

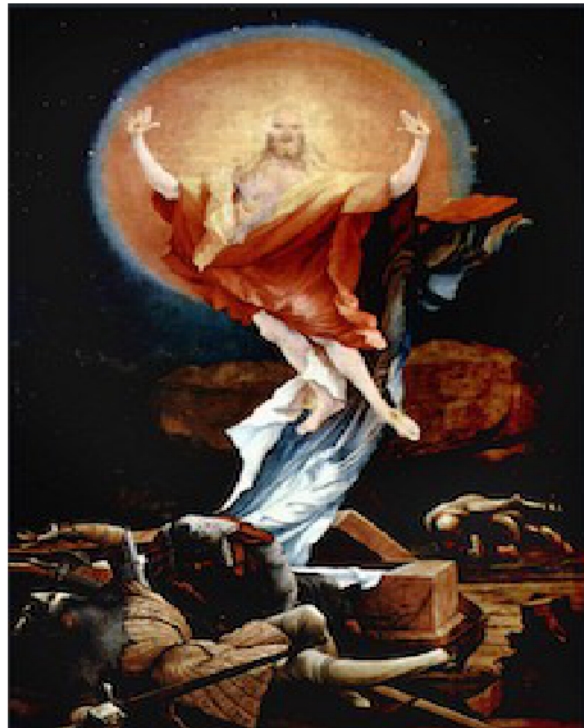
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The Solari Report

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**Spiritual Science in the Present Age:
Spiritual Knowledge – What Is It?
with
Thomas Meyer**



Thomas Meyer: Let me explain the basics of what we understand by knowing something or having a cognition. We have two sides: The perception or the percept given by observation of a certain field, of course. We never observe everything; we are always in a certain awareness field, and that is what we focus on now. On the other hand, we have the concepts that we bring into this field, which comes from a completely different source; they don't come through observation; they come through intuition. Here the word is used in a technical sense by getting a concept into our mind, not something vague.

The idea is that we have a synthesis in our field of observation of percept and concept. They must be congruent, like two triangles in geometry; the two triangles can be congruent. As simple as that sounds, we practically daily go against this idea of true cognition, mainly by making two mistakes.

First, we overlook some percepts in our field: we don't pay attention to them. So, there is a lack of concepts that we would send to this sphere and we don't. There is an overload of a perceptual field, which is not permeated by concepts; it's empty of concepts.

On the other hand, the other mistake that is done daily by practically all of us is this: we have concepts that go beyond what we actually perceive. You all know what that is; we make a generalization. We see a person once, and the person seems to be making jokes continuously, and we go away and say to our friends, "Oh, I've met a very humorous person today."

Did you? No, you met someone who made a few jokes, but you generalize out of what you have perceived. You make a generalization that is not justified in what you have experienced. That person may be a very deep melancholic, and you happened to meet him in only five minutes of the last few weeks or months in which he was in a good, humorous mood.

Generalization is going beyond what you actually perceive. This has deep social implications as well. We tend to always go much further with our concepts like "This person is a humorous person," without having a basis in observation.

Also, science does this: You all know about this deadly virus today. Some 'cute' people who were good observation people made claims, but they hadn't

observed it in an isolated form. So, you have a concept that is not fulfilled by being anchored in a percept. This is not scientifically sound and serious, but it happens all the time.

The synthesis is an ideal which, even in everyday life, is difficult to fulfill, and it is difficult to fulfill in science. Whenever science gets speculative with hypotheses, you don't go along the principle to only produce thoughts into the concrete field of observation that you are confronted with. It's an art, so to speak, to restrict oneself in one's thinking and to apply what one thinks to what one actually sees.

I will give you another example that comes from the great political event of 9/11: A friend, Gerhard Wisnewski – who may not be known to all of our listeners and readers – went to the place where the fourth plane allegedly went down by hijackers in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. All that one could see there was a little hole in which not even a small car would have fit in, and there was some debris. There were some sacks with rubbish in it.

Wisnewski went there and talked to the mayor of the city. They went to the field where the plane allegedly went down. Wisnewski asked the man, "Where did you see the plane going into the ground?"

The mayor was almost stupefied. He said, "There was no plane." So, he didn't actually observe a plane. He had heard the daily news for days and weeks, and the news claimed that there was a plane, so there must have been a plane. Then he said, "It probably evaporated in the air."

That is another good example for not fitting in the field of your observation what you think about what is there, and it is actually not there. That is another example of an unexact syntheses.

I think the basic thing was true that the man said, "I didn't see any plane," but he couldn't come up with that in the American public because the American public was made to believe, of course, that there was a plane. This shows another difficulty in everyday interpretation of what we actually see. This is a simple thing with huge consequences.

Another example of how it is difficult to be exact in what we apply from our thinking capacity to what we see is if we do a simple experiment and imagine that where we are discussing, the door would open. Who would step in? Who would you like to step in?

Speaker: President Trump.

Meyer: Ex-president Trump. He is here probably by a great error, thinking that this is the White House of Switzerland or some cabinet of a secret meeting. What are we doing? We see his movements; we see his clothes; we see his face and the color of his face. Then he speaks, and we listen to the words that he says. Then out of some impulse that we might not know, he leaves the room again after five minutes.

Everything we should do if we want to train ourselves in being exact in cognition and of what we actually perceive is to follow the sight, what he presents, the words, and the meaning of the words – if there is any. There are many people who speak, and you can't discover any meaning in their words, but let's say that he would say some thoughtful things. You register that; you register the tone of his voice, and that is all. Then he leaves. That is all we have to restrict ourselves with.

If later, we want to say what we have observed and what we have thought about, you can imagine the huge difficulty would be that when the door opens and Mr. Trump comes in, a whole 'swarm' of things that you believe to know about him from the 'wonderful' media immediately surges up. Of course, with most people, the strongest emotions jump up like, "I hate this man!" or some people may say, "What a wonderful man!"

It's all superfluous; it doesn't belong to the process that you want to exercise because it doesn't come from the immediate field of your experience, which I call the 'field of observation'. It comes from your whole being ;it comes from your memories, from the past, and from outside.

If we would practice this, we would actually practice exact knowledge to arrive at exact cognition. Cognition and knowledge are used synonymously, but I hope it's clear what is meant.

That would have a great impact. Not only is it a good scientific principle to go about things like that, but it is also keeping the social sphere free from what we can call prejudice – all of the past elements that we project when we see somebody who doesn't come out of the immediate experience. That would free many things in the social sphere.

If you would have the ability to meet everyone in a way as if we have never met the person before, then we would be very attentive to what we can experience now. We are not used to that.

From that point of view, you can get a great respect of the art of forming a conviction about something that is actually in front of your eyes and leave all the past things away as if it was the biggest rubbish in the world. The past things don't help me to understand what I see now.

I think that is one of the greatest difficulties in everyday life and in science – to keep to what we actually perceive. One of the great geniuses of this faculty was Goethe, and I don't think that is surprising.

Goethe was able to look and stay a long time with what he actually saw before he tried to see the conceptual background of this, whereas, we are generally jumping over what we see and going directly to concepts. We don't see they don't really fit or that they don't fit well, and the whole age is permeated with a rush into concepts after superficial observations.

This is a basic thing to understand that cognition always needs these two poles: observation/perception, and thinking/concept. They must be related in as exact a manner as possible, which presents in daily life a huge difficulty.

The percept side, of course, is usually some kind of sense perception and things that we would say belong to the material world. If we make this 'looking at what we observe' systematic, then we come to science. Science is nothing other than to look in a disciplined way into the world and into what the senses present us with, and then to understand this and permeating it with concepts. That is the basic principle.

Of course, we can also have non-material perceptions. Some of you would

doubt that and say, “That is impossible.” If you were to ask any person you might know or yourself, “What is science?” the answer most given immediately is, “Natural science.” That means dealing with material things in the sense world.

But natural science is only one type of science. You cannot define what is scientific by the object that you observe – the percept. If you observe and have the ability to observe etheric processes or living processes, you can do the same; you can try to understand them. But, of course, this is not physical or material anymore. So, one must not fix the idea of scientific research to the type of percept that you have involved because there are ethereal and astral percepts, and spiritual realities. That is a matter of development of the individual if you are able to see beyond the physical.

Let me sum up: You could say that to know what science is, the question should not be answered in a short-sighted way. It would be the same if you asked someone, “What is a triangle?”

The answer is, “This triangle, which is harmoniously built, and this is your favorite, and you like that”. Then you could say, “This is not ‘the’ triangle; this is just one specimen. There are all sorts of triangles that are far beyond your special triangle.”

So, the idea or the concept is much larger than your special mental picture of it. In the same way, if you say, “Natural science is science,” you have the same absurdity of saying, “This special form of triangle is ‘the’ triangle.”

Science can be, of course, of a living, of a soul, or of a spirituality. That is a matter of perception. The perception today is usually limited to the material/physical field, but it must not necessarily be. You can train yourself. Or it can happen spontaneously that you realize, “I have experienced something that is not only physical, but it has to do with life.”

I will give you a personal example. It’s not very deep, but I hope it shows what I want to talk about. Everyone has habits – strong habits. Sometimes you see that some of these habits are really bad for you. Could they be killed? It would be certainly better to kill the habits than to kill other people. Maybe there is even a

relation in not killing bad habits to killing other human beings.

If you make an attempt to get rid of one habit in a year, it can be a great achievement. This leads you to an experience of something that you didn't have before. In my case, I will give you an example of one habit that I have, and I would be happy to be able to kill many more habits, but that is another matter...

What did I do? For 15 years, I was a strong smoker. One day I was fed up – for various reasons. I stopped in the middle of the process from one hour to the next. I decided to get rid of that stupid habit. Maybe for other people it is necessary, but that is another question. I didn't even throw away the last package of Camels, which I used to smoke at that time. They were in my apartment.

One day, not long after that, I woke up after an intense dream. What was the dream? I was smoking very intensely. Then I observed what was going on. There are two options that could happen: You could fall back and say, "This is not over. I'm very lucky that I still have a package of cigarettes downstairs." Then in an hour, I could have been smoking again, but it didn't happen.

I was surprised, and I was, of course, happy. Nothing happened. So, what did I experience? If you have knowledge of spiritual science, then you know that you have a physical body, you have a life body, you have an astral body (which we will get to later), and we have an ego, which is the 'I' and the spiritual center.

All of the habits are connected with the life body in us. When you break a habit, as I did in that example, and you dream in such a way that you can clearly see your soul and your passionate nature are not involved at all, what is the dream showing you? For me, it was clearly showing the reality of the life body connected to habits that go on for a while with the habit, even if the habit – from a soul point of view – has been resolved and broken up.

What I'm saying is that you make a new experience. It was my first experience of a part of the etheric body, which is conservative and repetitive. If you stop one thing that is in that etheric body suddenly, and you do it from one moment to the next, your soul life is freed, but force of the etheric body still goes on.

That is produced in an imaginative image in the dream.

It's a trivial example, but for me, it was quite revealing. "Oh, I have not only a passionate soul, which has now been victorious with one little habit, and I'm not very proud", but you also have a life body that was surprised. It was not yet ready to accept that the habit of such-and-such has gone.

That is just a personal experience. Of course, you can make exercises to train yourself to realize the etheric in you or in nature in a more general way, not attached to your own person. But I don't think it matters where you start.

That gave me the insight that there are other things to be observed, other than just physical or soul realities. If they are understood and studied in the same way that you study how a leaf is built – the structure of the leaves and the mathematical structure in nature – that is fine. In such an exact sense, you can also start to study the super-sensible realities within yourself or in nature.

That gives full justification to speak of spiritual science, which goes even higher – not only to the etheric or the astral, but the spiritual realities that you start when you are meeting your own ego being; your ego being is a spiritual reality.

There is spiritual science, and that is what I want to outline briefly. It's a full justification, and I think that it is important because if you don't understand this, then you may have a materialistic world conception on one hand full of actual science, and on the other hand, you have a kind of mystical outlook into the world, which seems to be more spiritual but is vague and inexact. That is a discrepancy, which is not healthy.

I think that if you want to have a small idea about the historical importance of spiritual science as introduced to humanity by Rudolf Steiner, you can say that he did nothing else but expand the basic method of scientifically looking at material things to nonmaterial things, but with the same exactness. You don't have exact science of the physical and waking dreams of the mystical spiritual spheres, which is very often the case.

I don't think that anybody would accept a fruit of a natural scientific process – a technical fruit like a watch or a handy (cell phone) – if you would be told before

you buy it, “This was the product of a mystical insight of the inventor.” You would not have to trust that it works, and this is justified.

In spiritual matters, people are often accepting the fruits of not an exact spiritual research road taken, but something vague. This is not healthy. Steiner saw that natural science is, of course, absolutely necessary; the technical fruits are necessary. They can be dangerous, but human beings need an approach to the nonphysical, which is as exact as their approach to the physical world with the material fruits that we all know or suffer from.

It’s not ‘against’ any natural scientific insight, as some people believe. On the contrary, many things that are researched in spiritual science were actually confirmed by natural scientists from their point of view.

This may be enough for the basic. We can come back in a later talk about details of this. Natural science and spiritual science are not contradictions, but are complimentary. They are not used to going into spiritual science out of the following reasons; it needs some activity. We are used to be passively given the truth of the scientists.

In spiritual science, activity is key. It starts with the faculty of our thinking that we have been talking about. Thinking is an active process, and many people today are not used to that; they are even afraid of it. So, thinking is at the point of vanishing from the planet. That is the reason words become so all-important and often catchwords. There is no clear thought behind it, but there is an emotional energy together with these words.

We discussed a formulation that we found in a shop outside. It was: The distance in reality is the new nearness. Nobody can think anything concretely with this, but it sounds as if distancing is an achievement of great progress or moral progress, which is ridiculous.

Thinking is a good virtue, which is on the point of vanishing. Of course, for all of the dictators and manipulators in our world, this is ideal; this is wonderful. Instead of thoughts, you give catchwords and formulations. People then fight about them and are busy with this.

I must say that even some anthroposophists have fallen prey to these

tendencies. About ten or 15 years ago, I followed a discussion about the titles of translations of books of Steiner that are not 'palatable' anymore. For example, one of the basic books, *The Study of Man*, is about the human being. It's an old translation. What is a human being? What is man? Is man physical, etheric, astral, spiritual, etc.? Some people say, "Now we can't use that translation anymore with that title. We should give it a new name." It is too masculine!

Then they said, "Now we translate it as *The Study of the Human Being* because 'man' is only the male." This is ridiculous. Even in the anthroposophical movement you have this, but not in anthroposophy. You always have to distinguish the spiritual being of anthroposophy from the people who claim to be adherents to it for a certain time.

Here I have a document. Maybe this will make this serious, grave discussion on what is cognition a bit lighter. I will show you (*Solari* website) a document that has historical value because it shows that Steiner wanted anthroposophy to be looked at as a spiritual science, not as a mystical thing.

I found here a typescript draft of the first academic thesis ever done about anthroposophy and spiritual science. This was written by a pupil of Steiner, Walter Johannes Stein. I think that we have mentioned him in previous talks. His typescript was sent from Vienna in the closing months of World War I to Berlin where Steiner was located. Steiner took the time and care to read it through. Not only that, but he made numerous notes and wrote into this typescript his notes. Almost all of the notes were actually absorbed by the writer for the final form of his thesis. He took all the notes, which are the blue marks in the middle of the sentences, and incorporated them into his thesis. Then he turned it in to the University of Vienna.

Lo and behold, they accepted it. Of course, they didn't know, and wouldn't have accepted it if they would have known that this was partially (literally) a text written by Steiner and not by Stein, but it shows how important it was for Steiner to see that anthroposophy is presented as a serious science of the spiritual. It even includes wonderful elaborations, and one or two chapters where Steiner says, "You had better take that away."

For example, Stein thought he would also have to write about the mystery

dramas, and Steiner gave him the advice to take that away. He said, “That goes too far for your academic professors,” and so he did.

This was a wonderful thing to find because nobody knew that – not the anthroposophists around Steiner, not the people later. They didn’t know that the first thesis on spiritual science was, so to speak, a co-product of Steiner with one of his former pupils.

When we found that, we made an edition. It’s the only one so far of this thesis in book form, and it’s only in German. It’s not a best-seller, as you can imagine. Thorough thinking rarely leads to best-selling products. I hope that there are exceptions to the rule, and I’m sure there are, but they are exceptions. But it’s there.

There was also even an English translation once. It was a private one, but it was never published. So, we published this to show that Rudolf Steiner wanted this.

I also wanted to highlight that a little: Here we have whole sheets that were written, commenting in spaces, and all in Steiner’s handwriting. It was found in Ireland in a very strange way. I was going there once to meet Steiner’s daughter, and she told me that there were a few things in the garage. I found these typescripts, and I put them together with a friend. They were loose typescripts. Some ends were already bitten by mice. So, it was the last moment that this important document could be saved, which I did.

Rudolf Steiner wanted to show the world that anthroposophy is not only an alternative, mystical thing; it is a complimentary science, not only a materialistic science, such as materialistic medicine like we have today, but that there are exact modes of training your mind to become aware of higher realities.

Today we want to have knowledge that is exact and not some ‘wishy-washy’ thing. Today however, we have some one-sided intellectualizing of anthroposophy, especially from America. The main person who is leading the new sort of philological analysis is privately a Mormon, which is fine. But if you study Mormonism, you can see that Mormonism is not a very good instrument for understanding spiritual science. There is nothing against Mormonism, but it is really grotesque what you find in some pseudo-scientific editions – called

Critical Editions of Steiner today. The man I am talking about is Christian Clement from Brigham Young University. He is a very nice man, but just not fit to interpret spiritual science. We have discussed this in our journal *Der Europäer* (www.perseus.ch)

This thesis of Stein is the first one, and I could say that it is on the highest level. All that came afterward, especially what we have now in the Critical Edition, is far below what was already there. That is why I allowed myself to put a historical perspective into the whole discussion of what spiritual science is.

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Stein was also someone who had the courage to ask his teacher questions that other people didn't dare to ask. For example, he asked, "What is your most important work in your eyes?"

Stein asked Steiner this. Steiner answered, "Nothing but *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*", by which we began.

«If you understand this book, and if you 'practice' it, so to speak, you will find the whole content of anthroposophy in it. It is a key work; it's not just a philosophical work.

Of course, you need excessive concentration to read it. The concentration faculties today are at war. They are under attack, as everyone knows or sees the whole world going around, constantly with something in their ears: distraction, distraction, distraction.

It is not easier today than it was at that time to see the deep quality in such a basic work.

Another question which Stein put to Steiner was, "If you wouldn't have become a Goethe scientist, which you became, and following Goethe developing your own spiritual scientific method and research, what would have been your core mission?"

Steiner answered simply, "Reincarnation and karma and the social question." These are two things that came up at the end of his life very prominently. In our last discussion, I will talk about this – Steiner's core mission – which is on the

line of spiritual scientific investigation going beyond the physical and going beyond the ethereal, and going into the history of the ego or the individuality that has gone through past lives. That is one of the highest fruits of spiritual science. They are concrete revelations of the past history of hundreds of individuals. It's in the word; it is there to be studied, and it will change the whole way of looking at biographies if one goes into it.

You will soon see that looking at a biography without the concepts of reincarnation of karma is just 'scratching the surface' and nothing else; it is a snapshot. It is not wrong, but it is totally insufficient. So, that is a look at one of the highest results of spiritual science. Today I think it is important that people know that.

Experiences of karma and reincarnation come by themselves. This is the percept side, if you like. They can be totally misunderstood by an untrained thought faculty. There are people who think they were this and that, and in reality, they might have had pre-earthly, before-birth encounters with some individuals that made an impression. That comes up, and so there are numerous errors that are possible in this field.

Today, there are spiritual powers in which we also find light brought into them by spiritual science. There are powers that want to confuse human beings, especially if they start to have spiritual experiences. They are ready to blur it and confuse it. This is a reality that you can meet if you look closely.

I think that the presence and the cultivation of spiritual science in the sense of how Steiner brought it into the world is not only necessary, but it is a kind of therapy against the tendency to fall into all sorts of spiritual illusions. They may look deep, and they may look marvelous, but they are illusionary.

Maybe for the end, we could say that to have these higher perceptions that are necessary for other than physical investigations that lead to materialistic science, you need to train your soul to have insight into the etheric and into the astral and into the spiritual. Then you develop faculties of consciousness that go beyond the normal daily consciousness.

Let me shortly focus on our normal consciousness, which can be called 'object consciousness', in which you see, "Here I am, here sits my interview victim, and

he is not me, and I am not him.”

Object consciousness is everything that comes into our normal consciousness, which is different than our subject. This is necessary. Otherwise, we would confuse ourselves with everything we see, and we would have an undeveloped consciousness like what happens in childhood. The good side is that the child is merging with everything, which we lose later.

The normal consciousness is a subject/object consciousness, and then we come to the stage of, what we call in spiritual science, ‘imagination’. It’s not as a fancy, subjective fantasy thing, but as an image of what we perceive – not only physically, but in image form. Of course, it is obvious that this is very close to artistic processes of imagining things and poetry. All of humanity will go to this consciousness in the future.

The higher consciousness stage would be to have inspirations, but in an exact sense, not a ‘wishy-washy’ thing like some people say, “It’s my gut feeling. It means something very high,” but it is not very high.

Inspiration is a faculty to perceive what a departed person is trying to inspire into you. There was a time in Europe when some individuals showed that they were ready to develop this sort of consciousness, and they were coming into a certain insecurity because they didn’t know the source of their inspiration.

The paramount example of this for Steiner was Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche was having a lot of inspirations. You see that in his books. He could be inspired by departed people like Schopenhauer, and he could be inspired by many beings, but he didn’t have the security of knowing who was inspiring him. In the final phase of his life, he was inspired by a being that is called in spiritual science, ‘Ahriman’, but he didn’t know that.

That contributed to the ruin of his mental health, so to speak, and that showed Steiner that today when we rise beyond the object consciousness, and we come to the imagination, and we come to inspiration, we need an even higher consciousness still that he calls in a strict and exact technical sense ‘intuition’.

If you have intuition in that sense, you can start to see what the source of the

inspiration is; you could have the freedom to say, “I don’t want to be inspired by this being.”

If you knew that the inspirer of your soul was Ahriman, you could have had the freedom to say, “No, thank you. I don’t want that at the moment, and I don’t want to be possessed.”

So, intuition is the highest faculty, and this faculty is already used in the basic book, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, because we all have this faculty in our daily consciousness as a seed. When we find thoughts, thoughts show themselves as what they are; there is nothing behind them. If you have a thought, you have something that you know what it contains. We don’t have that with any perception; there is always something behind.

In thoughts, we meet the world of intuition in our daily consciousness, and this is the lowest step on the ladder that can go high up into the world of the spirit.

Steiner put this into a lecture of his and said, “If you think that you are not clairvoyant, you have no chance to ever become it. If you want to develop a faculty, you must find the seed of it already now.”

He pointed out that the seed of clairvoyance is flowing in ordinary, clear thought consciousness already; it’s a seed of a high faculty. By that, he also shows that we don’t jump from ordinary consciousness into a higher one, but we can find in the ordinary consciousness some elements which betray that they have a higher quality of intuition already in them. Then the question is: How can we develop that? For this, that would require another lecture that goes beyond this talk.

But, of course, there are all of these training books, *How to Get Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, and others in which Steiner gives detailed examples and methods of developing the higher faculties so that we don’t get clairvoyant inspiration like Nietzsche without knowing by what or by whom.

Those are just a few sketches about what spiritual science is, what it can be for us, and how to achieve it.

I think that for now, we close here. We have decided to go through a number of subjects that we have. I believe they are all on the *Solari* website. where we can get specific. If there are any comments or questions by listeners or readers, we can work them in.

We are currently on number two. The first one was ‘How Do I Find the Christ?’, which was a special starting interest and a lasting interest by Catherine. Now we are on number two, which is a sketch on ‘Spiritual Knowledge – What Is It?’ The remaining ones are:

- III. History and Evolution
- IV. World Economy
- V. The Threefold Social Order
- VI. Occult Politics
- VII. Education and Art
- VIII. Agriculture and Health
- IX. Self-Development and Meditation
- X. The Age of Ahriman and Michael
- XI. Rudolf Steiner’ Core Mission: Reincarnation and Karma.

So, we will go through all of these, and then we will repeat them and go a little deeper and further. This is also a bit dependent on what you, the listeners and readers, find as questions or criticism or whatever. We will try to work with that.

Thank you for your attention. In English and in French, you say, “Pay attention.” It’s almost a business with the word ‘pay’. In German, you say, “Aufmerksamkeit das Geschenk”: It’s a gift. You give attention. So, thank you for the attention that you have given the speaker.

MODIFICATION

Transcripts are not always verbatim. Modifications are sometimes made to improve clarity, usefulness and readability, while staying true to the original intent.

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