

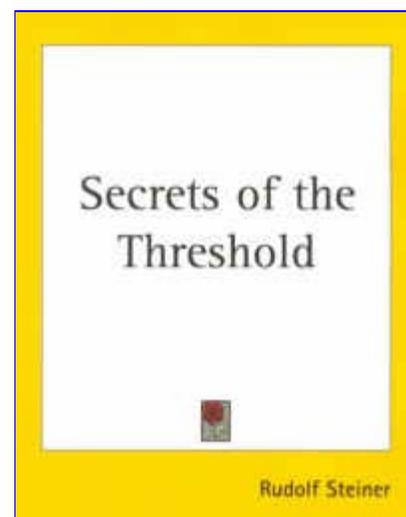
Site Map: [MAIN / A Reader's Journal, Vol. 2 Webpage](#) [Printer Ready](#)



A READER'S JOURNAL

Secrets of the Threshold, GA#147
by
Rudolf Steiner

8 Lectures in Munich, August 1913
Published by Anthroposophical Press in
1989
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne
©2005



Here in Steiner's words is the theme of these lectures(1). He tells us that the

goal of his mystery dramas is to unveil the truth of what seems otherwise mysterious to us.

[page 106] We have tried in both this lecture cycle and in the drama cycle to characterize the nature of the cosmos and the entity of man, who has a share in the cosmos. After such a discussion, it may perhaps be permissible to add for any person setting out on the path here described that he will need to continue it to some extent on his own. On trying to penetrate ever more deeply into *The Soul's Awakening*, you will notice that so many answers to the mysteries of life are dawning on you that you that you will say: "These things are really there for the revealing and unveiling of these mysteries."

In the passage "In the beginning was the Word" from the beginning of the Gospel of John, the word "Word" refers to living thought-beings, not to our usual meaning of "word" as a nominalized process. In the Cosmic Word, the process is alive and resides in living thought-beings. If one keeps this idea in mind, it will become clear that words have fluid meanings which change depending on the context. Poets use this flux of meaning all the time as they affix their living thoughts to a paper pad. As I wrote in my poem "Immortal Tracts"(2): "Tracts on a paper pad are immortal tracks of ideas walking inside." Words, those tracks on paper or sounds in the air, are the like the shadows in Plato's Cave which give us hints of a living reality.

[page 13] It is one of the most difficult things for people with this superficial faculty of intellect in our modern culture to realize that the same words in a different context mean something different. Modern civilization is such that people think that the words they use —: in so far as they have been coined on the physical plane —: must always mean the same thing. Here we have precisely the place where Ahriman has people most firmly by the throat, and where he hinders them from understanding that words only become living in their deepest sense when one looks at them in the connection in which they are uttered. Nothing that reaches out beyond the physical plane can be understood if one does not keep this occult fact in mind. It is especially important today that an occult fact of this kind should work upon our hearts and souls as a counterbalance to the external intellectual life that has taken firm hold of every human being.

The paragraph following the above quotation led me to read [The Threshold of the Spiritual World](#) immediately after finishing this book. In a footnote we find that [The Threshold of the Spiritual World](#) was produced during the course of

the lectures which comprise this book. Here is the paragraph. I would definitely recommend reading these two books in quick succession. [The Threshold of the Spiritual World](#) combined with this book presents the clearest exposition I've found of the two spiritual beings of Lucifer and Ahriman —: how they came into being, what their good intentions for humans are, and how we can benefit from each without being overwhelmed by either.

[page 13] Among the many things that have to be considered in these Mystery Dramas, notice how indeed in *The Soul's Awakening* the remarkable figure of Ahriman steals in quietly at first, how it seems to insinuate itself among the other characters and how it continually gains in significance towards the end of the drama. I shall endeavor to bring out for you a special piece of writing about Lucifer and Ahriman, and other things as well, entitled [The Threshold of the Spiritual World](#); it will be on hand during this lecture course, for these seem to me the subjects particularly necessary to illumine for our friends at this time.

Which is better? To acknowledge that it is possible 1) for there to be clear meanings hidden in obscure words, or 2) for there to be obscure meanings hidden in clear words? Steiner makes it clear in *The Soul's Awakening* mystery drama, that the latter is a higher human achievement. Strader is a character who hears both Felix Balde and Capesius talk and then remarks, "Capesius and father Felix, both/Conceal dark meaning in transparent words." (Page 16)

[page 16] . . . the concession that in clear words an obscure meaning may be hidden, is the higher of the two in human nature.

[page 17] And yet it would be a blessing for our present civilization if people could assume the attitude towards the thoughts and other achievements that Strader assumed towards Felix Balde and Capesius; if only such people might become more and more numerous, and if only Anthroposophy could in very truth contribute something directly to this self-knowledge!

Steiner's point is well-taken that scientists and philosophers of today, those thought by many to be the greatest thinkers of our time, would do well to acknowledge that their clear words embodied in their theories and postulates may indeed harbor obscure living meanings. Anthroposophy today is the legacy of Rudolf Steiner's living thoughts and these are our best hope for revealing the obscure living meanings hiding in humanity's clear thoughts.

Humanity's clear thoughts about the Devil hides living meanings from us. We can only wrest those living meanings from obscurity when we come to grips with the two aspects of the Devil in the form of Luciferic and Ahrimanic beings and learn to balance the influence of each in our lives. Some might try to eradicate one or the other, for example, by saying "Yes, indeed, Ahriman seems to be a dangerous fellow. If he has such an influence on the world and on human affairs, the simplest thing to do is to banish from the human soul all the impulses that come from him." This can result in one coming completely under the influence of Lucifer.

[page 19] These beings we call Ahriman and Lucifer are right here in the world, they have their task in the universal order, and one cannot sweep them away. Besides, it is not a question of annihilating them, but —: as in the case of the weights on both sides of the scales —: the ahrimanic and luciferic forces must balance each other in their influence on human beings and on other beings. We do not bring about the true activity of any of the various forces by removing it but by placing ourselves in the right relationship to it. We have the wrong attitude to these luciferic and ahrimanic beings if we simply say that they are bad and harmful.

Here Steiner's dictum [\(2\)](#) that evil is a good out of its time or place helps us to understand these beings. We need to understand their functions and how they may be applying their functions outside of the intended sphere.

[page 19, 20] Although these powers rebel in a certain sense against the general order of the universe —: which had already been designed before they entered it —: this does not stem from the fact that they invariably have to exercise a harmful activity, but rather that —: like the others whom we have met as lawful members of the higher worlds —: they have a definite sphere of activity in the sum total of the universe. Their opposition to and rebellion against the cosmic order consists in their

going beyond their own sphere; they exert beyond this sphere the forces they should employ only within their lawful domain.

Ahriman is the "Lord of Death" and his presence is required in the physical world because if no living beings were to die, they would soon overwhelm the resources of the world. Ahriman helps humans to develop a proper relationship to the physical world of the senses. That is his proper duty in our sphere.

[page 20] In what surrounds us as external nature, Ahriman is the rightful Lord of Death and should not be regarded as an evil power but as one whose influence in the general world order is fully legitimate. We will enter into a right relationship with the sense world only when we bring a creditable interest to bear upon it, when our interest in the sense world is so reasonable that we can see everything in it without greedily demanding eternal life for any of its physical forms; on the contrary, that we can do without them when they meet their natural death. To be able to rejoice rightly in the things of the sense world but not to be so dependent on them as to contradict the laws of death and decay —: this is the right relationship of the human being to the sense world. To bring about this right relationship to growth and decay, the human being has the impulses of Ahriman within himself; for this reason they pulsate in him.

On the other hand we have the task of Lucifer to keep us from becoming so attracted to the physical world of the senses that we forget our connection to the spiritual world. Inside of us resides psychic impulses which would be frittered away in the sensory world, but for the impulses of Lucifer, who might be called the Lord of Art and Philosophy.

[page 22, 23] Now there is also a lawful task belonging to Lucifer, one quite in accordance with the universal cosmic order. In a certain way Lucifer's task is to tear man and everything in the world pertaining to the soul away from living and being absorbed in the physical-sensory alone. If there were no luciferic power in the world, we would dream along in the perceptions streaming into us from the external world and in what comes to us from that world through the intellect. That would be a kind of dreaming away of human soul existence within the sense world. There are indeed impulses which will not tear our souls away from the sense world as long as they are bound temporarily to it but which raise our souls to a different sort of living, feeling and rejoicing from the kind the sense world can offer. We need merely to think of what humanity has been seeking as artistic development. Wherever the human being creates something through his imagination and his soul life of feeling, no longer clinging dully to the sense world but rising above it, Lucifer is the power that tears him out of that world. A large part of what is uplifting and liberating in the artistic development of mankind is inspired by Lucifer. We can designate something else as the inspiration of Lucifer: the human being has the chance through luciferic powers to free his thinking from a mere photograph-like copying of the sense world; he can raise himself above this in freedom, which he does, for instance, in his philosophy. From this point of view, all philosophizing is the inspiration of Lucifer. One could even write a history of the philosophical development of mankind, insofar as this is not pure positivism —: that is, does not keep to the external materialistic —: and could say: the history of the development of philosophy is a continual testimony to the inspiration of Lucifer. All creative work, in fact, that rises above the sense world we owe to Lucifer's rightful activities and powers.

Having seen what the rightful tasks of Ahriman and Lucifer are, let us look into how these tasks might lead humankind astray. Simply put Ahriman controls the thinking life and Lucifer the feeling life. Any excesses in a person's thinking activity will come from an Ahrimanic influence; any excesses in a person's psychic or feeling activity will come from a Luciferic influence.

[page 23] Ahriman has more to do with our thinking, Lucifer with the feelings, with the life of the emotions, passions, impulses and desires. Lucifer is lord over everything of soul feeling in the physical sense world. He has the tendency to detach and separate this feeling life of the soul from the physical world, to spiritualize it, and to set up, one can say, on a specially isolated island of

spiritual existence a luciferic kingdom composed of all the soul feeling he can seize and carry off from the sense world. Whereas Ahriman wants to hold back thinking to the physical sense world and make shadows and phantoms of it, visible to elementary clairvoyance as floating, wafting shadows, Lucifer does the opposite: he takes what is soul feeling in the physical sense world, tears it out and puts it in a special luciferic kingdom set up as an isolated kingdom similar to his own nature, in opposition to the general cosmic order.

There are two types of love in the world: self-less love and self-full love. Selfless love is unconditional, self-giving, universal love, it is a love which originates in the one loved, not in the one doing the loving. Self-full love is an egoistic love which originates in the one doing the loving, it is a love in which one perceives that the loved one fulfills a need in oneself and an attraction forms to fulfill that need. The self-less love repels Lucifer, and the self-full love plays into Lucifer's hands. And yet, there is an appropriate place for self-full love —: that is when it is directed towards the spiritual world. It is only when self-full love is directed to other human beings that it goes astray, and Lucifer is ever ready to lead one astray in that fashion —: an example of how Lucifer offers an evil impulse in a good out of its time and place. Applying these principles of self-less and self-full love, one can begin to discern the obscure living meanings hiding in humankind's supposedly "clear thoughts" about love.

Another example of clear thoughts which hide living meanings is found in the materialist's clear thoughts about the existence of the spiritual world. "We have no evidence of a spiritual world." "Show me a spiritual being, and I'll accept the existence of the spiritual world." What are materialists missing here? Steiner likens them to an ostrich, who sticks its head in the sand and says, "I don't see any problem."

[page 26] There are people who have in their outward physical experience and in their everyday activities no special interest in the spiritual world. It is said such people today are not uncommon. But nature does not permit us to use the ostrich strategy in her affairs. The ostrich strategy, as you know, consists in the bird sticking his head in the sand and believing that the things he doesn't see are not there. Materialistic minds believe that the spiritual world is not there; they do not see it. They are true ostriches. Nevertheless, in the depths of their souls, the craving for the spiritual world does not cease to exist merely because they deaden themselves and deny its reality. It is actually there. In every human soul, however materialistic, the desire and love for the spiritual world is alive, but people who deaden their soul nature are unconscious of the craving.

What happens to those who are unconscious of this self-less desire for the spiritual world? It shoots out as conscious self-full or egoistic desires and craving and in the extreme, this repressed spirituality leads to abnormal sensual impulses such rampant sexual appetites or aberrations. One may now understand how dramatic conversions may come about so quickly —: it happens when one rightly understands the hitherto covert spiritual impulses behind one's overt sensual impulses. The conversion of Augustine from a libertine in Rome to a sober Church leader and saint comes to mind as a prominent example.

[page 26, 27] There is a law that something repressed and deadened at one point will break out at another. The consequence of the repression of the egoistic impulse towards the spiritual world is that it thrusts itself into the sensual desires. The kind of love due the spiritual world hurls itself away from there into the sensual impulses, passions and desires, and these impulses become perverse. The perversity of the sensual impulses and their repellent abnormalities are the mirror image of what could be noble virtues in the spiritual world, were human beings to use for the spiritual world all the forces poured out into the physical world. We must consider this seriously: what finds expression in the sense world as loathsome impulses could —: if they were used in the spiritual world —: accomplish there something of the most sublime character. This is immensely significant.

If critics merely read the reviews of a book or listen to news reports of an event, they may end up spouting a criticism that would be unrecognizable to either the author of the book or the subject of the news report. Basing one's criticism on indirect evidence such as that is like "nibbling a piece of reality" and mistaking it for reality. One eats the card containing Antoine's menu and mistakes it for Antoine's food. A similar thing can happen to someone who catches a

glimpse of the spiritual world, mistakes the nibble for some deep truth about the spiritual world, and offers others their fleshed-out nibble as a full-blown image of the spiritual world. Much of the folly of otherwise spiritual people stem from the Ahrimanic inflation of their nibbled sweets from the spiritual world.

[page 28] If one only nibbles at the [spiritual world], one will have no protection against mistaking illusion for truth; when the pictures shrink and condense, one takes what should be merely picture for reality. The sweets, too, that such a person carries within himself out of the spiritual world are a special booty for Ahriman to pounce on. From what he can pull out of ordinary human thinking he gets only airy shadows, but —: to put it plainly —: he gets well padded shadows and plump phantoms when he presses out of human body-individualities (as well as he can) the false illusory pictures created by nibbling on the sly in the spiritual world. In this ahrimanic fashion the physical sense world is populated by spiritual shades and phantoms that offer serious resistance to the general cosmic order.

If one brings back a mode of thought from the spiritual world and applies it in the physical world, one will be subject to an Ahrimanic influence. However, if one takes a mode of thought in the physical world and applies it in the spiritual world, one will be subject to a Luciferic influence. What is one to do, faced with this dilemma? One must strive for balancing the Ahrimanic and Luciferic influences in one's life.

[page 28, 29] In a somewhat similar way the luciferic influence, the inducement to so much that is noble and sublime, may become dangerous, exceedingly dangerous, particularly to the soul that has become clairvoyant. This happens in just the opposite situation. We looked before at what happens when a soul nibbles at the spiritual world, that is, perceives something there, but then on returning to the physical sense world does not tell itself: "Here you may not use the same kind of thought pictures that are right for the spiritual world." In this case the soul is exposed in the physical world to the influence of Ahriman. But the opposite can take place. The human soul can carry into the spiritual world what should belong only to the physical sense world, namely the kinds of perception, feeling, and passion that the soul must necessarily develop to a certain degree for the physical world. None of the emotions cultivated here, however, should be carried into the spiritual world if the soul is not to fall victim to the temptations and allurements of Lucifer to an unusual degree.

I worked for many years with an inventor of a machine that could greatly benefit humankind. He had a certain genius which was unmistakable, but also some characteristics which got in his own way of success. Those were overweening vanity and ambition. Yet, he would never admit to himself or anyone else the truth that was plain enough to everyone else, that he was vain and ambitious. Steiner in the next passage helps us understand how the influence of Lucifer works in such a person's life.

[page 30] Because self-knowledge is hard to come by and the soul has the greatest difficulty in becoming clear about certain of its qualities, because, too, people are bent on getting as quickly as possible into the spiritual world, it is not at all to be wondered at that they say to themselves: I am already mature enough; I will of course be able to control my passions. As a matter of fact, it is more easily said than done. There are certain qualities that particularly challenge our control. Vanity, ambition, and similar things sit so deeply entrenched in human souls that it is not easy to admit to oneself: You are vain and ambitious! You want power! When we look into ourselves, we are usually deceived about just those emotions that are the very worst ones. To carry them into the spiritual world means that a person will most easily become the prey of Lucifer. And when he notices how he is thrown hither and thither, he does not willingly say: This comes from ambition or from vanity —: but he looks for the way to deaden the soul. Then Lucifer carries him off into his kingdom. There, of course, a person may receive insights but these do not correspond to the cosmic order, which had already been designed before Lucifer began his meddling. They are spiritual insights of a thoroughly luciferic nature. He may receive the most extraordinary impressions and judge them to be absolute truths. He may tell people about all sorts of incarnations of this person or that, but these will simply be purely luciferic inspirations.

Through Steiner even we who are not clairvoyant can come to understand that it is only through observation of the spiritual world that the obscure meanings in the clear truths of our philosophy and science can be understood rightly, that the "being of man, the real, true nature of man, lies in hidden worlds." Worlds hidden to the sensory data we receive from the physical world. One cannot even enter the first level of spiritual worlds, the elementary world, unless one has prepared oneself for what to expect there. If one is not clairvoyant, one can prepare oneself for that by studying spiritual science. How is the elementary world different from the sensory world in which I live as I type these words and you, dear Reader, live as you read them? You know that in the sensory world that you can observe other beings as distinct from yourself. You may change a little when you talk to your mother from when you talk to a colleague in a bar, but you are still yourself, no matter whom you are conversing or otherwise interacting with. This changes dramatically in the elementary world where you become the other person. We learn in this sensory world by observing others; we learn in the elementary world by transforming into others.

[page 33] We can learn nothing at all in the elemental world unless we become a different person within every other being, indeed unless we become similar to a high degree to the other beings and events.

We have to have, then, one peculiarity of soul for the elemental world: the capacity for transforming our own being into other beings outside ourselves. We must have the faculty of metamorphosis. We must be able to immerse ourselves in and become the other being. We must be able to lose the consciousness which always —: in order to remain emotionally healthy —: we have to have in the sense world, the consciousness of "I am myself." In the elemental world we get to know another being only when in a way we inwardly have "become" the other. When we have crossed the threshold, we have to move through the elemental world in such a way that with every step we transform ourselves into every single happening, creep into every single being. It belongs to the health of a person's soul that in passing through the sense world, he should hold his own and assert his individual character, but this is altogether impossible in the elemental world, where it would lead either to the darkening of his field of vision or to his being thrown back into the sense world.

In the elementary world, we are constantly transforming ourselves into other beings we meet —: it is our natural way of interacting with them. But we lose in the elementary world the natural ability which our physical body that allows us to feel our self as an Ego or "I". But in the elementary world we get no assist from our physical body and we *must* exert our own will to have a feeling of self. (Page 36)

We do experience in the elementary world something similar to our periods of sleep in the sensory world. We alternate between times when we are constantly transforming into other beings and times when we willfully remain within ourselves. The latter is equivalent in the elementary world to sleep in the physical or sensory world.

[page 37] For the elemental world this self-willing is necessary; like the alternation of sleeping and waking in the physical world, the condition of "transforming oneself into other beings" must give way to the feeling of self-strengthened volition. Just as we have become tired in the physical world and close our eyes, overcome by sleep, the moment comes in the elemental world when the etheric body feels, "I cannot go on continually changing; now I must shut out all the beings and happenings around me. I will have to thrust it all out of my field of vision and look away from it. I now must will myself and live absolutely and entirely within myself, ignoring the other beings and occurrences." This willing of self, excluding everything else, corresponds to sleep in the physical world.

Another difference between the sensory and elementary worlds is the nature of thoughts. Thoughts in our sensory world are more passive than the thoughts of the elementary world. Our thoughts are like our chattel in the sensory world, they bend and shape themselves to our will, no matter how silly the result might be. If this were not so, would there perforce be so many fools in our world?

[page 38] We truly need a stronger power of soul to confront these living thought-beings with our consciousness than we do with the passive thoughts of the physical world, which allow themselves to

be formed at will, to be connected and separated not only sensibly but often even quite foolishly. They are patient things, these thoughts of our ordinary world; they let the human soul do anything it likes with them. But it is quite different when we thrust our soul into the elemental world, where our thoughts will lead an independent life. A human being must hold his own with his soul life and assert his will in confronting these active, lively, no longer passive thoughts. In the physical world our thinking can be completely stupid and this does not harm us at all. But if we do foolish things with our thinking in the elemental world, it may well happen that our stupid thoughts, creeping around there as independent beings, can hurt us, can even cause real pain.

Those people, who nibble on the elementary world and return with the habits of thought acquired there to our world, very often become like the inventor I mentioned earlier, they no longer use the good rational thinking processes of the sensory world, but rather seek to hold onto the thinking processes they brought back from the elementary world. The result is a merry chase which can often turn the heads of those in the physical world and sometimes their stomachs.

[page 38] Thus we see that the habits of our soul life must change when we cross the threshold from the physical into the supersensible world. If we were then to return to the physical world with the activity we have to bring to bear on the living thought entities of the elemental world and failed to develop in ourselves sound thinking with these passive thoughts, wishing rather to hold fast to the conditions of the other world, our thoughts would continually run away from us; then hurrying after them, we would become a slave to our thoughts.

Another difference in the elemental world is something that allows us to make distinctions there as we do when we see colors in the sensory world. Unless we have some neurotic reaction to a given color, we simply note the color of a thing without any strong aversion or attraction. In the elementary world, sympathies and antipathies act as colors do in the sensory world. Only if one greets each form of sympathy or antipathy of other beings with equanimity is one truly able to experience those beings one transforms oneself into.

[page 40] For this we must necessarily change the attitude of soul usual in the physical world, where it is attracted by sympathy and repelled by antipathy; it must become completely changed. There the inner mood or disposition corresponding to the feelings of sympathy and antipathy must be replaced with what we can call soul-quiet, spirit-peacefulness. With an inwardly resolute soul life filled with spirit calm, we must immerse ourselves in the entities and transform ourselves into them; then we will feel the qualities of these beings rising within our soul depths as sympathies and antipathies. Only when we can do this, with such an attitude toward sympathy and antipathy, will the soul, in its experiences, be capable of letting the sympathetic and antipathetic perception appear before it as images that are right and true. That is, only then are we capable not merely of feeling what the perception of sympathies and antipathies is but of really experiencing our own particular self, transformed into another being, suddenly rising up as one or another color-picture or as one or another tone-picture of the elemental world.

In his metaphor of the Cave, Plato sought to express a reality of the spiritual world by asking us to consider people chained to cave wall in such a way that they were only able to see the shadows cast on the rear walls of their cave by beings who passed in front of the mouth of the cave, but they were never able to see the beings directly, only their shadows. Naturally they took these shadows to be the reality which existed in their world. Steiner tells us that it is not until we move into the elementary world do we understand the shadowy nature of what we here call thoughts.

[page 40, 41] As soon as we enter the elemental world and move with our etheric body, thoughts become —: one can say —: denser, more alive, more independent, more true to their own nature. What we experience as thought in the physical body relates to this truer element of thinking as a shadow on the wall relates to the objects casting it. As a matter of fact, it is the shadow of the elemental thought-life thrown into the physical sense world through the instrumentality of the physical body. When we think, our thinking lies more or less in the shadow of thought-beings.

In Figure 1 I have a simple diagram which describes the two aspects one must develop in the elemental world in order

to exist there properly. The lotus refers to one of those whirling vortices of energy called *chakras* which are located by clairvoyant vision on the human being in places along the length of the spinal column. Steiner points out that these may appear in one devoid of moral strength, but that they should not, indicating a serious lack if moral strength does not accompany the opening of the *chakras* or blossoming of the lotuses. The moral strength Steiner likens to an "elementary" backbone with which develops "one's strengthened ego in the elementary world." (Page 42) We will lack such a necessary backbone if we enter the spiritual world with ambition, vanity, pride, or desire for power, and Lucifer and Ahriman take advantage of us by forming a partnership to overcome us with egoism and deception. We can see in Figure 1 how Lucifer pulls at the lotus petals from above and Ahriman rises from within us in our elementary backbone.

[page 43, 44] At the moment we pass over the threshold into the spiritual world, we approach the luciferic and ahrimanic beings, of whom we have already spoken; here we meet them in quite a different way from any confrontation we might have in the physical world. We will have the remarkable experience that as soon as we cross the threshold, that is, as soon as we have developed the lotus flowers and a backbone, we will see the luciferic powers coming towards us with the intention of seizing the lotus flowers. They stretch their tentacles out towards our lotus flowers; we must have developed in the right way so that we use the lotus flowers to grasp and understand the spiritual events and so that they are not themselves grasped by the luciferic powers. It is possible to prevent their being seized by these powers only by ascending into the spiritual world with firmly established moral forces.

I have already mentioned that in the physical sense world the ahrimanic forces approach us more from outside, the luciferic more from within the soul. In the spiritual world it is just the opposite: the luciferic beings come from outside and try to lay hold of the lotus flowers, whereas the ahrimanic beings come from within and settle themselves tenaciously within the elementary backbone. If we have risen into the spiritual world without the support of morality, the ahrimanic and luciferic powers form an extraordinary alliance with each other. If we have come into the higher worlds filled with ambition, vanity, pride or with the desire for power, Ahriman and Lucifer will succeed in forming a partnership with each other. I will use a picture for what they do, but this picture corresponds to the actual situation and you will understand that what I am indicating really takes place: Ahriman and Lucifer form an alliance; together they bind the petals of the lotus flowers to the elementary backbone. When all the petals are fastened to the backbone, the human being is tied up in himself, fettered within himself through his strongly developed lotus flowers and backbone. The results of this will be the onset of egoism and love of deception to an extent that would be impossible were he to remain normally in the physical world. Thus we see what can happen if clairvoyant consciousness is not developed in the right way: the alliance of Ahriman and Lucifer whereby the petals of the lotus flowers are fastened onto the elementary backbone, fettering a person within himself by means of his own elemental or etheric capacities. These are the things we must know if we wish to penetrate with open eyes and with understanding into the actual spiritual world.



If we are reading and we come across a vertical line with a dot over it followed by another vertical line with a cross bar at the top of the line, we simply read it as the word "it", do we not? We do not give a

description of the components of the word as I did above, we interpret its meaning as part of the whole sentence in which it appears. Steiner uses this metaphor to explain the soul's experience in the picture-world region of the spirit. When one grasps this concept, the title of Steiner's book, [Reading the Pictures of the Apocalypse](#), becomes clearer as to the subject covered in the book.

[page 47] It is precisely the same with the relationship of the soul to the whole picture-world of the spirit region. What the soul has to do is not merely to describe what is there, for it is much more like reading. The pictures before one are indeed a cosmic writing, a script, and the soul will gain the right inner mood by recognizing that this whole world of pictures —: woven like a veil before the spiritual world —: is there to mediate, to manifest the true reality of that world. Hence in the real sense of the word we can speak of reading the cosmic script in the spirit region.

Yet the meaning of those strokes which comprise the letters of the words we read are mostly arbitrary, and we must learn what a collection of these strokes mean before reading is possible. Such learning is not required for reading the cosmic writing where the meanings flow out of the pictures.

[page 47] One should not imagine that learning to read this cosmic writing is anything like learning to read in the physical world. Reading today is based more or less on the relation of arbitrary signs to their meaning. Learning to read as we have to do for such arbitrary letters is unnecessary for reading the cosmic script which makes its appearance as a mighty tableau, expressing the spiritual world to the clairvoyant soul. One has only to take in with an open, unbiased inner being what is shown as picture-scenery, because what one is experiencing there is truly reading. The meaning itself can be said to flow out of the pictures. It can therefore happen that any sort of interpreting the images of the spiritual world as abstract ideas is more a hindrance than a help in leading the soul directly to what lies behind the occult writing.

But the very nature of cosmic reading is itself open to the Ahrimanic objections of many materialists who would ridicule such an ability. Steiner epitomizes the objectors in "Ferdinand Fox" and puts these words in his mouth by example, "Oh yes, you Steiner, you describe the clairvoyant consciousness and talk about the spiritual world, but it's merely a collection of bits and pieces of sense images. How can you claim —: in the face of all that scenery raked together from well-known physical pictures —: that we should experience something new from it, something we cannot imagine without approaching the spiritual world?" And yet this collection of bits and pieces could refer to the very letters which comprise the words on this page. You have seen all of the letters before as early as kindergarten. Yet who can deny that this combination of words contains new information for you? This is how Steiner overcomes Fox's objections.

Materialists like Ferdinand Fox require hard evidence of the spiritual world to be presented to them. Maurice Maeterlinck, a writer Steiner admires for his [work on bees](#), demands such proof of the spiritual world that Steiner claims are impossible to provide. The lack of proof for the existence of the spiritual world is not proof of the non-existence of the spiritual world. The lack of proof for the existence of the [Purloined Letter](#) in the room was not proof that it was not in the room.

[page 49, 50] [In his book *Concerning Death*] Maeterlinck asks for proofs of the spiritual world and facts about it. It is of course reasonable to require proofs of the spiritual world and we have every right to do so —: but not as Maeterlinck demands them. He would like to have proofs as palpable as those given by science for the physical plane. And because in the elemental world things are still reminiscent of the physical world, he would even agree to let himself be convinced of the existence of the spiritual world by means of experiments copied from the physical ones. That is what he demands. He shows with this that he has not the most rudimentary understanding of the true spiritual world, for he wants to prove, by methods borrowed from the physical one, things and processes which have nothing to do with the sense world. The real task is to show that such proofs as Maeterlinck demands for the spiritual world are impossible.

Movies that deal with the spiritual world sometimes create portrayals which match the description that Steiner provides

us with his supersensible sight. One of those is the 1998 movie, [What Dreams May Come](#), in which Robin Williams dies and enters a brightly colored world which changes as he thinks —: his very thoughts are the agents of change in the world around him. We get to experience with him there in the spiritual world the frightening reality of a world which transforms itself before our eyes.

[page 55] There the thoughts that we have do not put up with everything quite passively; we plunge our consciousness into a world (into a thought-world, one might call it) that creeps and crawls with a life of its own. A person has to hold himself firmly upright in his soul to withstand thoughts that are full of their own motion. Even so, many things in this elemental world of creeping and crawling thoughts remind us of the physical world.

With the advent of Steiner's Spiritual Science in the twentieth century, we have the possibility for "the right preparation by the men of today to guard against the entrance of that materialism which must otherwise dominate and bring the civilization of humanity ever more and more into a state of impoverishment, devastation and decline." (Page 57) This continuing state of the collapse of civilization predicted by Steiner matches the view of Andrew J. Galambos. Galambos sees us falling further into impoverishment (continued periods of recession), devastation (crime, war), and decline (lower and lower productivity due to coercive friction) unless we dismantle the burgeoning coercive bureaucracy of the State and replace it with a true government based on [sound spiritual principles of freedom](#). It should not be surprising that both Steiner and Galambos support principles which will lead to what Steiner calls a [three-fold society](#).

As a physicist I became enamored of the atomic view of the world for many years until I began to notice how desolate the prospects were in a world which consisted of physical objects composed merely of those atoms I had come to know so well. The advent of quantum mechanics did little to allay my despair. I struggled to derive the existence of a spiritual world from concepts based on the physical and gave up only when I found that the principles of the spiritual world underlay the physical world, but we are able only to see the vestures of the spiritual world in the physical, not the world covered by the vestures. The veil covering the spiritual world from our eyes cannot be penetrated by our physical eyes, but require instead organs of spiritual sight such as Steiner was born with and has taught many to develop for themselves.

The character Professor Capesius in Steiner's mystery plays had become acquainted with the atomistic world of Haeckelism.

[page 59] In other words, Capesius came more and more to recognize what is, in a sense, the one-sided correctness of atomism and a mechanistic view of nature. He was not one to fight fanatically against a new idea, for he had confidence in his own intelligence, which seemed to find these ideas necessary to explain the natural phenomena around him. Yet it troubled him. He said to himself, "How desolate, how unsatisfying for the human soul this conception of nature is. How poorly it supports any ideas one would like to acquire about spirit and spiritual beings or about the human soul!"

The good Professor goes to his friend Felix Balde who talks to him about the theory of atoms in detail until Capesius, in spite of his intense interest in the subject, is nearly asleep. At that point, in comes Felix's wife, Felicia, who tells Capesius a story which brings him awake. Note how dry theory tends to put us to sleep while a good story will bring us sharply awake.

[page 60, 61] Once upon a time there stood in a very lonely region a great castle. Within it lived many people, of all ages; they were more or less related to one another and belonged to the same family. They formed a self-contained community but were shut off from the rest of the world. Round about, far and wide, there were no other people nor human settlements to be found, and in time this state of things made many of the people uneasy. As a result, a few of them became somewhat visionary, and the visions that came to them might well, from the manner in which they appeared, have been founded on reality.

Felicia told how a great number of these people had the same vision. First, they saw a powerful

figure of light, which seemed to come down out of the clouds. It was a figure of light bringing warmth with it as it came down and sank into the hearts and souls of the people in the castle. It was really felt —: so ran Felicias' story —: that something of glory had come down from the heights of heaven in this figure of light from above.

But soon, Felicia continued, those who had the vision of light saw something more. They saw how from all sides, from all around the mountain, as though crawling out of the earth, there came all kinds of blackish, brownish, steel-grey figures. Whereas it was a single figure of light coming from above, there were many, many of these other forms around the castle. Whereas the figure of light entered into their hearts and their souls, these other beings —: one could call them elemental beings —: were like besiegers of the castle.

This a powerful story which relates in metaphor the appearance of Lucifer as the Light-Bearer shining from above on the Earth and the simultaneous appearance of Ahrimanic beings from the Earth itself. What happens next is an intensification of the action of these beings so that the humans enter a state of quiescence or sleep like Sleeping Beauty who was enchanted by a witch. When they wake up after hundreds of years, their experiences of life in the old castle lives inside their souls as psychic strength, psychic possessions, and psychic health and they now are divided into many individual castles where they live and prosper. Felix takes over from his wife as she ends the story and leaves. He tells Capesius about the Luciferic and Ahrimanic beings. Previously Benedictus (another character) had told Capesius about this beings, but he couldn't make heads nor tails of them. Now, he was strangely strengthened by the fairy tale of Felicia and went back to see Benedictus.

[page 62] Benedictus noticed that something had taken place in Capesius. Capesius himself was aware that every time he recalled the story of the fortress, his soul was peculiarly stirred within him. It seemed as if the story had worked upon his inner being and strengthened it. Consequently he was continually repeating the tale to himself —: as if in meditation. Now he came to Benedictus, who perceived that the forces of Capesius' soul had been newly strengthened. Benedictus began therefore to speak about these things in a special way. Whereas earlier Capesius —: perhaps because of his great learning —: would have had more trouble grasping it all, he now understood everything extremely well. Something like a seed had fallen into his soul with Felicia's story and this had fructified his soul forces.

[Milton Erickson](#) was a world-renown hypnotherapist for over fifty years. People came to him for all sorts of problems and they were greeted by stories. The stories invariably planted seeds in their souls and they went away to heal themselves of their problems. One should never underestimate the power of a story to heal and to ready someone to receive information they had previously been impervious to. Explanations are like theory which can one put to sleep, but a story can wake one up. A good story can plant itself into one's soul and create a fertile ground in which understanding of theory can grow. A Sufi master was seated at a table and his pupil asked if he might have a peach. The master picked up the last peach in the bowl, ate all the flesh from the peach and handed it to his pupil. After that the pupil no longer asked his master to explain the meaning of any story his master told him.

With Felicia's story of the castle-fortresses in mind, let's eavesdrop on what Benedictus had to tell Capesius:

[page 62, 63] Benedictus said the following, "Let us look at three different things: First, consider human thinking, human concepts, the thoughts that a person carries around within himself and ponders when he is alone to help him understand the world. Everyone is able to think and to try to explain things to himself in complete solitude. For this he doesn't need another person. In fact, he can think best when he shuts himself up in his own room and tries as best he can, in quiet, self-contained pondering, to understand the world and its phenomena."

"Now then," said Benedictus, "it will always happen to a person that a feeling element of soul rises up into his solitary thoughts, and thus there will come to every individual thinker the tempting attraction of the luciferic element. It is impossible for someone to ruminate and cogitate and philosophize and explain everything in the world to himself without having this impulse coming out of soul sensitivity as a luciferic thrust into his thinking. A thought grasped by an individual human being is always permeated to a great extent by the luciferic element."

"Ah," you may be saying along with Capesius, "so, that's how Luciferic beings enter my world, through my solitary thoughts! If so, how do Ahrimanic beings affect my world?" Interestingly, while Ahriman has no access to solitary thoughts, he does have access to writing because "by being put into writing, thought is snatched from destruction —: it is made permanent."

[page 63] A thought can be put into writing and snatched from destruction; it can be made permanent. I have sometimes pointed out that Ahriman's effort is to reclaim what is alive in human thinking as it goes toward destruction and to anchor it in the physical sense world. That is what typically happens when you write something down. The thoughts that otherwise would gradually disperse are fixed and preserved for all time —: and thus Ahriman can invade human culture. Professor Capesius is not the sort of reactionary who wants to forbid the teaching of writing in the early grades, but he understood that with all the books and other reading matter people are piling up around themselves, the ahrimanic impulses have entered the evolution of human culture.

What are the Ahrimanic citadels in our culture today? In the news media, in libraries, and most recently in the Internet. In each of these three endeavors, solitary thoughts are written down and preserved for all to read. As we found earlier, there is little useful in attempting to completely avoid Ahriman or Lucifer —: to do so would require avoiding all writing on the one hand and avoiding all solitary thought on the other. Instead we must find a middle path which requires us to balance the Luciferic and Ahrimanic influences in our solitary thoughts and public writing. When we bring together the two polarities, where they meet in the middle we can find the Divine path of balance. In effect the Word is the intermediate position between thinking and writing.

[page 67] Just as the positive and negative electric charge indicates a polarity in external physical nature, we will also have to agree that the contrasting ahrimanic and luciferic elements have also to exist. They are two polarities, neither of which we can do without, but they must be brought into the right relationship to measure and number. Then the human being can move between them in the middle ground by way of the spoken word —: for indeed the Word was meant to be the vessel for wisdom and insight, the vehicle of thoughts and mental images. A person could say, "I must so train myself in using words that through them I allow everything self-willed and merely personal to be corrected. I must take into my soul the wisdom that past ages have unlocked out of the word. I must pay attention not only to my own opinion, not only to what I myself believe or can recognize correctly through my own ability, but I must respect what has come down through the various cultures, through the efforts and wisdom of the various races in human evolution." This would mean bringing Lucifer into the right relationship to the Word. We would not do away with isolated thinking but, realizing that the spoken word belongs to the community, we would try to trace it back through long periods of time. The more we do this, the more we give Lucifer his rightful influence. Then instead of merely submitting to the authority of the Word, we protect its task of carrying earth wisdom from one epoch of civilization to the next.

On the other hand, if someone fully understands the matter, he must take it on himself not to submit to the rigid authoritarian principle that belongs to writing —: whether it be most holy in content or completely profane —: for otherwise he will fall victim to Ahriman. It is clear that for the external materialistic world we have to have writing, and writing is what Ahriman uses to detach thinking from its course toward destruction; this is his task. He wants to hold thinking back from flowing into the stream of death: writing is the best means of keeping thoughts on the physical plane. In full consciousness, therefore, we must face the fact that writing, which carries the ahrimanic element in itself, must never gain the upper hand over mankind. Through our vigilance we must keep the Word in the middle position, so that on the left and on the right —: both in our thinking and in our writing —: the two polar opposites, Lucifer and Ahriman, are working together at the same time. This is where we should stand and it will be the right place if we are clear in mind and heart that there must always be polarities.

In the early [gesture language](#) of the Neanderthals we find a Luciferic element because lacking words and written language they are unable to record their solitary thoughts; they can only share them in the moment with others. With their grunts and noises they were able to communicate their feelings in the moment. With the advent of the human

neocortex in the Cro-Magnons, words representing objects became available, and the early beginnings of Ahrimanic influence can be found. In historical times to the present, poetry and music are influenced by Lucifer and architecture and sculpture by Ahriman. Painting lies in the middle ground between the two polarities.

[page 75] In the middle between what is generally ahrimanic in architecture and sculpture and what is luciferic in poetry and music lies painting. In a way it is a neutral region but not such that we can comfortably settle down and say to ourselves, "Now I'll go ahead with painting, for here neither Lucifer nor Ahriman can get at me." Actually it is just here in the middle that we are exposed on both sides most strongly to their attacks; at every moment we must be on our guard. In the realm of painting we are in the highest degree vulnerable to one or the other influence. The middle line is always the place where we have to bring about, in the very strictest sense of the word, the harmonious balance of polarities by means of human will and human action.

These concepts are not necessary ones for us to manage our lives in the sensory-based material world, but are required when we graduate from the physical world. Just as one might aver that algebra is not necessary in the life of an grade school student (outside the classroom). And yet we teach algebra in grade school. Why is that? Because there is a life after grade school and high school in which one needs the concepts of algebra to handle one's business decisions wisely. Is it cheaper to buy a large quantity at a smaller price? These are matters which can sink a business if some basic algebraic manipulations are not performed. The study of algebra in grade school strengthens one's calculation ability for life after graduation from school. Understanding the Ahrimanic and Luciferic influences strengthens one soul for the time when one graduates from life on the physical plane and enters the realm of the spirit.

[page 75] Looking at the sphere of art as we have done —: it could have been any other sphere —: you see that we acquire certain concepts without which, of course, we can manage quite well on the physical plane. For it is obvious that when we are willing to remain shallow and superficial, we can get along easily enough on this plane even if we don't find music luciferic and architecture ahrimanic! But if we want to manage without such concepts, we will not be able to form on the physical plane any ideas, thoughts, or feelings that will strengthen our soul and enable it to cross the threshold successfully and rise into the realm of spirit; we will have to remain here below on the physical plane.

In the sensory world, we plan and then we act. We consider possibilities, talk about them, and then act upon them. Only in the third phase does the world around change to our sensory apparatus. In the spirit world what we speak happens immediately. What is spoken, is done. In the Cosmic World the Cosmic Word is deed.

[page 76] A human being in the physical world carries out his actions through the movement of his hands; we have described how thoughts, living within the cosmic Word, are also direct actions. Whatever is spoken accomplishes a deed. That is what matters in the spiritual world. A being is active towards another being; a being is active in relation to the external spiritual world around it; both of these actions are contained in spirit conversations. The spoken word is action. Therefore we have to bring ourselves upward into spirit regions in order to find ourselves as living thought-beings among other living thought-beings. We must conduct ourselves as do the other thought-beings, that is, allow our own words to be actions, to put it simply.

The concepts of the innocent bystander and accidental happenings are quaint artifacts of our materialistic civilization. Examined in the light of the spiritual world in which we are imbedded, they are exposed as alibis or cover stories for our lack of knowledge of the underlying reality, the mystery of the world we live in as human beings.

A summary of the levels we humans live in simultaneously will be helpful here. The Table at the beginning of my review of [The Threshold of the Spiritual World](#) will be helpful for this summary. We humans live in a physical body in the world of the senses, but we also live in or have living in us at all times: an Etheric body which lives in the elementary world, an Astral body which lives in the spiritual world, and an Ego body which lives in the super-spiritual world. During the process of going to sleep or dying we successively experience each of these four bodies: we leave the physical body, we experience the Etheric body in the elementary world, we experience the spiritual world in the

Astral body. When we go to sleep we are generally unconscious as soon as we experience the Etheric body in the elementary world. There is some bleed-through between the physical body and Etheric body transition which is called by science a "hypnogogic state" which label disguises more than it reveals, rightly understood. It is this state in which, returning from the elementary world upon awakening that dreams are formed.

When one experiences oneself in the Astral body, there comes to one another self, a second self, the Ego body. The Ego body is the eternal part of us which lives from lifetime to lifetime and acts as the Captain of our Soul, if you will, directing and inspiring it, leading it to experiences which are appropriate for it. What we in the physical body experience as chance, our Ego body experiences as necessity. There are no innocent bystanders or accidents because each of us has a Soul Captain which leads us to the events which are necessary for our lives. It is only with the blinders of materialism that we are unable to discern that the events which happen to us are planned by the wisest part of ourselves, our Ego body.

[page 77] How is this other self active? It has just been said that it belongs to the realm of the spirit as a living thought-being among other living thought-beings, whose words are deeds; they accomplish all they do through what we can call Inspiration. The second self acts inspiringly in man's nature. What does it inspire? Our karma, our destiny. Here we discover a mysterious process: whatever our experience, whether painful or joyous, whatever it is that happens in our life, it is inspired by our other self, working from the spiritual world into this one. If you are walking along the street and something happens to you that seems accidental, it is inspired by your other self from out of the spiritual world. So you see that something like Inspiration in the spiritual world reveals itself on the physical plane and brings about your destiny in large and small happenings. Your destiny is inspired by your other self, out of the realm of the spirit.

One needs to acquire the attitude that "What accidents come to me are as much a part of me as my finger is." [Everything always turns out the way it is supposed to](#) because the Ego body of each of us has a blueprint for us which extends over all of our lifetimes and the implementation of those plans requires events to happen that we cannot understand at the time they happen because we do not have access to that blueprint.

[page 77, 78] Behind the physical events of your destiny stand spiritual beings and spiritual processes. What are they? Inspirations! They are brought about by a conversation in the spiritual world. The cosmic Word is active as the inspirer of human destiny! This is of great significance for your spiritual perception on meeting your other self. You no longer think then of your human personality within its ordinary limits alone, for you extend yourself —: and this must include your other self —: to cover your entire destiny. You are only then a truly whole human being when —: in just the same way that you say, "This finger is part of myself and belongs on the physical plane to my ego" —: you also say, "It is part of myself to bang my thumb or take a painful fall, for all these things are inspired by my other self."

Steiner asks us to perform this thought experiment: Imagine that suddenly you were unable to see, feel, hear, smell, or taste anything but you were still alive. What would you have left? Only your memories. Everything that happened to you in the past would be available to you, but nothing in the present or future. You would be a "has-been" —: someone with a past, but no future. This is the situation that Lucifer finds himself in as a result of his descent from the spiritual world to Earth, and he tempts each of us to become has-beens like he is. Steiner shares with us his own experience of undergoing such an experience and coming to understand the nature of Lucifer as a has-been.

[page 79] When the clairvoyant soul has penetrated so far and endured this experience, then for the first time the human being will begin to have a true understanding for the being whose name has now been mentioned so often, for Lucifer. The human soul, in passing out into the spirit realm, realizes for a moment, "You are only a being of the past." Lucifer is the one who has become in the cosmic order forevermore such a being of the past, a mere has-been, a remnant of earth epochs that have died away, of what cosmic epochs had brought to his soul. And Lucifer's life —: because the other divine-spiritual beings of normal earth evolution have condemned him to the past —: consists in fighting with the aid of his past to gain a present and future.

When Lucifer separated himself from the Godhead, he lost the ability to evolve along with the other spiritual beings and this is what anchors him to the past. Lucifer has only the light he stole when he came to Earth and remains a has-been in that sense. It is the same destiny on Earth of anyone who steals ideas or other property from another person. They flash up and fade away, unable to sustain their brilliance. Rudyard Kipling understood this process and embodied it in his famous quatrain, "They copied all they could copy / But they couldn't copy my mind. / So I left them copying merrily / A year and a half behind."

In this next passage Steiner conjures up for us a powerful image of lightning flashes across the skies of the Cosmic Midnight to reveal a glimpse of Lucifer in-the-large bearing a resemblance to us humans in-the-small.

[page 79] Thus Lucifer stands before the clairvoyant vision, preserving in his life and soul the divine spiritual glories of world creation, yet condemned to realize, "They were once yours." And now his never-ceasing struggle begins: to obtain for this past and present the future also in the cosmic order. To perceive the macrocosmic resemblance of Lucifer to the microcosmic nature of the human soul as it crosses the threshold between the elemental and the spiritual worlds is to perceive the profound tragedy of this being, Lucifer. One then begins to have a glimmering of the great cosmic mysteries which rest deep in the womb of existence, where not only one being struggles with another, but where ages struggle with other ages which evolve into beings, and confront one another in battle. Truly it may be said that here begins an outlook on the world wherein deep earnestness and dignity begin to pervade the soul. Here one senses something that can be called the breath of eternal Necessities, which are experienced in the Cosmic Midnight when lightnings flash across existence, and in their flashing light up something like the form of Lucifer, but which die in the act of cognition and, dying, form into tokens of destiny so that they work on in the soul of man, in the form of an inner tragical karma.

In my [Soul Captain Chronicles](#), a work in progress, I am escorted to times in my past by my Soul Captain and allowed to watch scenes from my life. He points, in effect, to my life, and says, "This is what you have been." Each of us becomes such a spectator in our time between death and a new birth when we live into the spiritual worlds.

[page 79, 80] The human soul itself, as it grows into life in the spiritual worlds, has a moment where it is a mere "has-been" and confronts nothingness; it is a single point in the universe, experiencing itself only as a point. But then this point becomes a spectator and begins to observe something else. Our human soul, become microscopic, has at first no content —: just as a single dot has none, but now it finds itself belonging as a third entity to two others. The first to make its appearance is what lives in our memory. This is like an external world which we look back on, saying, "This is what thou hast been." At first, without really knowing it, we ourselves stand there next to this past existence that we have brought across the threshold into the spiritual world, providing it with a life as thought-being. If then we have a feeling of utter calmness in our soul, whatever we have brought there as our past begins a spirit conversation with the living thought-beings around it. We can observe —: like an objective spectator, standing nearby, though at the same time a mere dot —: the other two beginning their conversation. Whatever we have brought with us in the way of thought content unfolds a spirit conversation in cosmic language with a spiritual, living thought-being of that realm; there we listen to what our own past discusses with the living spiritual being. At first we are like nothing at all, but then, even as a nothing, we are born through listening to our own past converse with the spiritual beings of the spirit realm. Listening begins to fill us with new inward contents. We learn now to recognize ourselves when we are like a single point and feel ourselves as such, listening to the conversation of our own past with a living spiritual being. And the more we take in of this spirit conversation between our own past and the future, the more we actually *become* we ourselves become a spirit being.

Thus Steiner leads us to a possibility for understanding the true nature of our being, as a human being composed of physical, etheric, astral, and Ego bodies in which we constantly live in various states of awareness during our existence. Considering the tools which Steiner has for communicating with us, namely, words, these lectures comprise a masterwork of insight and exposition.

[page 80] This is what I wanted to describe to you in words —: words, which seeing that they are necessarily borrowed from a language that belongs to the physical plane, must ever remain one-sided. But I have endeavored as far as I can, to describe in the words of a language belonging to the physical plane, these sublime and deep relationships. For these relationships alone are capable of making us aware of our true being, when we, as has been said, learn from the two others, by listening in the spiritual world. By means of these lectures may we be led into the true being of man.

Our conversations in the spiritual world are with various beings who are really parts of us generated during our past. Three prominent parts of us are beings which represent our thinking, feeling, and willing in the physical world. Steiner gives these beings the names, Philia (thinking), Astrid (feeling), and Luna (willing) in his Mystery Plays. This triad consists of independent living thought-beings, and we do best to have a strong consciousness that we are each a unity of these three beings when we meet them.

In addition there is a meeting with our "double" which occurs when we enter the elementary world and are able to do something we cannot do in the physical world, we can see ourselves as a separate being apart from us. While this happens in the elementary world, in certain special circumstances, it may happen to someone in the physical world as it does to Steiner's "intriguer" in the next passage.

[page 84] This encounter with the double is in the nature of an elemental phenomenon. It can happen as a result of subconscious soul impressions and impulses even to a person who is not clairvoyant. The following can occur: Somebody or other may be an *intriguer* and thereby have done harm to other people. He may have gone out and set another intrigue in motion. On returning home, he may enter his study, where papers are lying on his desk, papers that may contain things he made use of in his intrigues. Now what may happen, despite the cynical cast of his ordinary consciousness, is that his subconscious may be seized by these impulses to make intrigues. He comes in, looks at his desk —: and what does he see? He sees himself sitting there! It's an uncomfortable encounter, to enter one's own room and see oneself sitting at the desk. But such things belong to the realm of the possible; they happen often and most easily to those given to intrigue. What one encounters is indeed the double.

From whence does our double arise? From our unredeemed karma. What is unredeemed karma? Consider it like the liability side of a balance sheet for a business. At some point these liabilities must be paid off, resolved, or redeemed. Once paid off, the debt is considered resolved or dissolved. All these adjectives are ways of talking about the debts we owe to others, many of which were incurred in previous lifetimes. These unpaid debts form into beings outside of us and confront us as they do Johannes Thomasius in the Mystery Plays.

[page 86] If we consider human karma, the lawful order of human destiny, we must say that there is a great deal of fulfilled karma in the human soul but also much that is unredeemed. We have gone through a great deal in a former earth life that requires harmonizing; for the moment it may be lying unredeemed in the depths of the soul. Every soul has unredeemed karma of this kind. Johannes Thomasius has to become conscious of an especially large amount of unpaid karma, when his inner being separates into his ordinary and his other self.

In my review of [Running from Safety](#), I write:

In this adventure of his spirit, Richard Bach proves himself to be an umbrologist —: which, as he defines it on page ninety-five, is "A physician who treats disorders of the shadow." He then goes on to wrestle with his shadow, Dickie, who appears to him as a nine-year old boy —: not just any nine-year old boy, but his own self at nine years old —: come into the present to allow Richard to keep a promise he made to Dickie in 1944.

His book details how Bach's unpaid karmic debt returns as an actual person to confront him some fifty years later in the form of Dickie. Thomasius in Steiner's Mystery Plays undergoes a similar confrontation with his unpaid karma.

[page 87] Unresolved karma of this kind and the looking back at one's younger self as though at someone else are both inwardly experienced. Lucifer finds entry here; he can take away a substantial part of the etheric body and, as it were, ensoul it with the unresolved karma. It becomes a shadow-being under Lucifer's influence, a being like that portrayed in the Spirit of Johannes's Youth. A shadow-being of this kind is an actual being. It is there, separate from Johannes Thomasius, but involved in gruesome concerns, running as it does counter to the world order. This shadow-being outside Johannes Thomasius ought really to be within him; the fact that it is *not* has caused what we feel to be the tragic fate of this being, which lives outside as a part of his etheric body in the elemental and spiritual worlds.

Further from my [review](#) of Bach's book:

When Richard calls for Dickie to come he is greeted by a vituperative fury of words fueled by fifty years of isolation in a small cell. Dickie makes it clear he would like to torch Richard with a flame thrower, not talk to him. But talk he does, and an adventure and dialogue of a fifty-nine year old and his nine-year old self begins.

Compare that to what Steiner calls "agitating experiences" in the next passage. I offer these comparisons to bring a strong dose of reality to what might otherwise seem to be airy, fairy nonsense to some. No doubt, these are real experiences to real people like Richard Bach.

[page 89] It is one of the most agitating experiences the clairvoyant can have to find that parts of one's karma which have not yet been balanced, have, through Lucifer, been made independent as phantoms in the spiritual world. We can find many such shadow-beings, which we ourselves, prompted by Lucifer, have placed in the spiritual world through our unresolved karma. These experiences with shadow-beings correspond to the point our soul development has reached.

In the spiritual world we will each come someday to the abyss of existence where we are called to extinguish all memories of ourselves. This happens every night after we fall asleep, but we are unconscious of it, so we have no experience to prepare for what in the spiritual world must be a conscious decision.

[page 91] A person only stands really before the abyss of existence when he makes the decision in true free inner willing, through an energetic act of will, to extinguish, to forget himself.

As Sir Walter Scott famously said, "Oh what a tangled web we weave, When first we practice to deceive!" Lucifer and Ahrimanic are weaving a tangled web in our time, with Lucifer taking the warp and Ahriman the woof, but instead of a civilized cloth, we find knotted tatters with which to dress and address our human needs. No wonder our many messes are so difficult to unravel —: they have been knotted outside of our consciousness and will continue to be so because of our lack of awareness of the Luciferic and Ahrimanic sources of the problem, up until now.

[page 96] Lucifer and Ahriman now are in league together in a kind of partnership in the outer world. Before these forces reach the human soul, they are knotted together externally. In ancient times the skeins of influence from Ahriman and Lucifer were quite separate, but nowadays we have them tangled and knotted together within the development of our civilization. It is extremely difficult for a human being to unravel the entanglement and find a way out of it. Everywhere in our cultural happenings we find luciferic and ahrimanic threads interwoven in a higgledy-piggledy mixture, stirring up a great deal of violent political agitation and even playing into many of the abstract ideas and superficial proceedings in full swing now and in times to come; until we are clear about this, we will not be able to form a sound judgment of the conditions around us. We need to be watchful of the chaotic entanglement of luciferic and ahrimanic threads.

If we are not watchful, then our soul will literally faint when we encounter our weaknesses and when we encounter the Guardian of the Threshold to the spiritual world. Those moments of unconsciousness will provide a point of attack or entry for the Ahrimanic beings. If we have fortified our soul with the wisdom of spiritual science, we will simply find Lucifer and Ahriman balancing each other when we step across the Threshold. If not, we will be attempting

something for which we are unprepared, and, like a thief in the night robbing the goodies of sweet shop, we will be thrown out. And what we have stolen will be densified by Ahriman into the phantoms mentioned earlier.

[page 99] In short, he will be the victim of hallucinations and illusions; he will believe he has approached a spiritual world, because he has come as far as the Guardian of the Threshold. However, he has not passed the Guardian but has been thrown back because of his nibbling at the spiritual world. Everything he took in has condensed to what could contain genuine pictures of that world but does not contain the most important element, the one that will guarantee the soul a clear perception of the truth and the value of what he sees.

There is much, much more in these lectures than my short study of them can reveal. I mentioned a movie, "What Dreams May Come," and a book, "Running for Safety," which each, in their own way, reveals that the insights Steiner shares with us in these lectures are known by many because they surface in such works written and performed some ninety years after Steiner gave these lectures in German. There are many such spiritual fonts of inspiration about us in the world, which you, dear Reader, if you were to read these lectures, will find connections with in your own soul. How much is it worth to you to build up and fortify your soul for that time when you will face the edge of the abyss in which you will have to make a conscious decision to obliterate your entire past, the has-been of your self, and take a leap into nothingness? Will you be able to do that in full confidence, or will you be forced to steal away with some pilfered goods from the spiritual world and be thrown out into the night where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth as your stolen goods are formed by Ahriman into plump phantoms who will then tear at you? The decision is yours. Make it like the wise virgins did, who filled their lamps with oil and were prepared.

We are separated from Rudolf Steiner's physical presence by ninety years in time —: he resides now in another space, in the spiritual world, as I type these words, but his message and prayer for us transcends those reaches of time and space to fill our hearts and I would like to share them with you in closing:

[page 109] And now as my farewell greeting to your souls, for the period in which we again separate after having been together for a time in space, may I give you this time the following parting wish: May the Truth of the spiritual life be strengthened ever more and more in our own souls and reveal itself, in that when we are not together in space we are still together, together through the fact that in us there lives the genuine enthusiasm which can light up our souls from an open-hearted and loving experience of our truth, together with a genuine, honest feeling of responsibility for what is to us so sacred and so necessary for the world. If we feel thus we shall be always together in the Spirit. Whether guided by our karma we be together in space, or whether our karma scatters us spatially for a while to our various occupations in life, we are still certainly together if we are joined by our enthusiasm and our feeling of responsibility. If we are, then we may have all hope, trust and confidence in the future of our movement; for it will then enter into our civilization, into the spiritual development of humanity, even as it ought to do; it will so find a home in that we may perceive our Anthroposophy as a whisper out of the spiritual world, bringing warmth into our hearts. What ought to happen will happen; and it must happen. Let us endeavor through this spiritual community of our to become so capable ourselves that, so far as in us lies, what ought to happen, what must happen, shall happen through us.

~^~

----- *Footnote* -----

Footnote 1.

In the Synopsis of Contents we are told that Lecture 1, in Munich, 24 August, 1913, contains the first reference in print to Eurythmy, the voice, gestures, and movement art form innovated by Rudolf Steiner.

[page 6] . . . already a great number of our friends have shown an interest in what we might call a new branch of our endeavors: expressive gestures, expressive movements carried out in the loftiest

spirit, and which has always been called the art of dancing. A number of our friends have had opportunity, and will have still more, of making themselves acquainted with that which here appears as Eurythmy. At one of our social gatherings we shall have the opportunity of bringing before our friends something of this branch of our activity.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

~~~~~  
**Footnote 2.** From page 28: *"There is no essential evil. Everything evil arises from this, something that is good in one direction is put to use in the world in another direction and thereby turned into evil."*

[Return to text directly before Footnote 2.](#)

~~~~~  
Footnote 3. This poem from "Flowers of Shanidar", written by Bobby Matherne on July 10, 1990. Inspired by the thought that written words on a page are like footprints of ideas left on the sands of time and are therefore immortal tracks.

Immortal Tracts

Tracks on the beach
are temporary tracks
Washed away by
the evening tide.

Tracks on bathroom tile
are ephemeral tracks
They disappear
when they are dried.

Tracts on a paper pad
are immortal tracks
Of ideas
walking inside.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 3.](#)

~~~~~  
**To Obtain your own Copy of this Reviewed Book, Click on SteinerBooks Logo below.**



