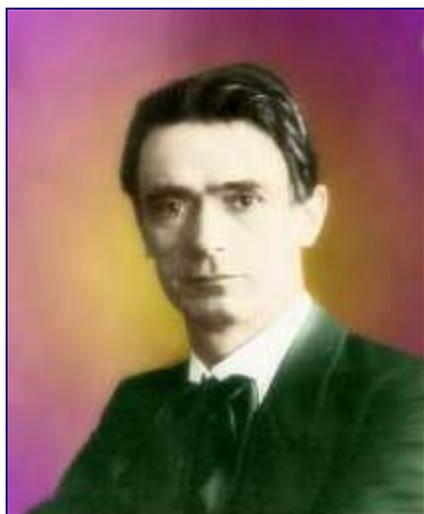


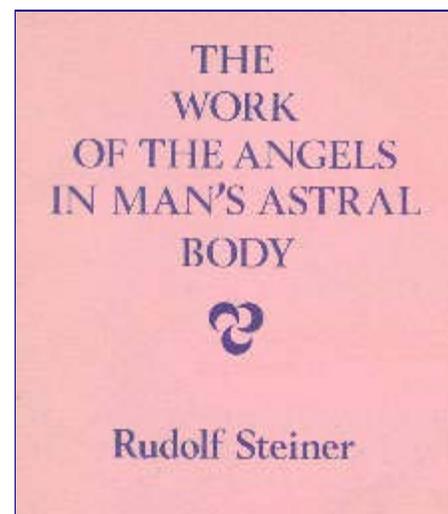
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*A READER'S JOURNAL*  
**The Work of the Angels in Man's  
Astral Body, GA# 182**  
by  
**Rudolf Steiner**  
**A Lecture in Zurich, 9 October 1918**

Translated by D. S. Osmond with  
Owen Barfield  
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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne  
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What can one say about a book that is only 26 pages long in a compact 5X7 booklet form? It contains one lecture by Rudolf Steiner about the work of the Angels on the astral body of the human being, but he packs a lot of information in that one lecture. And, unknown to most people, there are two versions of this lecture that have spawned from one translation. Let's look at two passages to discern the difference as it first begins to appear, in an innocuous way. This is the passage from the book whose cover appears in the upper right corner of this review :

**[page 5] In the sense of Spiritual Science, the members of man's being, beginning from above downwards, are: 'I', astral body, etheric body — which latterly I have also called the body of formative forces — and physical body. The 'I' is the only one of these members in which we live and function as beings of spirit-and-soul. The 'I' 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 'I'. And unless the 'I', 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 'I' 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.**

Below is the text of this same passage as it appears in its [elib incarnation](#).

**[from the elib version] 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.**

Note how the *only* difference is that the name for our immortal spirit, our <'I'> as it is translated in the book, has been replaced by an alternate name for the same thing, <Ego>. (I use <brackets> to avoid confusion of single and double quotes.) In the word <Ego>, the capital "E" indicates that we are *not* talking about the little ego, i.e., the normal process of *human egoism*, which can act in direction opposition to the forces of the <Ego> or <'I'>. This distinction is made clear by usage in many areas of translations of Steiner's writing. I can think of no exception to this usage, but with the plethora of translations available, I have no doubt that one could find many variations in usage. So far as I know, whatever the usage, the Ego or 'I' is *never* confused with the little ego or forces of human egoism, up until now. The one place where that happens is later in this lecture's transcription [page 21 below], when the usage is apparently purposefully changed from 'I' to "human egoism" by a surreptitious emendation of the elib version of the transcription.

After talking about the "baleful doings in the sphere of the purely mechanistic forces of the world" Rudolf Steiner says that "the whole of technical science will sail into desolate waters."

**[page 21] But the human 'I' will find these desolate waters of tremendous use and benefit.**

And the elib version with its emendation:

**[elib emendation] But human egoism will find these desolate waters of tremendous use and benefit.**

This is rather puzzling from several aspects. One, it violates the otherwise inviolable pattern of replacing the <'I'> with <Ego>. Two, the usage of "But" indicates a contrary state of affairs to what went before — and only in the book version on page 21 is such a contrary state of affairs meaningful. Three, what is a benefit to human egoism is dramatically different from what is a benefit to the immortal human 'I'. In the former we're talking something that makes one feel good in the short term in this life on Earth; in the latter, something that provides a long-term benefit for one's immortal spirit or 'I' during its long testing period during all of Earth evolution.

The reason that I think Steiner meant the passage to be translated as on page 21 has to do with a passage from [\*Stages of Higher Knowledge\*](#) below. If Christ can see in the rotting teeth of a dog its beautiful teeth, cannot be Steiner directing us to see in the "desolate waters" of our times something of "tremendous use and benefit" to our immortal spirit, our 'I'?

**[page 17, 18] Another important quality is the "yea saying" sense. This can be developed in one who in all things has an eye for the good, beautiful, and purposeful aspects of life, and not, primarily, for the blameworthy, ugly and contradictory. In Persian poetry there is a beautiful legend about Christ, which illustrates the meaning of this quality. A dead dog is lying on the road. Among the passersby is Christ. All the others turn away from the ugly sight; only Christ pauses and speaks admiringly of the animal's beautiful teeth. It is possible to look at things in this way, and he who earnestly seeks for it may find in all things, even the most repulsive, something worthy of acknowledgment. The fruitfulness in things is not in what is lacking in them, but in what they have. — Further, it is important to develop the quality of "impartiality." Every human being has gone through his own experiences and has formed from them a fixed set of opinions according to which he directs his life. Just as conformity to experience is of course necessary, on the one hand, it is also important that he who would pass through spiritual development to higher knowledge should always keep an eye open for everything new and unfamiliar that confronts him. He will be as cautious as possible with judgments such as, "That is**

**impossible," "That cannot be." Whatever opinion he may have formed from previous experiences, he will be ready at any moment, when he encounters something new, to admit a new opinion. All love of one's own opinion must vanish.**

One can only wonder about whether the surreptitious emendation of the Osmond/Barfield translation was done by someone whose own opinion unwarrantedly superseded the requirements of translation. Clearly, the Osmond/Barfield translation was lifted in its entirety except for the changes noted above, all of which served to invert the meaning of one key statement by Steiner. Textual criticism is definitely not my forte, but this issue bears directly on the semantic content, not on any translation issues.

One of the wonderful tools that Korzybski's Science of General Semantics gave to the world was the Time Index. It is a tool for helping us to remember that Person<sub>time1</sub> is not the same as Person<sub>time2</sub> — in other words, one person at two different times is not the same person — something has changed. Shouldn't one expect that of humanity in general as well — that humanity will change over time? If humans react different at different times due to changes in their state of development at 10, 20, 40, 60, 80, then it seems clear that humanity as a whole acts differently at different stages of its development. That is called the "evolution of humankind." And yet so few scientists recognize this fact of human existence. Steiner minces no words about the seriousness of this lacuna in the minds of scientists.

**[page 4] One of the greatest defects, one of the principal sources of aberration and confusion in our time, is the 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 generalizations, that there is no need to regard humanity as being involved in a continuous process of evolution.**

In carrying out their work, Steiner tells us, Angels have as their aim "to engender in the astral bodies of men such pictures as will bring about definite conditions in the social life of the future.

**[page 9] 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.**

The second impulse of the Angels to engender in all a view of the hidden divinity in their fellow humans. To do this is to hurl forever into the dustbin of history the view of the human being as a higher ape.

**[page 10] Neither in theory nor in practice shall we look only at a man's physical qualities, regarding him as a more highly developed animal; we must confront every human being with the full realization that in him something is revealing itself from the divine foundations of the world, revealing itself through flesh and blood.**

The time for prophets is already past, Steiner has told us in other places. Here he tells us that soon the time for religions will be past. I once had a boss who claimed that his job was to work himself out of a job. Rightly understood, religions will soon be facing the imminent reality of becoming obsolete and unnecessary. We will each come to realize that every "human being is made in the likeness of the Godhead."

**[page 10] When that time comes there will be no need for any religious coercion; for then every meeting between one man and another will be of itself in the nature of a religious rite, a sacrament, and nobody will need a special church with institutions of 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 life becomes the expression of the supersensible.**

In this next passage, he concisely sums up these three goals of the Angels as they work on our astral bodies:

**[page 11] 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.**

It is in this lecture that I encountered what is likely the source for a quote by Tom Mellett that allowed me to first understand the essential natures of Lucifer and Ahriman. He said that Lucifer wishes for us to become *moral automatons* and Ahriman wishes for us to become *free, amoral human beings*. Anyone who does not understand the goals of Lucifer and Ahriman would do well to ponder these statements. Many have trouble reconciling themselves to the idea that Ahriman wishes us to be *free* albeit amoral human beings. In listening to their arguments against this usage of the word *free* I get the sense that they feel an aversion to allowing that Ahriman would want freedom for anyone. I suspect that behind that feeling of abhorrence lies someone who has been hoodwinked by Lucifer into becoming a moral automaton. Thus, they feel that following certain rules, certain likes and dislikes, assures them of being free, while in truth the opposite is the case — their spirituality is an automatic response. There is, on the other side of coin, no one who experiences more freedom than someone who can blithely say that religion is hogwash, a product of weak minds, and the "opiate of the masses" as atheists after Marx like to call it. With their freedom comes an unsavory lack of morality for which adherents of Karl Marx's philosophy have become known since he penned the phrase.

Where does one find these moral automatons? In fundamentalist churches, Television evangelists, and adherents to many other cults and societies who claim to raise us to spiritual heights if only we would follow their lead. It was this disdain for moral automatons that led Groucho Marx to return his invitation to become a member of the prestigious Friar's Club in Los Angeles with this note appended, "I would *not* join a Club that would have *me* as a member."

Steiner characterizes the Luciferic beings in a way that allows us to recognize when a religion, society, or cult is furthering a Luciferic purpose:

**[page 15] 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.**

While Lucifer would make us into spiritual puppets, Ahriman would extirpate in us the consciousness of our own spirituality. This was not possible during earlier epochs for the very good reason that early humans had direct visions of the spiritual world which would have put the lie to any suggestion that the spiritual world existed, whomever it might come from. Only now, during our Consciousness Soul (also called Spiritual Soul) Age, is it possible for humans, who have greatly increased thought powers combined with greatly decreased clairvoyance, to accept Ahrimanic teachings that obfuscate the divine origins of humankind. (Summarized from pages 16, 17.)

**[page 18] Here lies the 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.**

During the 1970s, thirty years before the third millennium, there was a spiritual revival of sorts with rock operas like *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* and the outwardly religious Yippies or Jesus Freaks replacing the amoral hippies of the 1960s. This wave of religious fervor was likely due to the actions of the Angels working in humans' astral bodies during that time. These influential rock operas undoubtedly came to the authors from Angels working their astral bodies while they were awake.

One must recall that, during sleep humans have only etheric and physical bodies present, the astral and 'I' bodies have gone. Thus it is clear that Angels who work in a human's astral body can only do so while the

human being is awake. Working in the human astral body in consciousness is an essential aspect of the Angels work for a very good reason — there will be what Steiner calls *baleful* effects if the Angels are only able to work in the bodies of sleeping humans because they will only be able to operate only upon the human etheric and physical bodies. *Baleful* means "full of evil" or "pernicious". Evil, according to Steiner, is "a good out of its time." Some thing or some process that has come to human beings too early or too late — usually of the too soon variety, such as the knowledge of good and evil that Lucifer brought to humankind before it was ready for it. But here, on pages 18 through 20, Steiner tells of a case where in this Consciousness Soul age where humans are lagging behind in a way that has baleful results. Specifically this applies to humans who blithely ignore or otherwise obstruct the work of the Angels on their astral bodies while awake. As a consequence, the Angels have to do their work while those humans are unconscious or asleep, at which time their astral body is gone, and the Angels can only work upon the etheric and physical bodies of the sleeping humans. Steiner tells us that the Angels have to work on the sleeping human because, ". . .if he were there in the waking state, he would obstruct it." By receiving the Angels' work while asleep, the work becomes instinct and unconscious and therefore is evil or *baleful*. Why is it evil? Steiner says "evil is a good out of its time." While in earlier times it would have been acceptable, in the Consciousness Soul age, it is necessary for the reception of the Angels' work that humans be conscious of it. How evil are these consequences that Steiner predicts for humanity?

**[page 19] 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.**

As you attempt to understand the above passage, keep in mind that Steiner cautions us about jumping to easy conclusions about what spiritual science teachings say. But materialistic science has no qualms about jumping to conclusions about such instincts.

**[page 20] And what do you suppose the scientific experts will say when such instincts come into evidence? They will say it is a natural and inevitable development in the evolution of humanity. . . . 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.**

If you doubt the veracity of his last sentence in the above passage, consider the helplessness of natural scientists in 1917 to predict the events which Steiner foretold over eighty years ago which have since come to pass. Helpless to predict them, helpless to offer a prescription to humanity to avoid them, and mostly helpless to do anything about the problems when they appear — that, rightly understood, is the legacy of materialistic or so-called "natural science" — in reality, an "un-natural science" because it deals only with material things in blithe ignorance of their spiritual underpinnings; an unnatural science which, in fact, professes with pride and disdain its ignorance of the spiritual world. And no where do we find this hubris more overweening than in the present day practice of medicine which has resulted in a population that is seemingly unable to live without a drug cabinet full of prescription drugs for allergies, aches and pains, hormones, depression, neurasthenia, bipolar disorder, Alzheimer's, etc. — the list is virtually endless. The costs are astronomical, and because of the indications or symptoms produced by one drug the patient often ends up with another drug being prescribed to overcome the symptoms produced by the first drug. Steiner saw all this coming almost a century ago.

**[page 20, 21] Everything connected with medicine will make a great advance in 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.**

Along with the knowledge of how to cure diseases such as smallpox, anthrax, and similar diseases will come the evil technology to be able to create sicknesses on a large scale as weapons of war.

**[page 21] For man will come to know, through certain instincts, what kinds of *illnesses* can be induced by particular substances and treatments. And it will then be possible for him to either bring about or not to bring about illnesses, entirely as suits his egotistical purposes.**

This leads us into the paragraph with whose last sentence I began this review. In this passage one can ken a prediction of atomic and hydrogen bombs and laser-powered weapons.

**[page 21] Men 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. In this way, instinctively he will come to realize 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 the human 'I' will find these desolate waters of tremendous use and benefit.**

By sleeping through this stage of development, humans on Earth would discover only too late the deleterious effects that accompany it. One need only recall recent headlines to bring to mind specific instances of the areas that Steiner predicted back in 1918.

**[page 22] 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.**

The process of paradigm change and our expanded understanding of the word "paradigm" itself came to us in 1962 in Thomas Kuhn's masterwork, [The Structure of Scientific Revolutions](#). He took a word that meant simply a model and used it to describe how the general scheme of science that allows it to work effectively in the current paradigm prevents scientists for a long time from being able to discern when a new paradigm is necessary. In effect, the ghost of the old paradigm keeps walking while data showing the need for a new paradigm is appearing in scientific notebooks and being discounted as "anomalies." This happened in the phlogiston/oxygen case, in the Newton/Einstein case, and many other cases. Scientists who discounted the anomalies in the phlogiston theory urged that "nothing happened" — that the phlogiston theory be kept for the explanatory basis of what happens during combustion. In my review of [Language Structure and Change](#) by Jay S. Efran, Michael D. and Robert J. Lukens, I point out how, while the authors talk of the benefit of a new paradigm, they actually use the old paradigm or way of understanding the world in their discussion. This is a process that is universal in humans as we evolve: we are always talking of the new in terms of the old. It is as if the old were a ghost walking among the new.

Here is Steiner talking about this same process, forty years before Kuhn's book, and he points out that we must come to learn the new paradigm and ignore those who would keep the ghosts of the old walking among us, and we must do this now if humanity is to rise out of chaos.

**[page 24] Today, one who 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 rise 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.**

What we need today in our Consciousness Soul age is to directly perceive when the Angels are working in our astral body. Clues to what is happening in our astral body will not be found on television or in impassioned speeches made in public forums. Clues will be found only in our individual lives by close attention to those things that are happening to us, attention to those "miracles" in our everyday lives that we have ignored at our peril, up until now.

Some twenty-five years ago, I came up with two questions that I would ask when something unusual happened in my life. Let us refer to an event as X and ask the two questions:

**1.) What is it that I did as a result of X that I would not have done under any other circumstance?**

**2.) What is that I did *not* do as a result of X that I would likely have done if it were not for X?**

I remember a young man in a group that I ran who worked as a head-hunter, a job recruiter, who spent his work day on the phone talking constantly to other people. One weekend he explained that he had been sick and laid up in bed for a week. I explained the two questions to him and we explored his answers to the two. To the first question, he said he stayed in bed all day instead of going to work. To the second question, he said he would have gone to work. Neither question seemed to offer any insights until we examined carefully what he did during his time at home. He recalled that a friend came to visit him, and they had a long talk as his friend sat next to his bed. His tonality as he described this visit led me to think that long heart-to-heart talk would not have happened but for his being sick, so I asked him if that was so, and he definitely agreed and said that it was a very valuable conversation to him. That episode of being sick allowed him, gave him permission, to spend time just talking to a friend and fill a gap in his busy life that was begging to be filled.

There were many other examples, but soon I became to understand that the two questions were about permission and protection.

**1.) What did I get permission to do as a result of X?**

**2.) What was I protected from doing as a result of X?**

In this next passage Steiner is directing our attention to those everyday events that can change our life for the better or keep it from changing for the worse. These are what he calls "miracles." This is a way in which we can unveil the work that Angels are doing in our life.

**[page 25] 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. The last sentence can be turned around, and we can also say: if on some day we find no miracle in our life, then we have merely overlooked it. One evening try to survey your life and you will find some event of slight or great and middling importance in it of which you will be able to say: it came into my life and took effect in a truly remarkable way. You can only realize this provided 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?**

It is easy to see that this is the protection type of question. Both types of question may provide fruitful understandings of how the Angels are working in our life. But one must develop the discipline to ponder these events as they occur or soon afterward. Keeping one's environment filled with distracting things such as my friend did in the story above is not conducive to understanding these things. It is known that people usually get colds when they have a lot of things going on in their life at the time. Doesn't the presence of the cold give them permission to drop some of the more onerous tasks they would have otherwise done? Quiet time for meditating on the events in one's life, perhaps in the shower, or while sitting in meditation, or in bed at night looking back over the events of the day — all of these are ways that we can begin to notice how the Angels are working in our astral body while we are conscious. If we do this, we may discover that even these “desolate waters” in which we find ourselves will be of “tremendous use and benefit” to our immortal spirit, our ‘I’.

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