologer is given the date and hour of birth and from this discovers which constellation was rising on the horizon and the relative positions of other stars and constellations. From this he calculates how the positions of the constellations will change during the course of the man's life and, according to certain traditional observations of the favourable or unfavourable influences of heavenly bodies upon human life, predicts from these calculations what will transpire in the life of an individual or of a people. There seems to be no kind of similarity between this type of astrologer and the ancient Hebrew prophets, the Greek seeresses or others who, having passed out of their ordinary consciousness into a state of ecstasy, foretold the future entirely from knowledge acquired in the realm of the Supersensible. For those who consider themselves enlightened men of culture today, the greatest stumbling-block in these astrological predictions is the difficulty of realising how the courses of the stars and constellations can possibly have any connection with happenings in the life of an individual or a people, or in the procession of events on the Earth. And as the attention of modern scholarship is never focused on such connections, no particular interest is taken in what was accepted as authentic knowledge in times when astrological prophecy and enlightened science often went hand in hand.

Kepler, the very distinguished and learned scientist, was not only the discoverer of the Laws named after him; not only was he one of the greatest astronomers of all time, but he devoted himself to astrological prophecy. In his time—also during the periods immediately preceding and following it—numbers of truly enlightened men were votaries of this art. Indeed if we think objectively about life as it was in those days, we realise that from their standpoint it was as natural to them to take this prophetic art, this prophetic knowledge, as seriously as our contemporaries take any genuine branch of science. When some prediction based upon the constellations—and made perhaps, at the birth of an individual—comes true later on, it is of course easy to say that the connection of this constellation with the man's life was only a matter of chance. Certainly it must be admitted in countless cases that astonishment at the fulfilment of astrological prediction is caused simply because it came true and because people have forgotten what did *not* come true. The contention of a certain Greek atheist is, in a sense, correct. He once came in his ship to a coastal town where, in a sanctuary, tokens had been hung by men who had vowed at sea that if they were saved from shipwreck they would make such offerings. Many, many tokens were hanging there—all of them the offerings of men who had been saved from shipwreck. But the atheist maintained that the truth could only be brought to light if the tokens of everyone who in spite of vows had actually perished in shipwreck, were also displayed. It would then be obvious to which category the greater number of tokens belonged. This implies that a really objective judgment could only be reached if records were kept not only of those astrological predictions which have come true, but also of those which have not. This attitude is perfectly justified but on the other hand there is certainly much that is very astonishing. As in these public lectures I cannot take for granted a fundamental knowledge of all the teachings of Spiritual Science, I must speak in a way which will convey an idea of the significance of the subjects we are studying.

Even a confirmed sceptic must surely feel surprise when he hears the following. Keeping to well-known personages, let us take the case of Wallenstein. Wallenstein wished to have his horoscope drawn up by Kepler—a name honoured by every scientist. Kepler sent the

horoscope. But the matter had been arranged with caution. Wallenstein did not write to Kepler giving him the year of his birth and saying that he would like him to draw up the horoscope, but an intermediary was chosen. Kepler therefore did not know for whom the horoscope was intended. The only indication given was the date of the birth. There had already been many important happenings in Wallenstein's life and he requested that they too should be recorded, as well as predictions made of those still to come. Kepler completed the horoscope as requested. As is the case with many horoscopes, Wallenstein found very much that tallied with his experiences. He began (it was often so in those days) to have great confidence in Kepler and on many occasions was able to adjust his life according to the prognostications. But it must be said too, that although many things tallied, many did not, so far as the past was concerned and, as subsequently transpired, the same was true of the predictions made about the future. It was so with numbers of horoscopes and in those days people were accustomed to say that there must be some inaccuracy in the alleged hour of birth and that the astrologer might be able to correct it. Wallenstein did the same. He begged Kepler to correct the hour of birth; the correction was only very slight but after it had been made, the prognostications were more accurate. It must be added here that Kepler was a thoroughly honest man and it went very much against the grain to correct the hour of birth. From a letter on the subject written by Kepler at the time it is obvious that he did not favour such procedure on account of the many possible consequences. Nevertheless he undertook to do what Wallenstein asked—it was in the year 1625—and gave further details about Wallenstein's future; above all he said that according to the new reading of the positions of the stars, the constellation that would be present in the year 1634 would be extremely unfavourable for Wallenstein. Kepler added—as well he might, for the date lay so far ahead—that even if this were a cause of alarm, the alarm would have passed away by the time of these unfavourable conditions. He did not therefore consider them dangerous for Wallenstein's plans. The prediction was for March 1634. And now think of it: within a few weeks of the period indicated, the causes occurred which led to the murder of Wallenstein. These things are at least striking!

But let us take other examples—not of second-rate astrologers but of really enlightened men. The name of an extraordinarily learned man in this sphere will at once occur to us—*Nostradamus*. Nostradamus was a doctor of high repute who, among other activities, had rendered wonderful service during an epidemic of the plague; he was a man of profound gifts and the selflessness with which he devoted himself to his profession as a doctor is well known. It is known, too, that when on account of his selflessness he had been much maligned by his colleagues, he retired from his medical work to the isolation of Salon where, in 1566, he died. In Salon he began to observe the stars, but not as Kepler or others like Kepler had observed them. Nostradamus had a special room in his house into which he often withdrew and, as can be gathered from what he himself says, from this room he watched the stars, just as they presented themselves to his gaze. In other words he made no special mathematical calculations but immersed himself in what the soul, the heart, the imagination can discover when gazing with wonder at the starry heavens. Nostradamus spent many an hour of reverent, fervent contemplation in this curious chamber with its open views on all sides to the heavens. And from him there came not only specific predictions, but long series of diverse and remarkably true prophecies of the future. So much so, that Kemmerich, the historian of whom I spoke just now, cannot but be astonished and attach a certain value to the prophetic utterances of Nostradamus. Nostradamus himself made some of his prophecies known to the public and was naturally laughed to scorn in his day, for he could quote no astrological calculations. As he gazed at the stars his predictions

seemed to rise up in him in the form of strange pictures and imaginations, for instance of the outcome of the battle at Gravelingen in the year 1558, where the French were defeated with heavy loss. Another prediction, made long beforehand, for the year 1559, was to the effect that King Henry II of France would succumb "in a duel" as Nostradamus put it. People only laughed, including the Queen herself, who said that this clearly showed what reliance could be placed upon prediction—for a King was above engaging in a duel. But what happened? In the year predicted, the King was killed in a tournament. And it would be possible to quote many, many predictions that subsequently came true.

Again there is *Tycho de Brahe*, one of the brilliant minds of the 16th century and of outstanding significance as an astronomer. The modern world knows little of Tycho de Brahe beyond that he is said to have been one who only half accepted the Copernican view of the world. But those who are more closely acquainted with his life know what Tycho de Brahe achieved in the making of celestial charts, how vastly he improved the charts then existing, that he had discovered new stars and was, in short, an astronomer of great eminence in his day. Tycho de Brahe was also deeply convinced that not only are physical conditions on the Earth connected with the whole Universe, but that the spiritual experiences of men are connected with happenings in the great Cosmos. Tycho de Brahe did not simply observe the stars as an astronomer but he related the happenings of human life with happenings in the heavens. And when he came to Rostock at the age of 20, he caused a stir by predicting the death of the Sultan Soliman, which although it did not occur exactly on the day indicated, did nevertheless occur. The indication was not *quite* exact but this will probably not bring an outcry from historians, for they might well argue that if anyone were intent upon lying he would not tell a half-lie by introducing the difference of a mere day or so into the prediction.

Hearing of this, the King of Denmark requested Tycho de Brahe to cast the horoscopes of his three sons. Concerning his son, Christian, the indications were accurate; less so in the case of Ulrich. But about Hans, the third son, Tycho de Brahe made a remarkable prediction, derived from the movements of the stars. He said: The whole constellation and everything to be seen goes to show that he is and will remain frail and is unlikely to live to a great age. As the hour of birth was not quite accurate, Tycho de Brahe gave the indications very cautiously ... he might die in his eighteenth or perhaps in his nineteenth year, for the constellations then would be extremely unfavourable. I will leave it an open question whether it was out of pity for the parents or for other reasons, that Tycho de Brahe wrote of the possibility of this terrible constellation in the eighteenth or nineteenth year being overcome in the life of Duke Hans ... if so, he said, God would have been his protector; but it must be realised that these conditions would be there, that an extremely unfavourable constellation connected with Mars was revealed by the horoscope and that Hans would be entangled in the complications of war; as in this constellation, Venus had ascendancy over Mars, there was just a hope that Hans would pass this period safely, but then, in his eighteenth and nineteenth years, there would be the very unfavourable constellation due to the inimical influence of Saturn; this indicated the risk of a "moist, melancholic" illness caused by the strange environment in which Hans would find himself. And now, what was the history of Duke Hans' life? As a young man he was involved in the political complications of the time, was sent to war, took part in the battle of Ostend and in connection with this, as Tycho de Brahe had predicted, had to endure the ordeal of terrible storms at sea. He came very near death, but as the result of friendly negotiations set on foot for his marriage with the daughter of the Czar he was recalled to Denmark. According to Tycho de Brahe's interpretation, the complications due to the unfavourable influences of Mars had been stemmed by the influences of Venus—

the protector of love-relationships: Venus had protected the Duke at this time. But then, in his eighteenth and nineteenth years the inimical influence of Saturn began to take effect. One can picture how the eyes of the Danish Court were upon the young Duke: all the preparations for the marriage were made and the news that it had taken place was hourly awaited. But there came instead the announcement that the marriage was delayed, then news of the Duke's illness, and finally of his death. Such things made a great impression upon people at the time and must surely surprise posterity.

Now world-history sometimes has its humorous sides! There was once, in a different domain altogether, a certain Professor who asserted that the brain of the female always weighs less than that of the male. After his death, however, his own brain was weighed and proved to be extremely light. He was the victim of humour in world-history!

The horoscope of Pico de Mirandola (a descendant of the famous philosopher) prophesied that Mars would bring him great misfortune. He was an opponent of all such predictions. Tycho de Brahe proved to him that all his arguments against prognostications from the stars were false, and he died in the year that had been indicated as the period of the unfavourable influence of Mars.

Numbers of examples could be quoted and we shall probably realise that in a certain sense it is not difficult to make objections. For example, a very distinguished modern astronomer—a man greatly to be respected too, for his humanitarian activities—has argued that Wallenstein's death cannot be said to have been correctly predicted in the horoscope drawn up by Kepler. In a certain respect such arguments must be taken seriously. We cannot altogether ignore Wilhelm Foerster's argument that Wallenstein knew what had been predicted; that in the corresponding year he remembered his horoscope, hesitated, did not take the firm stand he would otherwise have taken and so was himself the cause of the misfortune. Such objections are always possible.

But on the other side it must be remembered that although in illustrations produced by science, external data are of value, the modern age accepts these data as an absolutely adequate basis for scientific truths. Many things may be problematical. But we should not shut our eyes to the fact that careful comparison of events that had actually occurred in life with indications obtained from the stars, did indeed lead, in earlier times, to confidence in prognostications of the future. People were certainly alive to mistakes but they did not conceal things that were genuinely astonishing, nor did they accept these things entirely without criticism. In those times too they were quite capable of criticism and in all probability applied it on many occasions.

I wanted to quote very striking examples in order to show that in accordance with the standards of modern science too, it is possible to take these matters seriously. And even when we take what there is to be said against them, we shall have to admit that the reasons which in times of the relatively near past made brilliant minds place firm reliance in them, were not bad but sound and well-founded reasons. Even if these reasons are rejected, it must be admitted that the impression they made on brilliant and enlightened minds was such that these men believed—quite apart from details—that there is a connection between events in the lives of individuals and of peoples, and happenings in the Cosmos. These men believed that there is a real connection between the macrocosm, the great world, and the microcosm, the little world.

They believed that human life on the Earth is not a chaotic flow of events but that law manifests in these events, that just as celestial events are governed by cyclic law, so too a certain cyclic law, a certain rhythm is manifest in human and earthly conditions. To explain what is here meant, I shall speak of certain facts that can be collated by observation, as truly as the most exacting facts of chemistry or physics today. But the observations must be made in the appropriate spheres. Suppose we observe something that happens in a man's life during his childhood. If we study the longer sweep of human life, remarkable connections will come to light, for example, between the life of earliest childhood and that of very old age; a connection is perceptible between what a man experiences in the evening of his life and what he experienced in early youth. We shall be able to say: If, during youth, we were shaken by emotions due to alarm or fright, we may possibly have been exempt from their effects all through our life, but in old age things may appear of which we know that their causes are to be sought in very early childhood. Again there are connections between the years of adolescence and the period immediately preceding old age. Life runs a circular course.

We can go still further, taking as an example the case of someone who, say at the age of 18, was torn right away from the course his life had taken hitherto. Until then he may have been able to devote himself to study but was suddenly obliged to abandon this and become a merchant, perhaps because his father lost his money, or for some other reason. To begin with he gets on quite well but after a few years, great inner difficulties make their appearance. In trying to help such a person to overcome these difficulties, we cannot apply any general, abstract principles. We shall have to say to ourselves: At the age of 18 there was a sudden change in his life and at the age of 24—that is to say, six years later—difficulties cropped up in his life of soul. Six years earlier, in his twelfth year or thereabouts, certain things happened in his soul which actually explain the difficulties appearing in his twenty-fourth year: six years before, six years later—the change of profession lies between. Just as above a pendulum swinging to right and left there is a point of equilibrium, so, in the case quoted, the eighteenth year is a pivotal point. A cause generated before this pivotal point has its effect the same number of years afterwards. So it is in man's life as a whole. Human life takes its course *not* with irregularity but with regularity and according to law. Although the individual does not necessarily realise it, there is in every human life one centre-point; what lies before—youth and childhood—allows causes to rest in the depths of subsequent happenings, and then what took place a number of years before this centre-point of life reveals itself in its effects an equal number of years afterwards. In the sense that birth is the point polar to death, the happenings of childhood are the causes of happenings during the years that precede death. In this way life becomes comprehensible.

In the case, for example, of illness occurring, say, at the age of 54, the only really intelligent approach is to look for a pivotal point at which a man passed through a definite crisis, reckoning back from there to some event related to the fifty-fourth year somewhat in the same sense as death is related to birth, or the other way round. The fact that happenings in human life reveal conformity to law and principle does not gainsay our freedom. Many people are apt to say that this conformity to law in the course taken by events contradicts man's freedom of will. But this is not the case and it can only appear so to superficial thinking. A human being who at the age, say, of 15, lays into the womb of time some cause, the effects of which he experienced in, say, his fifty-fourth year, no more deprives himself of his freedom than does someone who builds a house and then moves into it when it is ultimately ready. Logical thinking will never say that the man deprives himself of his freedom when he moves into the house. Nobody deprives himself of freedom by anticipating

that causes will have their effects later on. This principle has nothing directly to do with freedom in life.

Just as there are cyclic connections in the life of the individual, so too are there cyclic connections in the life of the peoples, and in life on the Earth in the general sense. The evolution of mankind on the Earth divides itself into successive epochs of culture. Two of the epochs most closely connected with our own, are the period of Assyrian-Egyptian-Chaldean civilisation and that of the later culture of Greece and Rome; then, reckoning from the decline of Greek and Roman culture and its aftermaths, comes our present epoch. According to all the signs of the times this will last for a very long time yet. There, then, we have three consecutive periods of culture.

Close observation of the life of the peoples during these three epochs will reveal, during the Greco-Latin period, something like a pivotal point in the evolution of mankind. Hence, too, the curious fascinating of the culture of Greece and Rome. Greek art, Greek and Roman political life, Roman equity, the conception of Roman citizenship ... it all seems to stand like a kind of pivotal point in the stream of the evolutionary process: After it—our own epoch; before it—the Egypto-Chaldean epoch. In a remarkable way, those who observe deeply enough will perceive certain conditions of life during the Egypto-Chaldean period operating again today, in quite a different but nevertheless related form. In those times, therefore, causes were laid into the womb of the ages, which now in their effects come again to the fore. Certain methods of hygiene, certain ablutions customary in ancient Egypt, also certain views of life are now, strangely enough, in the forefront again—naturally in absolutely different forms; in short, the effects of causes laid down in ancient Egypt are becoming perceptible today. In between—like a fulcrum—lies the culture of Greece and Rome.

The Egypto-Chaldean epoch was preceded by that of the most ancient Persian culture. According to the law of cyclic evolution, then, it can be foreshadowed that just as in our civilisation there is a cyclic re-emergence of Egypto-Chaldean culture, so ancient Persian culture will re-emerge in the epoch following our own. Law is revealed everywhere in the flow of evolution! Not irregularity, not chaos—but also not the kind of law conjectured by historians: that the causes of everything happening today are to be sought in the immediately preceding period, the causes of happenings in the recent past again in the immediately preceding period, and so forth. This is how historians build up a chain of events—the one directly following the other. Closer observation, however, reveals the existence of cycles, breaks ... what was once present appears again at a very much later time.

External observation itself can discern this. But it will be quite apparent to those who study the evolution of humanity in the light of Spiritual Science that there is evidence of spiritual law in the flow of happenings, in the stream of the 'Becoming' and that a certain deepening of the life of soul will enable men actually to perceive the threads of these inner connections. And although it is not easy to grasp everything that belongs to this sphere, although it may sometimes tend to charlatanry or humbug and direct its appeal to the lower impulses and instincts, nevertheless the following is true: When a man is able to eliminate personal interests and quicken the hidden forces of spiritual life, so that his knowledge is drawn not merely from his environment or from remembrances of his own life and that of his nearest acquaintances, when he is uninfluenced by material and personal considerations ... then he grows beyond his own personality and becomes conscious of the presence of higher forces with him, which it is only a matter of developing by appropriate

exercises. When these deeper forces are brought to the surface, happenings in the life of a human being will also reveal their hidden causes and such a soul will then glimpse the truth that whatever has transpired through the ages throws its effects into the future. The law presented to us by Spiritual Science is that no happenings—and this also applies to the domain of the Spiritual—float meaninglessly along the stream of existence; they all have their effects and we must discover the law underlying the manifestation of these effects in later times. Therewith the insight will come that this law also embraces the return of the individuality into the present earthly life, where the effects of earlier lives are working themselves out.

Just as knowledge of the workings of Karma, the Law of Destiny, arises from insight into how causes lie in the womb of time and appear again in transformation, so too this insight was present in all those who have taken prophecy seriously or have actually engaged in it; they have been convinced that laws prevail in the course taken by human life and that the soul can awaken the forces whereby these laws may be fathomed. But the soul needs points of focus. In its facts, the world is an interconnected whole. Just as in his physical life the human being is affected by wind and weather, it is not difficult to assume that there are connections in everything around us, even though the details are obscure. Without actually seeking for laws of Nature, something in the courses of the stars and constellations evokes the thought: The harmonies perceptible there can call forth in us similar harmonies and rhythms according to which human life runs its course. Further observations will then lead on to the details.

As may be read in the little book, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science*, epochs can be distinguished in the life of the individual: from birth to the change of teeth, from then to puberty, then the years up to twenty-one and again from twenty-one to twenty-eight ... 7-year periods clearly different in character and after which new kinds of faculties are present. If we know how to investigate these things we shall find clear evidence of a rhythmic stream in human life, which can as it were be found again in the starry heavens. Strikingly enough, if life is observed from this point of view (but such observation must be calm and balanced, without the wonted fanaticism of opponents) it will be found that round about the twenty-eighth year something in the life of soul indicates, in many cases, a culmination of what has come into being after four periods of seven years each. Four times seven years—twenty-eight years ... although the figure is not absolutely exact, this is the approximate time of one revolution of Saturn. Saturn revolves in a circle consisting of four parts, passes therefore through the whole Zodiacal circle, and its course has an actual correspondence with the course of man's life from birth to the twenty-eighth year. Just as the circle divides into four parts, so too these twenty-eight years divide into four periods of seven years each. There, in the revolution of a star in cosmic space, we see indications of similarity with the course taken by human life.

Other movements in the heavens, too, correspond to rhythms in human life. Little attention is given today to the very brilliant researches made by Fliess, a doctor in Berlin; they are still only in the initial stage but if ever they are properly studied, the rhythmic flow of births and deaths in the life of humanity will be clearly perceived. All such research is only at the beginning; but in time to come it will be realised that one need only regard the stars and their movements as a great celestial clock and human life as a rhythm that runs its own course but is in a certain sense determined by the stars. Without looking for actual *causes* in the stars, it is quite possible to conceive that because of this inner relationship, human life runs its course with a like rhythm. Suppose, for example, we often

go outside the door of our house or look out of the window at some particular time in the morning and always see a certain man on the way to his office ... we glance at the clock, knowing that every day he will pass at a definite time. Are the hands of the clock the cause of it? Of course not! ... but because of the invariable rhythm we can assume that the man will pass the house at a definite time. In this sense we can see in the stars a celestial clock according to which the life of man and of peoples runs its course.

Such things may well be vantage-points for the observation and study of life, and Spiritual Science is able to indicate these deeper connections. We shall now understand why Tycho de Brahe, Kepler and others, worked on the basis of calculations—Kepler especially, Tycho de Brahe less. For insight into the soul of Tycho de Brahe reveals a certain similarity with that of Nostradamus. Nostradamus, however, does not need to make calculations at all; he sits up in his attic and gives himself up to the impressions made by the stars. He ascribes this gift to certain inherited qualities in his organism, which for this reason is no cause of hindrance to him. But he also needs that inner tranquillity of soul that arises after he has put away all thoughts, emotions, cares, and excitements of everyday life. The soul must face the stars in purity and freedom. And then what Nostradamus prophesies rises up in him in pictures and images; he sees it all before him in pictures. If he spoke in astronomical terms of Saturn or Mars being injurious, he would not, in predicting destiny, have been thinking of the physical Saturn or the physical Mars, but he would have pondered in this way: Such and such a man has a warlike nature, a temperament that loves fighting, but he also has a kind of melancholy making him subject to moods of depression which may even affect him physically. Nostradamus lets this interweave in his contemplation and a picture rises before him of future happenings in the man's life: the tendency to melancholy and the fighting spirit intermingle—"Saturn" and "Mars." This is only a sense-image. When he speaks of "Saturn" and "Mars," his meaning is: There is something in this man which presents itself to me as a picture but which can be compared with the opposition or conjunction between Saturn and Mars in the heavens. This was merely a way of expressing it; contemplation of the stars evoked in Nostradamus the seership that enabled him to see more deeply into souls than is otherwise possible.

Nostradamus, therefore, was a man who by acting in a certain way was able to waken to life inner powers of soul otherwise slumbering within the human being. In a mood of devotion, of reverence, he completely put away all cares and anxieties, all concerns of the outer world. In utter forgetfulness of self, with no feeling of his own personality, his soul knew the truth of the axiom he always quoted: "It is God Who utters through my mouth anything I am able to tell you about your concerns. Take it as spoken to you by the Grace of your God I ...". Without such reverence there is no genuine seership. But this very attitude ensures that those who have it will not abuse or make illicit use of their gift.

Tycho de Brahe represents a stage of transition between Nostradamus and Kepler. When we contemplate the soul of Tycho de Brahe, he seems to be one who is calling up remembrances from an earlier life, rather reminiscent of Greek soothe-saying. He has in him something that is akin to the soul of an ancient Greek seeking everywhere for the manifestations of cosmic harmony. Such is the attunement of his soul—and his astrological insight is really an attitude of soul—it is as if astronomical calculation were merely a prop helping him to call up those powers which enable pictures of happenings in the past or the future to take shape before him. Kepler's mind is more abstract, in the sense that modern thought is abstract—in a still higher degree. Kepler has to rely more or less upon pure calculation in which there is, of course, accuracy, for according to knowledge derived from

clairvoyance there is an actual relation between the constellations and the actions of men. As time went on, astrology became more and more a matter of reckoning and calculation only. The gift of seership gave place to purely intellectual thought and it can truly be said that astrological forecasts now are nothing but intellectual deduction.

The farther we go back into the past, the more we shall find that the utterances of the ancient prophets concerning the life of their peoples rose up from the very depths of their souls. So it was among the Hebrew prophets; in communion with their God and free of their personal interests and affairs, they were wholly given up to the great concerns of their people and could perceive what was in store. Just as a teacher foresees that certain qualities in a child will express themselves later on, and takes account of them, the Hebrew prophet beheld the soul of his people as one unit; the Past mellowed in his soul and worked in such a way that the consequences were revealed to him as a great vision of the Future.

But now, what does prophecy mean in human life, what does it really signify? We shall find the answer by thinking of the following: There are certain great figures to whom we always trace streams of happenings in history. Although today the preference is for everyone to be at one level, because it goes against the grain when a single personality towers over all the others (in their desire that all faculties shall be equal, people are loath to admit that certain men are more forceful than the rest)—in spite of this, great and advanced leaders *are* at work in the process of historical evolution. Things have come to such a pass nowadays that the mightiest happenings are conceived to be the outcome simply of ideas and not to lead back to any one personality. There is a certain school of theology, which still claims to be Christian, although it contends that there need have been no Christ Jesus as an individual. In reply to the retort that world-history is after all made by men, one of these theologians said: That is as obvious as the fact that a forest is composed of trees; human beings make history in the same sense that trees make a forest ... But think of it—surely the whole forest could have grown up from a few grains of seed? Certainly the forest is composed of trees but the primary step is to find out whether it did not originate from grains of seeds once laid in the soil. So, too, it is a matter of inquiring whether it is not, after all, the case that events in human evolution lead back to this or that individual who inspired the rest.

This conception of world-history suggests the thought of “surplus” forces in men who play leading parts in the evolution of humanity. Whether they apply these forces for good or ill is another matter. Such men work upon their environment out of the surplus forces within them. These surplus forces, which need not be drawn upon for the affairs of personal life, may express themselves in deeds or they may find no outlet in deeds; but with others, some kind of hindrance always seems to prevent this. Nostradamus is an interesting example: he was a doctor and in this capacity brought blessing to very many human beings. But the thought that someone is doing good, often goes against the grain! Nostradamus became an object of envy and jealousy and was accused of being a Calvinist. To be a Jew or a Calvinist was looked upon askance and circumstances therefore forced him to withdraw from his work of healing and abandon his profession. But were the forces used in this inspiring work no longer within him when he had retired? Of course they were! Physics believes in the conservation of energy or force. What happened in the case of Nostradamus was that when he threw up his work, the forces in him took a different direction. If his medical activities had continued, these forces would have produced quite other effects in the future. For where can our deeds really be said to end? If, like Nostradamus, we withdraw from some activity, the flow of our deeds is suddenly stemmed—but the forces themselves are still there. The forces in Nostradamus' soul remained and were transformed, so that what might

have expressed itself in deeds at some future time, rose up before him in pictures. In his case, deeds were transformed into the gift of seership. The same may be true of human beings endowed with a faculty for prophecy today; and it was true in the case of the ancient Hebrew prophets. As biblical history indicates, these men had a real connection with forces belonging to the past and to the future of their people; their own soul, their personal life, was nothing to them. They were not war-like by nature but had within them surplus forces which from the very beginning took the same form as those of Nostradamus after their transformation. Forces, which in others poured into deeds, revealed themselves to the Hebrew prophets in the form of mighty pictures and visions. The gift of seership is directly connected with the urge to action in men, with the transformation of surplus forces in the soul.

Seership is therefore by no means an incomprehensible faculty; it can be reconciled with the kind of thinking pursued in natural science itself. But it is obvious, too, that the gift of seership leads beyond the immediate Present. What is the way, the only way, of reaching out beyond the Present? It is to have *ideals*. Ideals, however, are usually abstract: man sets them before him and believes that they conform to the realities of the Present. But instead of setting up abstract ideals, a man who desires to work in line with the aims of the super-sensible world tries to discover causes lying in the womb of the ages, asking himself: How do these causes express themselves in the flow of time? He approaches this problem not with his intellect but with his deeper faculty of seership. True knowledge of the Past—when this is acquired by the operations of deeper forces and not by way of the intellect—calls up before the soul pictures of the Future, which more or less conform to fact. And one who rightly exercises the gift of seership today, after having pondered the stream of evolution in olden times, will find a picture rising up before him as a concrete ideal. This picture seems to tell him: Mankind is standing at the threshold of transition; certain forces hitherto concealed in darkness are becoming more and more apparent. And just as today people are familiar with intellect and with imagination, so in a Future by no means distant, a new faculty of soul will be there to meet the urge for knowledge of the super-sensible world.

The dawn of this new power of soul can already be perceived. When such glimpses of the Future astonish us, our attitude will not be that of the fanatic, neither will it be that of the pure realist, but we shall *know* why we do this or that for the sake of spiritual evolution. This, fundamentally, is the purpose of all true prophecy. We realise that this purpose is achieved even when the pictures of the Future outlined by the seer may not be absolutely accurate. Anyone who is able to perceive the hidden forces of the human soul knows better than others that false pictures may arise of what the Future holds in store; he understands, too, why the pictures are capable of many interpretations. To say that although certain indications have been given, they are vague and ambiguous does not mean very much. Such pictures may well be ambiguous. What matters, is that impulses connected with evolution as it moves on towards the Future, shall work upon and awaken slumbering powers in man. These prophesyings may or may not be accurate in every detail: what matters is that powers shall be awakened in the human being!

Prophecy, therefore, is to be conceived less as a means of satisfying curiosity by prediction of the Future than as a stimulating realisation that the gift of seership is within man's grasp. Shadow-sides there may well be—but the good sides are there too! The good side will be revealed above all when men do not go blindly through the day nor blindly onwards into a remote future but can set their own goals and direct their impulses in the light of knowledge. Goethe, who has said so many wonderful things about the affairs of the world,

was right when he wrote down the words: "If a man knew the Past, he would know what the Future holds; both are linked to the Present as a Whole complete in itself." ("Wer das Vergangene kannte, der wusste das Künftige; beides schliesst an heute sich rein, als ein Vollendetes, an.") This is a beautiful saying from the "Prophecies of Bakis."

And so the *raison d'être* of prophecy does not lie in the appeasement of curiosity or the thirst for knowledge, but in the impulses it can give to work for the sake of the Future. The unwillingness to be really objective about prophecy today is due to the fact that our age sets too high a value on purely intellectual knowledge—which does not kindle impulses of will. But Spiritual Science will bring the recognition that although there have been many shadow-sides in the realm of ancient and modern prophecy, nevertheless in this striving for consciousness of the Future a seed has formed, not for the appeasement of cravings for knowledge or of curiosity, but as **fire for our will**. And even those who insist upon judging everything in the human being by cold, intellectual standards, must learn from this vista of the world that **the purpose of prophecy is to stimulate the impulses of will**.

Having considered how attacks against prophecy may be met and having recognised its core and purpose, we have a certain right to say: In this domain lie many of those things with which academic philosophy will have nothing to do ... that is certainly true. But the light of this very knowledge will reveal, in connection with those facts which illustrate the other saying, that data of intellectual knowledge—however correct they may be—are sometimes completely valueless because they are incapable of engendering impulses of will. Just as it is true that there are many things undreamed of by philosophy, so on the other side it is true that a great deal in the realm of scientific research into the things of heaven and earth comes to nothing because it does not quicken the seed of right endeavour. But progress in life must be made in the light of a kind of knowledge which reveals that at the beginning, the middle and the end, everything turns upon **human activity, human deeds!**