

THE  
WORK  
OF THE ANGELS  
IN MAN'S ASTRAL  
BODY



Rudolf Steiner

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# THE WORK OF THE ANGELS IN MAN'S ASTRAL BODY

RUDOLF STEINER

*Lecture given in Zürich, 9th October, 1918*

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## THE WORK OF THE ANGELS IN MAN'S ASTRAL BODY

**A**NTHROPOSOPHICAL understanding of the spirit must not be a merely theoretical view of the world, but a leaven, an actual power in life. Only when we manage to investigate this view of the world so fundamentally that it really comes alive in us does it properly fulfil its mission. For by linking our souls with this anthroposophical conception of the spirit we have become custodians, as it were, of very definite and significant processes in the evolution of humanity.

Whatever their view of the world, men are generally convinced that thoughts and ideas have no status in it except as the contents of their own souls. Those who hold such views believe that thoughts and mental pictures are "ideals" which will be embodied in the world only to the extent that man succeeds in ratifying them by his physical deeds.

The anthroposophical attitude posits the conviction that our thoughts and ideas must find other ways of taking effect besides the way

through our deeds in the physical world. Recognition of this essential principle implies that the anthroposophist must play his part in *watching out for the signs of the times*. A very great deal is happening all the time in the evolution of the world; and it is incumbent upon men, particularly the men of our own time, to acquire real understanding of what is going on in the evolutionary process in which they themselves are placed.

In the case of an individual human being, everybody knows that account must be taken of his stage of development, not only of the outer facts and occurrences around him. Think of it quite crudely for a moment. Outer, physical happenings are going on around human beings of five, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, seventy years of age. But nobody in his senses will expect the same reaction to these happenings from the five-year-olds, the ten-year-olds, the twenty-year-olds, the fifty-year-olds, the seventy-year-olds! How human beings may be expected to react to their environment can be determined only by taking account of their stage of development. Everybody will admit this in the case of the individual.

But just as there are definite stages in the evolution of the individual human being, just as the nature of his powers and faculties differs in childhood, middle life and old age, so too are the

powers and faculties possessed by humanity in general constantly changing in the course of evolution. Not to take account of the fact that the character of humanity is different in the 20th century from what it was in the 15th century, let alone before and at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, is to sleep through the process of world-evolution. One of the greatest defects, one of the principal sources of aberration and confusion in our time, is its failure to pay heed to this, as well as the prevalent notion that it is possible to speak of man or of humanity in terms of abstract generalisations, that there is no need to regard humanity as being involved in a continuous process of evolution.

How can a more exact insight into these things be acquired? As you know, mention has often been made of an important phase in the evolution of humanity. The Greco-Latin epoch of civilisation, lasting from the 8th century B.C. to approximately the 15th century, was the period of the development of the Intellectual Soul, or Mind-Soul; the development of the Consciousness-Soul (the Spiritual Soul) has been in progress since the 15th century. This is a factor in the evolution of humanity which essentially concerns our own times. The paramount force in human evolution from the 15th century until

the beginning of the third millennium, is the Spiritual Soul.

But in true Spiritual Science we must never stop at generalisations and abstractions; everywhere and at all times it must be our endeavour to grasp concrete facts. Abstractions are, at the highest, useful to curiosity in the most ordinary sense of the term. If Spiritual Science is to become the very leaven and essential force of life, earnestness must outweigh curiosity and we must not stop at abstractions such as those of which I have just spoken. It is both true and important that because we are living in the epoch of the Spiritual Soul we must take account of its development; but we must not stop there.

To arrive at a clear conception of these things, we must above all consider in greater detail the nature of man himself. In the sense of Spiritual Science, the members of man's being, beginning from above downwards, are: Ego, astral body, etheric body—which latterly I have also called the body of formative forces—and physical body. The Ego is the only one of these members in which we live and function as beings of spirit-and-soul. The Ego has been implanted in us by the Earth-evolution and the spirits of Form who direct it. Fundamentally speaking, everything that enters into our consciousness enters it through our Ego.

And unless the Ego, as it unfolds itself, can remain connected—connected through the bodies—with the outer world, we have as little consciousness as we have during sleep. It is the Ego that connects us with our environment; the astral body is the legacy of the Moon-evolution, the etheric body of the Sun-evolution, the physical body, in its first rudiments, of the Saturn-evolution.

But if you study the description of these bodies given in the book, *An Outline of Occult Science*, you will realise by what a complicated process this fourfold constitution of man came into being. It is not evident from the facts presented in that book that Spirits belonging to all the Hierarchies participated in the formation of the three sheaths of man's being? Is it not evident that our three-fold sheath composed of physical body, etheric body, astral body, is extremely complicated? It is not simply that these sheaths owe their *origin* to the co-operation of the Hierarchies; the Hierarchies are still constantly working within them. And those who believe that man is merely the apparatus of bones, blood, flesh and so forth, of which natural science, physiology, biology and anatomy speak, have no understanding of his nature.

If we genuinely study these sheaths of man,



we realise that spiritual Beings of the higher Hierarchies are working together with wisdom and set purpose in everything that takes place, without our being conscious of it, in our bodily sheaths. From the brief outline I have given in *Occult Science* about the co-operation that took place between particular Beings of the Hierarchies in order that man should come into existence, you will have realised how intricate the details must be. Nevertheless if man is to be understood, these things too must be studied more and more concretely.

In this domain it is extremely difficult even to formulate a concrete question, because of the tremendous complexity of all such questions. Suppose for a moment that someone were to ask: What is the Hierarchy, let us say, of the Seraphim or of the Dynamis (Mights) doing in man's etheric body in the year 1918 of the present cycle of evolution? For we can certainly ask this question, just as we can ask whether it is raining or not raining in Lugano at the present time. Neither question can be answered by mere reflection or theorising, but only by ascertaining the facts. Just as we should have to find out, by means perhaps of a telegram, whether or not it is raining at Lugano, so it is necessary to investigate the facts themselves, in order to get the

answer to a question such as: What is the task of the Spirits of Wisdom or of the Thrones in the etheric body of man during the present cycle of evolution? Only, this latter kind of question is indescribably complex and we can never do more than make an approach to the domains where such questions arise. Good care is taken that man shall not soar too far aloft and become arrogant and supercilious in his endeavours to attain knowledge of such things.

Roughly speaking, it is the prospects *nearest* to us—those that directly concern us—of which we can get a clear view. But such a view we *must* get, if we are not to remain asleep at our stations in the evolution of humanity.

I will therefore speak about a question that is less vague and indefinite than the question as to what the Dynamis or the Thrones are doing in our etheric body. I will speak of another question that is of immediate concern to men at the present time. It is the question: What are the *Angels*—the spiritual Beings nearest to men—doing in the human astral body in the present cycle of evolution?

The astral body is the member nearest to the Ego; obviously, therefore, the answer to this question will vitally concern us. The Angels are the Hierarchy immediately above the Human

Hierarchy itself. So the question is not unduly arrogant and we shall see how it can be answered. What are the Angels doing in man's astral body in this present epoch which began in the 15th century and will last until the beginning of the third millennium?

What is there to be said in the general sense when it comes to answering a question such as this? It can only be said that spiritual investigation, when earnestly pursued, is not a matter of juggling with ideas or words, but works its way into the actual sphere where the spiritual world becomes perceptible . . . but this question can, in reality, be fruitfully answered only in the age of the Spiritual Soul itself.

You may think that if this question had been asked in other epochs, an answer would probably have been forthcoming. But neither in the epoch of atavistic clairvoyance nor in that of Greco-Latin civilisation *could* this question have been answered, because the pictures arising in man's soul from atavistic clairvoyance obscured his observation of the deeds of the Angels in his astral body. Nothing could be seen of this, precisely because he had in him the pictures given by the atavistic clairvoyance. And in the Greco-Latin period, thought was not as strong as it is today. Thought has been strengthened as the direct consequence

of the era of natural science. Hence it is in the epoch of the Spiritual Soul that such questions can be the subject of conscious study. The fruitfulness of Spiritual Science for life must be shown by the fact that we do not just browse on theories but know how to say things of incisive significance for life.

What are the Angels doing in our astral body? Conviction of what they are doing can come to us only when we have achieved a certain degree of clairvoyance and are able to perceive what is actually going on in our astral body. A certain degree at least of Imaginative Knowledge must therefore have been attained if this question is to be answered.

It is then revealed that these Beings of the Hierarchy of the Angels—particularly through their concerted work, although in a certain sense each single Angel also has his task in connection with every individual human being—these Beings form *pictures* in man's astral body. Under the guidance of the Spirits of Form (Exusiai) the Angels form pictures. Unless we reach the level of Imaginative Cognition we do not know that pictures are all the time being formed in our astral body. They arise and pass away, but without them there would be for mankind no evolution into the future in accordance with the inten-

tions of the Spirits of Form. The Spirits of Form are obliged, to begin with, to unfold in pictures what they desire to achieve with us during Earth-evolution and beyond. And then, later on, the pictures become reality in a humanity transformed.

Through the Angels, the Spirits of Form are already now shaping these pictures in our astral body. The Angels form pictures in man's astral body and these pictures are accessible to thinking that has become clairvoyant. If we are able to scrutinise these pictures, it becomes evident that they are woven in accordance with quite definite impulses and principles. Forces for the future evolution of mankind are contained in them. If we watch the Angels carrying out this work of theirs—strange as it sounds, one has to express it in this way—it is clear that they have a very definite plan for the future configuration of social life on earth; their aim is to engender in the astral bodies of men such pictures as will bring about definite conditions in the social life of the future.

People may shy away from the notion that Angels want to call forth in them ideals for the future, but it is so all the same. And indeed in forming these pictures the Angels work on a definite principle, namely, that in the future no

human being is to find peace in the enjoyment of happiness if others beside him are unhappy. An impulse of Brotherhood in the absolute sense, unification of the human race in Brotherhood rightly understood—this is to be the governing principle of the social conditions in physical existence.

That is the one principle in accordance with which the Angels form the pictures in man's astral body.

But there is a second impulse in the work of the Angels. The Angels have certain objectives in view, not only in connection with the outer social life but also with man's life of soul. Through the pictures they inculcate into the astral body their aim is that in future time every human being shall see in each and all of his fellow-men a hidden *divinity*.

Quite clearly, then, according to the intention underlying the work of the Angels, things are to be very different in future. Neither in theory nor in practice shall we look only at man's physical qualities, regarding him as a more highly developed animal, but we must confront every human being with the full realisation that in him something is revealing itself from the divine foundations of the world, revealing itself through flesh and blood. To conceive man as a picture

revealed from the spiritual world, to conceive this with all the earnestness, all the strength and all the insight at our command—this is the impulse laid by the Angels into the pictures.

Once this is fulfilled, there will be a very definite consequence. The basis of all free religious feeling that will unfold in humanity in the future will be the acknowledgement, not merely in theory but in actual practice, that every human being is made in the likeness of the Godhead. When that time comes there will be no need for any religious coercion; for then every meeting between one man and another will of itself be in the nature of a religious rite, a sacrament, and nobody will need a special Church with institutions on the physical plane to sustain the religious life. If the Church understands itself truly, its one aim must be to render itself unnecessary on the physical plane, as the whole of life becomes the expression of the super-sensible.

The bestowal on man of complete *freedom in the religious life*—this underlies the impulses, at least, of the work of the Angels.

And there is a third objective: To make it possible for men to *reach the Spirit through thinking*, to cross the abyss and through thinking to experience the reality of the Spirit.

Spiritual Science for the spirit, freedom of religious life for the soul, brotherhood for the bodily life—this resounds like cosmic music through the work wrought by the Angels in the astral bodies of men.

All that is necessary is to raise our consciousness to a different level and we shall feel ourselves transported to this wonderful site of the work done by the Angels in the human astral body.

We are living in the age of the Spiritual Soul, and in this age the Angels work in the astral bodies of men as I have described. Man must gradually come to understand this in his wide-awake consciousness. It is part of the process of human evolution itself. How can such a statement be made? Where are we to look for this work of the Angels?

It is still to be discovered in man while he is sleeping, in the conditions prevailing between the moments of falling asleep and waking—also in somnolent waking states. I have often said that although men are awake, they actually sleep through the most important concerns in life. And I can give you the not very heartening assurance that anyone who goes through life with alert consciousness to-day finds numbers and numbers of human beings who are really asleep. They let



events happen without taking the slightest interest in them, without troubling about them or associating themselves with these happenings in any way. Great world-events often pass men by just as something that is taking place in the city passes a sleeper by . . . although people are apparently awake. At such times, while men, in spite of being awake, are sleeping through some momentous event, it can be seen how in their astral bodies—quite independently of what they want or do not want to know—this important work of the Angels continues.

Such things proceed in a way which must necessarily seem highly enigmatic and paradoxical. A man may be considered entirely unworthy of having any connections at all with the spiritual world. But the truth about such a man may well be that in this incarnation he is just a terrible dormouse who sleeps through everything that goes on around him. Yet one of the choir of the Angels is working in his astral body at the future of mankind. Observation of his astral body shows that it is being made use of, in spite of these conditions.

What really matters, however, is that men shall become conscious of these things. The Spiritual Soul must rise to the level where it is

able to recognise what can be discovered only in this way.

After all this, you will understand me when I point out that this epoch of the Spiritual Soul is heading towards the definite event, and that—just because it is the Spiritual Soul that is involved—it will depend upon men themselves how this event takes effect in the evolution of humanity. It may come a century earlier or a century later, but it is bound to form part of the evolutionary process. It can be characterised by saying: Purely through the Spiritual Soul, purely through their conscious thinking, men must reach the point of actually *perceiving* what the Angels are doing to prepare the future of humanity. The teachings of Spiritual Science in this domain must become practical wisdom in the life of humanity—practical, because men can be convinced that it belongs to their own wisdom to recognise the aims of the Angels, as I have described them.

But the progress of the human race towards freedom has already gone so far that it depends upon man himself whether he will sleep through this event or face it with fully wideawake consciousness. What would this entail? To face this event with wideawake consciousness would entail the study of Spiritual Science, which is possible to-day. Indeed nothing else is really necessary.

The practice of meditations of various kinds and attention to the guidance given in the book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, will be an additional help. But the essential step has already been taken when Spiritual Science is studied and really consciously understood. Spiritual Science can be studied to-day without developing clairvoyant faculties. Everyone can do so, who does not bar his own way with his prejudices. And if people study Spiritual Science more and more thoroughly, if they assimilate its concepts and ideas, their consciousness will become so alert that instead of sleeping through certain events, they will be fully aware of them.

These events can be characterised in greater detail, for to know what the Angel is doing is only the preparatory stage. The essential point is that at a definite time—depending, as I have said, upon the attitude men themselves adopt it will be earlier or later or at worst not at all—a *threefold truth* will be revealed to mankind by the Angels.

Firstly, it will be shown how his own genuine interest will enable man to understand the deeper side of human nature. A time will come—and it must not pass unnoticed—when out of the spiritual world men will receive through their Angel an impulse that will kindle a far deeper

interest in every individual human being than we are inclined to have to-day. This enhanced interest in our fellow-men will not unfold in the subjective, leisurely way that people would prefer, but by a sudden impetus a certain secret will be inspired into man from the spiritual side, namely, *what the other man really is*. By this I mean something quite concrete—not any kind of theoretical consideration. Men will learn something whereby their interest in every individual can be kindled. That is the one point—and that is what will particularly affect the *social life*.

Secondly: From the spiritual world the Angel will reveal to man that, in addition to everything else, the Christ Impulse postulates *complete freedom in matters of religious life*, that the only true Christianity is the Christianity which makes possible absolute freedom in the religious life.

And thirdly: Unquestionable insight into the *spiritual nature of the world*.

As I have said, this event ought to take place in such a way that the Spiritual Soul in man participates in it. This is impending in the evolution of humanity, for the Angel is working to this end through the pictures woven in man's astral body.

But let it be emphasised that this impending event confronts the *will of man*. Many things that

should lead to conscious awareness of this event may be and indeed are being left undone.

But as you know, there are other beings working in world-evolution, beings who are interested in deflecting man from his proper course: these are the Ahrimanic and the Luciferic beings. What I have just said belongs to the divinely-willed evolution of mankind. If man were to follow the dictates of his own proper nature, he could not very well fail to perceive what the Angel is unfolding in his astral body; but the aim of the Luciferic beings is to tear men away from insight into the work of the Angels. And they set about doing this by curbing man's free will. They try to cloud his understanding of the exercise of his free will. True, they desire to make him good—for from the aspect of which I am now speaking, Lucifer desires that there shall be goodness, spirituality, in man—but automatic goodness, automatic spirituality—without free will. Lucifer desires that man shall be led automatically, in accordance with perfectly good principles, to clairvoyance—but he wants to deprive him of his free will, to remove from him the possibility of evil-doing. Lucifer wants to make man into a being who, it is true, acts out of, the spirit, but acts as a *reflection*, as an automaton, without free will.

This is connected with certain specific secrets of evolution. As you know, the Luciferic beings have remained stationary at other stages of evolution and they introduce an element that is foreign to the normal evolutionary process. They are deeply interested in so seizing hold of man that he does not unfold free will, because they themselves have not acquired free will. Free will can be acquired only on the Earth but the Luciferic beings want to have nothing to do with the Earth; they want only Saturn-, Sun-, Moon-evolution, and to remain at those stages. In a sense they hate the free will of man. Their manner of acting is highly spiritual, but it is automatic—that is a point of great significance—and they want to lift man to their own spiritual heights, to make him an automaton—a spiritual, but an automatically spiritual, being. Thereby on the one side the danger would arise that prematurely, before his Spiritual Soul is in full function, man would become a being whose actions are those of a spiritual puppet and he would sleep through the impending revelation.

But the Ahrimanic beings too are working to obscure this revelation. They are not at pains to make man particularly spiritual, but rather to *kill out in him the consciousness of his own spirituality*. They endeavour to instil into him

the conviction that he is nothing but a completely developed animal. Ahriman is in truth the teacher *par excellence* of materialistic Darwinism. He is also the great teacher of all those technical and practical pursuits in Earth-evolution where there is refusal to acknowledge the validity of anything except the external life of the senses, where the only desire is for a widespread technology, so that with somewhat greater refinement, men shall satisfy their hunger, thirst and other needs in the same way as the animal. To kill, to darken in man the consciousness that he is an image of the Godhead—this is what the Ahrimanic beings are endeavouring by subtle scientific means of every kind to achieve in our age of the Spiritual Soul.

In earlier epochs it would have been of no avail to the Ahrimanic beings to obscure the truth from men by theories in this way. And why? Even during the Greco-Latin age, but still more so in the earlier epoch when man still had the pictures of atavistic clairvoyance, *how* he thought was entirely a matter of indifference: he had his pictures and these pictures were windows through which he looked into the spiritual world. Whatever Ahriman might have insinuated to man concerning his relation to the animals would have had no effect at all upon his way

of life. Thought has for the first time become really powerful—one could also say, powerful in its ineptitude—in our Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, since the 15th century. Only since then has thinking been competent to bring the Spiritual Soul into the realm of the spirit, but at the same time also to hinder it from entering the spiritual world. Only now are we experiencing the age when a theory or a science, by the path of consciousness, robs man of his divinity, of his knowledge of the Divine. Only in the age of the Spiritual or Consciousness Soul is this possible. Hence the Ahrimanic spirits endeavour to spread teachings which obscure man's divine origin.

From this mention of the streams which run counter to the normal, god-willed evolution of man it can be gathered how he must conduct his life, lest the impending revelation finds him in a state of sleep. A great danger may arise and men must be alert to it. If they are not, instead of the event that should play a momentous part in shaping the future evolution of the Earth, a great danger to this evolution will supervene.

Now certain spiritual beings achieve their development *through men* who evolve together with them. The Angels who unfold their pictures in



the human astral body are not doing this as a game but in order to achieve something. But because this aim must be achieved in earthly humanity itself, the whole matter would become a game if, having reached the stage of the Spiritual Soul, men deliberately ignore it. It would become a game! The Angels would be playing a game in the evolution of man's astral body! Only when this activity is realised in humanity itself is it not a game but serious business.

From this you can realise that the work of the Angels is, and under all circumstances must remain, serious. Just imagine what conditions would be behind the scenes of existence if through their somnolence men were able to turn the work of the Angels into a game!

And what if this should happen after all? What if humanity on earth should persist in sleeping through the momentous spiritual revelation of the future? If this were to happen in respect of the freedom of the religious life, for example, if men were to sleep through the repetition of the Mystery of Golgotha on the etheric plane, the reappearance of the etheric Christ, or other matters as well, then the Angels would have to try different means of achieving what the pictures they weave in the astral body of man

are intended to achieve. If men do not allow this to be achieved in the astral body while they are awake, the Angels would, in this case, endeavour to fulfil their aims through their sleeping bodies. Therefore what the Angels could not achieve, because in their waking life men slept through it, would be achieved with the help of the physical and etheric bodies of men during actual sleep. It is there that the Angels would seek forces required for the fulfilment of what could not be achieved through men in their wideawake consciousness when the souls were within the etheric and physical bodies in the waking state. It would be achieved by means of the etheric and physical bodies in the sleeping state, when human beings who ought to be awake to what is going on were outside these bodies with their Ego and astral body.

Here lies the great danger for the age of the Spiritual Soul. This is what might still happen if, before the beginning of the third millennium, men were to refuse to turn to the spiritual life. The third millennium begins with the year 2000, so it is only a short time ahead of us. It might still happen that the aim of the Angels in their work would have to be achieved by means of the sleeping bodies of men—instead of through men wideawake. The Angels might still be com-

pelled to withdraw their whole work from the astral body and to submerge it in the etheric body in order to bring it to fulfilment. But then, in his real being, man would have no part in it. It would have to be performed in the etheric body while man himself was not there, just because if he *were* there in the waking state, he would obstruct it.

I have now given you a general picture of these things. But what would be the outcome if the Angels were obliged to perform this work without man himself participating, to carry it out in his etheric and physical bodies during sleep?

The outcome in the evolution of humanity would unquestionably be threefold. Firstly, something would be engendered in the sleeping human bodies—while the Ego and astral body were not within them—and man would meet with it on waking in the morning . . . but then it would become instinct instead of conscious spiritual activity and therefore *baleful*. It is so indeed: certain instinctive knowledge that will arise in human nature, instinctive knowledge connected with the mystery of birth and conception, with sexual life as a whole, threatens to become baleful if the danger of which I have spoken takes effect. Certain Angels would then

themselves undergo a change—a change of which I cannot speak, because this is a subject belonging to the higher secrets of Initiation-Science which may not yet be disclosed. But this much can certainly be said: The effect in the evolution of humanity would be that certain instincts connected with the sexual life would arise in a pernicious form instead of wholesomely, in clear waking consciousness. These instincts would not be mere aberrations but would pass over into and configure the social life, would above all prevent men—through what would then enter their blood as the effect of the sexual life—from unfolding brotherhood in any form whatever on the earth, and would rather induce them to rebel against it. This would be a matter of instinct.

So the crucial point lies ahead when either the path to the right can be taken—but that demands wakefulness—or the path to the left, which permits of sleep. But in that case instincts come on the scene—instincts of a fearful kind.

And what do you suppose the scientific experts will say when such instincts come into evidence? They will say that it is a natural and inevitable development in the evolution of humanity. Light cannot be shed on such matters by natural science, for whether men become angels or devils would be equally capable of explanation by

scientific reasoning. Science will say the same in both cases: the later is the outcome of the earlier . . . so grand and wise is the interpretation of nature in terms of causality! Natural science will be totally blind to the event of which I have told you, for if men become half devils through their sexual instincts, science will as a matter of course regard this as a natural necessity. Scientifically, then, the matter is simply not capable of explanation, for whatever happens, everything can be explained by science. The fact is that such things can be understood only by spiritual, supersensible cognition. That is the one aspect.

The second aspect is that from this work which involves changes affecting the Angels themselves, still another result accrues for humanity: instinctive knowledge of certain medicaments—but knowledge of a baleful kind!

Everything connected with medicine will make a great advance in the materialistic sense. Men will acquire instinctive insights into the medicinal properties of certain substances and certain treatments—and thereby do terrible harm. But the harm will be called useful. A sick man will be called healthy, for it will be perceived that the particular treatment applied leads to something pleasing. People will actually *like* things that

make the human being—in a certain direction—unhealthy.

Knowledge of the medicinal effects of certain processes and treatments will be enhanced, but this will lead into very baleful channels. For man will come to know through certain instincts, what kind of *illnesses* can be induced by particular substances and treatments. And it will then be possible for him either to bring about or not to bring about illnesses, entirely as suits his egotistical purposes.

The third result will be this. Man will get to know of definite forces which, simply by means of quite easy manipulations—by bringing into accord certain vibrations—will enable him to unleash tremendous mechanical forces in the world. Instinctively he will come to realise in this way the possibility of exercising a certain spiritual guidance and control of the mechanistic principle—and the whole of technical science will sail into desolate waters. But human egoism will find these desolate waters of tremendous use and benefit.

This, my friends, is a fragment of concrete knowledge of the evolution of existence, a fragment of a conception of life which can be truly assessed only by those who realise that an unspiritual view of life can never grow clear about

these things. If a form of medicine injurious to humanity were ever to take root, if a terrible aberration of the sexual instincts were to arise, if there were baleful doings in the sphere of the purely mechanistic forces of the world, in the application of the forces of nature by means of spiritual powers, an unspiritual conception of life would see through none of these things, would not perceive how they deviate from the true path. . . . The sleeper, as long as sleep lasts, does not see the approach of a thief who is about to rob him; he is unaware of it and at most he finds out later on, when he wakes, what has been done to him. But it would be a bad awakening for humanity! Man would pride himself upon the growth of his instinctive knowledge of certain processes and substances and would experience such satisfaction in obeying certain aberrations of the sexual impulses that he would regard them as evidence of a particularly high development of superhumanity, of freedom from convention, of broad-mindedness! In a certain respect, ugliness would be beauty and beauty, ugliness. Nothing of this would be perceived because it would all be regarded as natural necessity. But it would denote an aberration from the path which, in the nature of humanity itself, is prescribed for man's essential being.

If a feeling has been acquired of how Spiritual Science penetrates into and affects our whole attitude of mind, I believe that there can also arise the *earnestness* required for receiving such truths as have been presented today. From this earnestness there can stem what ought indeed to stem from all Spiritual Science: the acknowledgment of definite obligations, of definite responsibilities in life. Whatever our position may be, whatever we have to do in the world, the essential thing is to foster the thought that our conduct must be permeated and illumined by our anthroposophical consciousness. Then we contribute something towards the true progress of humanity.

If a man ever believes that true Spiritual Science, earnestly and worthily pursued, may divert him from practical and necessary activity in life, he is entirely misguided. True Spiritual Science begets vigilance—an awakening in regard to matters such as those I have presented today. It may be asked: Is waking life, then, really harmful to sleep? If we choose to draw this parallel—namely that insight into the spiritual world is itself a greater awakening from ordinary waking life, just as the ordinary waking is an awakening from sleep, then in order to follow the



comparison, we can indeed ask the question: Can waking life ever be harmful to sleep?

Yes—if waking life is not what it ought to be! If a man spends his waking life as it ought to be spent, his sleep will also be healthy, and if in his waking life he is drowsy or lazy, happy-go-lucky or indolent, then his sleep too will be unhealthy. And it is the same in regard to the waking life we acquire as the result of our study of Spiritual Science. If Spiritual Science enables us to establish a true relation to the spiritual world, our interest in the familiar facts of physical life will be guided into the right channels—just as a healthy waking life brings order and direction into sleep.

Anyone who looks at life, particularly in our own age, must himself be asleep if he does not notice a number of things. How men have preened themselves on their conduct of life, particularly during the last few decades! Things have finally come to the point where the leading positions everywhere are held by those who are most contemptuous of the ideal, of the spiritual. People managed to go on declaiming about their conduct of this life as long as mankind had not actually been dragged into the abyss. Now a few—mostly out of instinct—are actually beginning to croak that a new age must come, with all

kinds of new ideals. But it is all so much croaking. And if things have to come about instinctively, without conscious penetration into Spiritual Science on the part of men, they would lead to the decline of what ought to be experienced in the waking state rather than to any wholesome transition in evolution.

One who today makes impassioned speeches to men in the words they have so long been accustomed to hear can still usually count on some applause. But men will have to get used to listening to different words, different ways of putting things, if social cosmos is again to arise out of chaos.

If, in some epoch, the men who ought to be vigilant fail in this respect and do not discern what really ought to happen, then nothing real does happen. Instead, the ghost of the preceding epoch walks—as the ghosts of the past are walking in many religious communities today, and as the ghost of ancient Rome still haunts the sphere of jurisprudence. In the age of the Spiritual Soul, Spiritual Science must make men free in just this way, must lead them to perception of a spiritual fact: *What the Angel is doing in our astral body*. To speak abstractly about Angels and so on, can at most be the beginning; progress requires that we speak concretely—

which means that in reference to our own epoch we find the answer to the question nearest to us. This question concerns us most nearly, for the simple reason that in our astral body the Angel is weaving pictures that are to determine our future form, and this determination is to be brought about through the Spiritual Soul.

If we had not the Spiritual Soul, there would be no need to exert ourselves, for then other Spirits, other Hierarchies, would certainly step in to bring to fulfilment what the Angel is weaving. But because our task is to unfold the Spiritual Soul, no other Spirits step in to carry the work of the Angels into effect.

Other Angels, of course, were at work in the Egyptian epoch. But other Spirits soon made their entry and the work of the Angel was obscured from men through their own atavistic clairvoyance. Their clairvoyance wove a veil, a dark veil over the pictures. But now man must unveil them. Therefore it behoves him not to sleep through what is being inculcated into his conscious life in the epoch that will end before the third millennium does. Let us draw from anthroposophical Spiritual Science not only teachings, but resolutions as well! They will give us strength to be vigilant and alert. We can season ourselves to be watchful human beings by paying

heed to many things. We can make a beginning in this direction now; we can discover that in reality no single day passes without a miracle happening in our life. This last sentence can be turned, and we can also say: If on some day we find no miracle in our life, then we have merely overlooked it. Try one evening to survey your life and you will find in it some event of slight or great or middling importance of which you will be able to say: It came into my life and took effect in a truly remarkable way. You can realise this provided only that you think comprehensively enough, provided only that you have in your mind's eye a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the circumstances and connections of life. But in the ordinary course this does not happen, because as a rule we do not ask ourselves: What was it that was *prevented* from happening by this or that occurrence?

We do not usually trouble about the things that have been prevented but which, if they had happened, would have fundamentally changed our life. Behind these things which in some way or other have been kept out of our lives there is very, very much that educates us into becoming vigilant human beings. What manner of things might have happened to me today? If we ask ourselves this question every evening and

then think of particular occurrences which could have had this or that result, observations will couple themselves with such questions and introduce the element of vigilance into the exercise of self-discipline. This is something that can be a beginning, and of itself leads on and on, until finally we do not explore only into what it meant in our life when, for example, we wanted to go out, say, at half-past ten one morning and at the last moment somebody turned up and stopped us . . . we are annoyed at being stopped, but we do not enquire what might have happened if we had actually gone out as we had planned. What is it that has been changed?

I have already spoken here in greater detail about such matters. From observation of the negative in our life—which can, however, bear witness to the wisdom guiding it—to observation of the Angel weaving and working in our astral body there is a direct path, a direct and unerring path that can be trodden.