

Four Day Karma Exercise

Rudolf Steiner-Karmic Relationships II, GA 236, Lecture VII, 9 May 1924, *Dornach*

Now the possibility exists for a comparatively quick ripening of insight into karmic connections if, for a considerable time, we endeavour patiently, and with inner activity, to picture in our consciousness, more and more clearly, an experience which would otherwise simply take its course externally, without being properly grasped, so that it fades away in the course of life. After all, this fading away is what really happens with the events of life. For what does a man do with events and experiences, as they approach him in the course of the day? He experiences them, but in reality only half observes them. You can realise how experiences are only half observed if you sit down one day in the afternoon or in the evening—and I advise you to do it—and ask yourself: ‘What did I actually experience this morning at half-past nine?’ And now try to call up such an experience in all details before your soul, recall it as if it were actually there, say at half-past seven in the evening—as if you were creating it spiritually before you. You will see how much you will find lacking, how much you failed to observe, and how difficult it is. If you take a pen or pencil to write it all down, you will soon begin to bite at the pen or the pencil, because you cannot hit upon the details—and, in time, you want to bite them out of the pencil!

Yes, but that is just the point, to take upon oneself the task of placing before the mind, in all precision, an experience one has had,—not at the moment when it is actually there, but afterwards. It must be placed before the soul as if one were going to paint it spiritually. If the experience were one in which somebody spoke, this must be made quite objectively real: the ring of the voice, the way in which the words were used, clumsily or cleverly—the picture must be made with strength and vigour. In short, we try to make a picture of what we have experienced. If we make a picture of such an experience of the day, then in the following night, the astral body, when it is outside the physical body and the etheric body, occupies itself with this picture. The astral body itself is, in reality, the bearer of the picture, and gives shape to it outside the body. The astral body takes the picture with it when it goes out on the first night. It shapes it there, outside the physical and etheric bodies.

That is the first stage (we will take these stages quite exactly): the sleeping astral body, when outside the physical and etheric bodies, shapes the picture of the experience. Where does it do this? In the external ether. It is now in the external etheric world; it does this in the external ether.

Now picture to yourself the human being: his physical and etheric bodies lie in bed, and the astral body is outside. We will leave aside the ego. There outside is the astral body, reshaping this picture that has been made. But the astral body does this in the external ether. In consequence of this the following happens—think of it: the astral body is there outside, shaping this picture. All this happens in the external ether which encrusts, as it were, with its own substance that which is formed as a picture within the astral body. So the external ether makes the etheric form (dotted (dark) outline) into a picture which is clearly and precisely visualised by the eye of spirit.



In the morning you return into the physical and etheric bodies and bear into them what has been made substantial by the external ether. That is to say: the sleeping astral body shapes the picture of the experience outside the physical and etheric bodies. The external ether then impregnates the picture with its own substance. You can imagine that the picture becomes stronger thereby, and that now, when the astral body returns in the morning with this stronger substantiality, it can make an impression upon the etheric body in the human being. With forces that are derived from the external ether, the astral body now stamps an impression into the etheric body.

The second stage is therefore: The picture is impressed into the etheric body by the astral body. There we have the events of the first day and the first night. Now we come to the second day. On the second day, while you are busying yourself with all the little things of life in full waking consciousness, there, underneath the consciousness, in the unconscious, the picture is descending into the etheric body. And in the next night, when the etheric body is undisturbed, when the astral body has gone out again, the etheric body elaborates this picture.

Thus in the second night the picture is elaborated by the man's own etheric body. There we have the second stage:—The picture is impressed into the etheric body by the astral body; and in the next night the etheric body elaborates the picture. Thus we have: the second day and the second night. Now if you do this, if you actually do not give up occupying yourself with the picture you formed on the preceding day—and you can continue to occupy yourself with it, for a reason which I shall immediately mention—if you do not disdain to do this, then you will find that you are living on further with the picture. What does this mean—to continue occupying yourself with it? If you really take pains to shape such a picture, vigorously, elaborating it plastically in characteristic, strong lines on the first day after you had the experience, then you have really exerted yourself spiritually. Such things cost spiritual exertion. I don't mean what I am going to say as a hint—present company is, of course, always excepted in these matters!—but after all, it must be said that the majority of men simply do not know what spiritual exertion is. Spiritual exertion, true spiritual exertion, comes about only by means of activity of soul. When you allow the world to work upon you, and let thoughts run their course without taking them in hand, then there is no spiritual exertion. We should not imagine, when something tires us, that we have exerted ourselves spiritually. Getting tired does not imply that there has been spiritual exertion. We can get tired, for instance, from reading. But if we have not ourselves been productive in some way during the reading, if we merely let the thoughts contained in the book act on us, then we are *not* exerting ourselves. On the contrary, a person who has really exerted himself spiritually, who has exerted himself out of the inner activity of his soul, may then take up a book, a very interesting one, and just “sleep off” his spiritual exertion in the best possible way, in the reading of it. Naturally, we can fall asleep over a book if we are tired. This getting tired is no sign at all of spiritual exertion.

A sign of spiritual exertion, however, is this: that one feels—the brain is used up. It is just as we may feel that a demand has been made on the muscle of the arm when lifting things. Ordinary thought makes no such strong claims upon the brain. The process continues, and you will even notice that when you try it for the first time, the second, the third, the tenth, you get a slight headache. It is not that you get tired or fall asleep; on the contrary, you cannot fall asleep; you get a slight headache from it. Only you must not regard this headache as something baleful; on the contrary, you must take it as actual proof of the fact that you have exerted your head.

Well, the process goes on ... it stays with you until you go to sleep. If you have really done this on the preceding day, then you will awake in the morning with the feeling: “There actually *is* something in me! I don't quite know what it is, but there is something in me, and it wants something from me. Yes, after all it is not a matter of indifference that I made this picture for myself yesterday. It really means something. This picture has changed. To-day it is giving me quite different feelings from those I had previously. The picture is making me have quite definite feelings.”

All this stays with you through the next day as the remaining inner experience of the picture which you made for yourself. And what you feel, and cannot get rid of through the whole of the day—this is a witness to the fact that the picture is now descending into the etheric body, as I have described to you, and that the etheric body is receiving it.

Now you will probably experience on waking after the next night—when you slip into your body after these two days—that you find this picture slightly changed, slightly transformed. You find it again ... precisely on waking the third day you find it again within you. It appears to you like a very real dream. But it has undergone a transformation. It will clothe itself in manifold pictures until it is other than it was. It will assume an appearance as if spiritual beings were now bringing you this experience. And you actually receive the impression: Yes, this experience which I had and which I

subsequently formed into a picture, has actually been brought to me. If the experience happened to be with another human being, then we have the feeling after this has all happened, that actually we did not only experience it through that human being, but that it was really brought to us. Other forces, spiritual forces, have been at play. It was they who brought it to us.

The next day comes. This next day the picture is carried down from the etheric body into the physical body. The etheric body impresses this picture into the physical body, into the nerve-processes, into the blood-processes. On the third day the picture is impressed into the physical body. So the third stage is: The picture is stamped into the physical body by the etheric body.

And now comes the next night. You have been attending throughout the day to the ordinary little trifles of life, and underneath it all this important process is going on: the picture is being carried down into the physical body. All this goes on in the subconscious. When the following night comes, the picture is elaborated in the physical body. It is spiritualised in the physical body. First of all, throughout the day, the picture is brought down into the processes of the blood and nerves, but in the night it is spiritualised. Those who have vision see how this picture is now elaborated by the physical body, but it appears spiritually as an altogether changed picture. We can say: the physical body elaborates the picture during the next night.

1st Day and 1st Night:

When outside the physical and etheric bodies, the astral body shapes the picture of the experience. The outer ether impregnates the picture with its own substance.

2nd Day and 2nd Night:

The picture is stamped by the astral body into the etheric body. And the etheric body elaborates the picture during the next day.

3rd Day and 3rd Night:

The picture is stamped by the etheric body into the physical body. And the physical body elaborates the picture during the next night.



Now this is something of which you must make an absolutely correct mental picture. The physical body actually works up this picture spiritually. It spiritualises the picture. So that when all this has really been gone through, it does happen—when the human being is asleep—that his physical body works up the whole picture, but not in such a way that it remains within the physical body. Out of the physical body there arises a transformation, a greatly magnified transformation of the picture. And when you get up in the morning, this picture stands there, and in truth you hover in it; it is like a kind of cloud in which you yourself are. With this picture you get up in the morning.

So this is the third day and the third night. With this picture, which is entirely transformed, you get out of bed on the fourth day. You rise from sleep, enveloped by this cloud. And if you have actually shaped the picture with the necessary strength on the first day, and if you have paid attention to what your feeling conveyed to you on the second day, you will notice now that your will is contained in the picture as it now is. The will is contained in it! But this will is unable to express itself; it is as though fettered. Put into somewhat radical terms, it is actually as if one had planned after the manner of an incredibly daring sprinter, who might resolve to make a display of a bravado race: I will run, now I am running to Ober-Dornach, I make a picture of it already, I've got it within me. It is my will ... But in the very moment when I want to start, when the will is strongest, somebody fetters me, so that I stand there quite rigidly. The whole will has unfolded, but I cannot carry out the will. Such, approximately, is the process.

When this experience of feeling yourself in a pillory develops—for it is a feeling of being in a pillory after the third night—when you again awake in it, feeling in a pillory as it were, with the will fettered through and through, then, if you can pay attention to it, you will find that the will begins to transform itself. This will becomes *sight*. In itself it can do nothing, but it leads to our

seeing something. It becomes an eye of the soul. And the picture, with which one rose from sleep, becomes objective. What it shows is the event of the previous earth-life, or of some previous earth-life, which had been the cause of the experience that we shaped into a picture on the first day. By means of this transformation through feeling and through will, one gets the picture of the causal event of a preceding incarnation.

