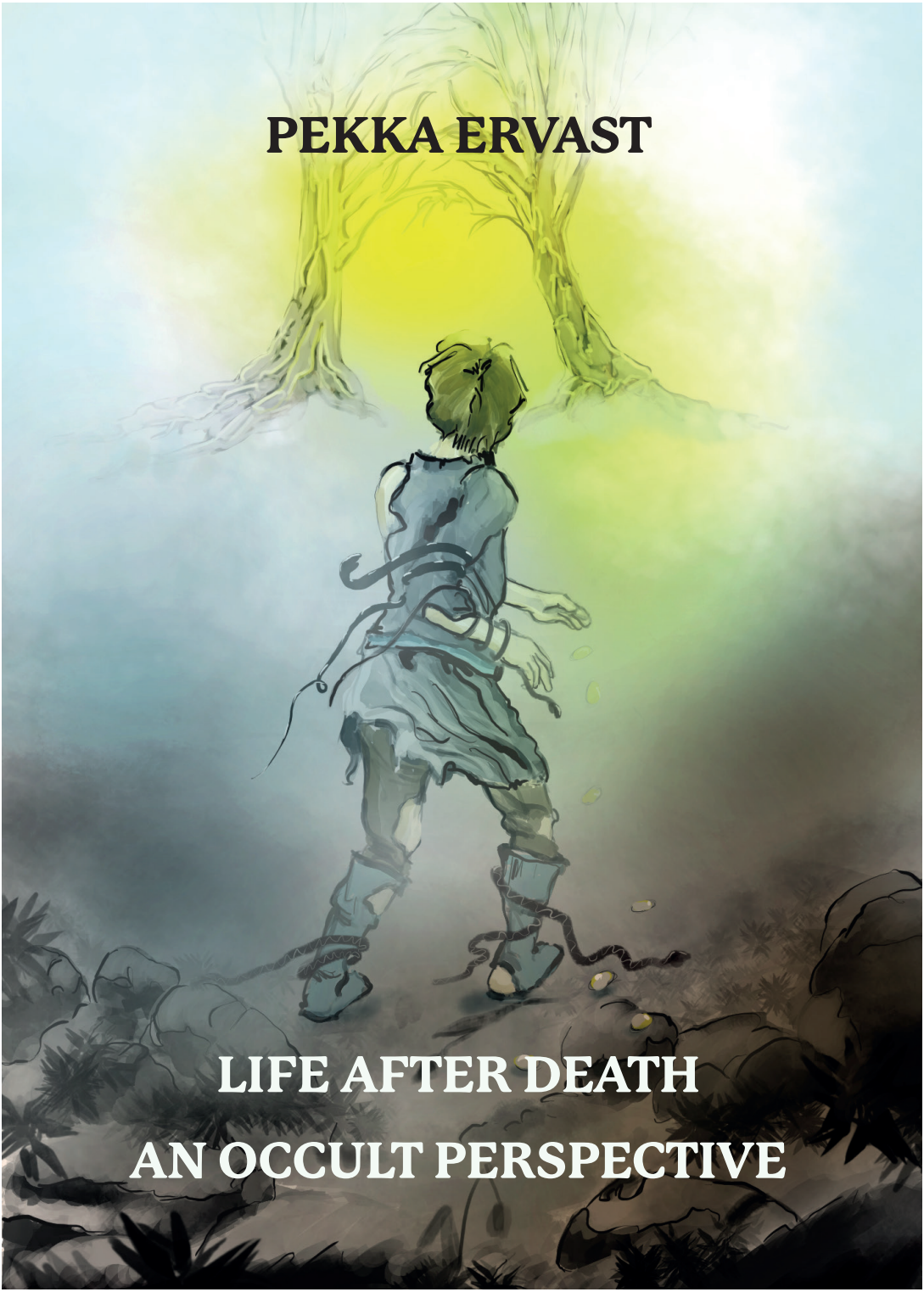
PEKKA ERVAST



LIFE AFTER DEATH

AN OCCULT PERSPECTIVE

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Life After Death
An Occult Perspective

A series of lectures in Tuonenkylä, Finland, on 10 June 1919 and a lecture in Helsinki on 18 October 1925

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Introduction

The question of what occurs when we die has occupied mankind's best minds for millennia. It occurs to almost everyone at some point in their lives. It is a debate which will never end. These lectures delivered in the aftermath of World War I by the noted Finnish theosophist Pekka Ervast (1875–1934) offer a unique esoteric perspective on the process of death and our transition into non-material after-death states.

Adopting a broadly theosophical classification (with slight variations) Ervast identifies three principal after-death states corresponding to the astral and the heaven worlds. (The latter is sometimes known as devachan, or 'the lands of the Gods' in Sanskrit).

The lowest and most unpleasant region of the astral plane is the hell realm or underworld located inside the Earth. It is dull, grey and lifeless. This is a subjective, temporary world (although permanent in Christianity) populated by evil, non-human looking animal-like spirits but which in fact are created by human thoughts, desires and lusts. These entities have human souls trapped within them, souls who have succumbed to the power of evil.

He describes a different and slightly more elevated portion of the astral world as the Dwellings of Hades, which is also drab, dreary and monotonous. Here souls have no bodies but can connect invisibly with some occupants of Earth such as mediums whom he describes as 'sickly and strange beings', individuals who were subject to magical ceremonies in the deep past.

The third state, loosely corresponding to the devachan of the theosophists, is what Ervast compares to the Summerland of the spiritualists. It houses numerous different communities of like-minded souls. Some are able to progress beyond this and like pilgrims ascending a mountain, find enlightenment and bliss in a heavenly paradise where evil does not exist.

To reach this world it has been necessary to traverse what he calls the Narrow Gate of Heaven. Those who reach this realm have succeeded because they have been able to transcend personal love for an impersonal, selfless love of truth and other noble virtues. This is a place of high pure beings and home to those hidden guides of humanity known as The Great White Brotherhood.

Threading through his talks as a constant but simple theme, is the extent to which both materialism and our innate passions enslave us until we are somehow able to overcome them. Each life, he asserts, is a constant battle of the dualities – between good and evil, light and darkness, good and bad, higher and lower.

The final lecture deals exclusively and in great detail with the vexed question of suicide which elsewhere has been described as the ultimate act of spiritual ineptitude.

Like many proponents of occult science, Ervast makes the crucial point that suicides are mistaken in the belief that they actually 'die' after taking their own lives and are rudely reminded of this on the inner planes. He says they are 'disappointed, because 1) death did not end anything; they remained, 2) death was not rest, but became a great burden to them, 3) death was not easier, but more painful than life on Earth.'

However, Ervast informs us that not all suicides are the same and he classifies them into three distinct categories.

The least, and possibly most forgivable are what he terms 'altruistic' suicides, those who kill themselves to save others. Secondly, he refers to the 'mediocre' suicide by someone who is neither very good nor very evil. The consequences of killing themselves is that they are obliged to constantly mentally re-enact their deaths in all its detail. Ervast says, 'It causes the suicide victim to relive over and over again, in an etheric state, all the reasons that led to suicide, all the feelings that preceded it.' And he adds, 'Suicides almost involuntarily become tormentors of the living.'

The third and most serious category are those who consciously kill themselves for 'ignoble' reasons. They face punishment and revenge in the form of losing the connection to their higher selves. They become vampires and incite the living to kill themselves, too.

Underpinning all this is the ineluctable truth that suicide has profound implications for future lives. Those who choose to end their lives prematurely are obliged to attend the school of life again, facing similar challenges and difficulties, until these have been overcome.

Ervast's messages remain stark and as relevant today as they were more than a century ago. Death does not kill.

Tim Wyatt, Bingley, West Yorkshire England. 26th January 2026.

1. The Realm of the Grave

Let us pause for a moment to quietly reflect that we humans are immortal spiritual beings who have taken up residence in visible bodies on this earth. Still, after leaving our bodies, we wander in the invisible world, experiencing many different fates, until we act as ourselves, as spiritual beings. Then we return here to earth. We wander from birth to birth, developing until we have fully realised and truly know that we are immortal spirits.

When we want to study the human soul and understand the world in which it exists, when we want to know how the human soul can develop, and from which point it can move forward, and when we thus know ourselves and others, then we must find out about the different forces that strive to fight in the human soul. We must find out about the great forces that strive to use the human soul and the soul of humanity as their battlefield. It is therefore essential that we gain some understanding of the realms and forces that exist in the invisible world and our relationship to them.

We must realise, as perhaps everyone has noticed, that there are two forces within human beings. As Goethe says, human beings have two souls: one pulling them down, the other pulling them up. This is such an old saying that it does not even need justification. There are two kinds of forces at work in the human soul, and so we hear two kinds of voices, one of which can be described as black* and evil, the other as white and good. When we study human beings, we can see that they are influenced by these forces. They may be under the influence of dark forces, even though evil can take on such a fine form that people do not notice that it is dark, evil and selfish. We can also see that the voice of conscience influences people, and at times they can be good.

* This has nothing to do with ethnicity. *Editor's note*.

Pekka Ervast (b. 1875, d. 1934) was a leading figure in the Finnish Theosophical movement. He gave numerous lectures on spiritual topics, such as Theosophy, esoteric Christianity, reincarnation, karma, and the afterlife. Quite remarkably, Ervast could describe the conditions in the afterlife from his own experience.

This little book takes the reader on a journey from the lowest astral plane, the underworld, to the highest heaven, which he called the Kingdom of God or the Great White Brotherhood. It is based on the lecture series Ervast gave in 1915 and a lecture on the serious topic of suicide in 1925. Ervast eloquently summarised the journey through the invisible world as follows:

We humans are immortal spiritual beings who have taken up residence in visible bodies on this earth. Still, after leaving our bodies, we wander in the invisible world, experiencing many different fates, until we act as ourselves, as spiritual beings. Then we return here to earth. We wander from birth to birth, developing until we have fully realised and truly know that we are immortal spirits.

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