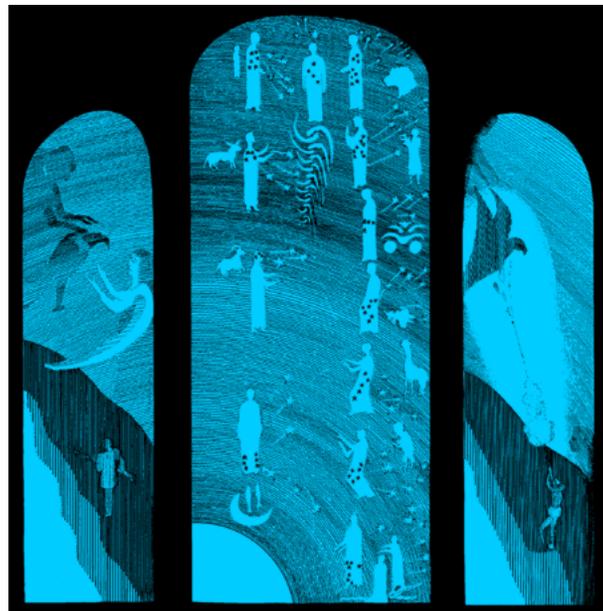


Astral world

In the **astral world** (also called **astral plane**, **world-astral-ity**, **soul world**, **astral light** or **imaginative world**; the lower regions of the astral world, which overlap with the etheric world, are also called the elementary world), desire and suffering, affection and hatred, urges and desires are just as really present as the outer material objects are in the physical world. One can rightly speak of an independent **soul-substance**, **soul-materiality** or **astral matter** - only the terms "matter" or "substance" must not be misunderstood in the physical-material sense. The world of the soul necessarily remains hidden from the physical senses; it only opens up to the imaginative gaze of the soul. Sympathy and antipathy are the two poles between which the soul forces dynamically unfold. The totality of the soul world with all the soul-spiritual beings living in it forms the **world soul**.

Sometimes the astral world is also characterised as an **astral sea**, because in the spiritual experience it actually presents itself like a waving sea of soul impressions. Clear spiritual knowledge can only be gained if one is able to completely calm the waving feelings in one's soul. Only if one can establish this **stillness of the sea** in one's soul, will heaven, i.e. the spiritual world, be reflected in one's soul unclouded.



The blue south window of the first Goetheanum, showing the initiation into the cosmic astral world.

Contents

- 1 What is the astral world?
- 2 Characteristic properties of the astral world
- 3 Astral world and sense qualities
- 4 Astral world and astral body
- 5 The 7 Regions of the Astral World
- 6 The perception of the astral world
- 7 The perception of the physical, astral and devachanic world
- 8 Exercise for Experiencing the Astral Light
- 9 The good and the evil astral world
- 10 The World of the Holy Spirit
- 11 Literature

What is the astral world?

„We can say quite precisely what the astral element is in man. It is that which causes all human beings who have such an element in them to let something happen in them which we call pleasure and displeasure in the broadest sense. Pleasure and displeasure is something that occurs in our body and in the bodies that are similar to us in an astral relation, and which cannot be brought about by chemical and physical substances. Take a crystal or any

other physical substance composed of chemical substances. Everything can happen to it that otherwise happens in the physical, but not desire and displeasure. This is only to be found in man himself and in those beings which are organised like man. These beings are interspersed with an element which can feel pleasure and displeasure. If you strike a stone, it will fly on or strike somewhere and make an impression. If you impress such a natural object in this or any other way, you can see it from the outside; you can even subject it to a process that destroys it, but it will never feel pleasure or displeasure. Pleasure and displeasure reach as far as the astral world reaches. And just as I belong to the outer world through the processes of a chemical and physical nature that take place within me, so I really and really have all the different nuances of pleasure and displeasure within me, and through these different nuances and appearances of pleasure and displeasure I belong to a world that permeates and sails through our corporeal world and that is just as much outside me as within me. In space there is not only air that sustains the bodily physical life, but space is also interspersed with an astral world in which we human beings participate just as we participate in the outer physical world. And just as we could not live as physical beings without letting the physical force flow through our organism, so we could not live as pleasure and displeasure beings, as astral beings, without participating in what goes on in the astral world, what lives and weaves in it, and what continually pervades and inspires us. Just as we are separated from the physical world by our skin and thus individualised, so we are also closed off in the general astral world. We are individualised within it as single astral entities and participate in this astral world around us.“ (Lit.:GA 88, p. 24f)

Characteristic properties of the astral world

On the astral plane the chemical ether (sound ether) has its true life:

„The sixth is the astral plane. The chemical ether lives on it. When one is somnambulic, one perceives on the astral plane the properties of the chemicals, the chemical properties, because on the astral plane the chemical ether really has its life.“ (Lit.:GA 93a, p. 46)

Substantially, the astral world is woven from the same soul forces that are at work in our feelings, emotions and sensations and especially in the sensory qualities we experience. But during our life on earth we do not experience these astral forces directly as they are, but only as a dimmed reflection. To the imaginative vision, the astral world therefore often appears like a mirror image of the experiences in the physical world. The number 563, for example, would have to be read as 365 in the astral world. A feeling of hatred that we emit appears to us there as if it came to us from the person to whom we sent it. Our own unrestrained animal instincts show themselves in the imagination as wild animals rushing at us. All colours appear in the astral world as complementary colours; the calm green of the plant world corresponds, for example, on the astral plane to the energetic purple colour (also called peach blossom by Goethe). What in the soul world lives out as glowing soul warmth appears to us here as a peculiar feeling of coldness, and so on.

„What appears on the astral plane is as a rule present there like a mirror image in comparison with the physical plan; for example, the number 563 is 365 there. A feeling of hatred also appears there as if it came from the person to whom it was sent. This fact is valid for all things on the astral plane. The soul, which shines from the astral plane onto the physical plan, can be perceived here with the opposite qualities. When psychic sensations penetrate from the astral plan, they penetrate here, for example, as a reflection of the astral plan, with a peculiar feeling of coldness, while they are warmth there. These are things that must be made quite clear. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that the beings of the astral plane have to matter what we call feeling. They express themselves in this feeling. If these entities are not yet very strongly present, we can only perceive them in this way, namely through a cold sensation. But if they become stronger, if their matter increases, they become visible as luminous beings. This explains that when materialisations become sufficiently dense during spiritualistic sessions, a luminous appearance occurs (mollusc cancer as an example). This is a natural process in such a

thing. Anyone who looks at something like this without this knowledge is talking about miracles. A miracle is nothing other than the intervention of a higher world in ours. It is simply a natural process. It is like that when other entities of higher plan intervene in human life.“ (Lit.:GA 93a, p. 145)

Just as everything in the astral world reverses itself into its mirror image, so here also time runs backwards:

„Another phenomenon is that time and events go backwards. For example, in the physical we first see the hen and then the egg. Conversely, in the astral we first see the egg and then the hen that laid the egg. In the astral, time moves back; first you see the effect and then the cause. Hence the prophetic spirit; no one could foresee future events without this moving backwards of time events.

It is not worthless to learn these peculiarities of the astral world. Many myths and legends of all peoples have dealt with it with wonderful wisdom, for example, the legend of Hercules at the Crossroads. It is said that he once felt himself posed before two female figures, one beautiful and enticing; she promised him lust, happiness and bliss, the second simple and serious, speaking of toil, hard work and renunciation. The two figures are vice and virtue. This legend tells us correctly how Hercules' own two natures appear before him in the astral, the one that urges him to evil, the other nature that urges him to good. And these appear in the mirror image as two female figures with opposite qualities: vice beautiful, luxuriant, captivating, virtue ugly and repulsive. Each image appears reversed in the astral.“ (Lit.:GA 95, p. 22)

Astral world and sense qualities

The sense qualities, through which the outer physical world is brought to our conscious soul experience, are, according to their true nature, also at home in the astral world. Here they form a stream of flooded irritability of colours, forms, sounds, smells and tastes, etc., detached from all objectivity. These sensory qualities are only accessible to animate beings. Purely physical apparatuses experience the physical effects of light or sound, but they do not experience colours or sounds. Our sensory perception is based on the fact that the purely mental sense qualities are reflected back to us through the physical world or through our physical sense organs into the mental experience (cf. -> colour perception process). The physical world or our senses serve us, as it were, as mirroring apparatuses which first bring colours, sounds, smells etc. to our consciousness. However, the true spiritual nature of the sensory qualities is thereby shadowed and distorted. Their actual unadulterated reality only opens up to the imaginative gaze. In fact, it is precisely these freely flowing, purely psychic sense qualities that are, as it were, the "raw material" from which the imaginative psychic images are woven. The colours of the human aura, for example, which show themselves to the clairvoyant imaginative gaze, are also to be understood in this sense.

„The astral world is mainly composed of forms and colours. Such there are also in the physical world; but we are accustomed to see the colours always connected with an object on the physical plane. In the astral world, this colour floats freely in the air like an image of flame. There is an appearance in the physical world that is reminiscent of these floating colours, that is the rainbow. But the astral colour images are free to move in space, they vibrate like a flood of colours, a sea of colours in ever-changing, diverse lines and forms.

Gradually, however, the pupil comes to recognise a certain similarity between the physical and astral worlds. At first this glow, this sea of colours, appears to him as masterless, so to speak, it does not adhere to objects. But then the flakes of colour come together and attach themselves, not to objects, but to entities. Whereas before

only a floating form was seen, now spiritual entities, called gods, devas, reveal themselves through these colours. Spiritual entities express themselves in them. A world of entities that speaks to us through colours is the astral world.“ (Lit.:GA 95, p. 24)

Astral world and astral body

The human astral body is woven from the substances of the astral world. The human being thus envelops his spiritual core with partly very low astral forces, which, however, is inevitably necessary for the physical incarnation. Only through these forces, which are oriented towards the purely earthly, can we live at all as an earthly embodied human being. Without nourishment instinct, reproductive instinct etc. we could not exist on Earth. However, at the latest after death, when we are to ascend again into the spiritual realms of the world, we must cast off this libidinal attachment to earthly existence. The largest part of our astral body is thereby handed over to the astral world again and dissolves in it. This happens during the purification time of the human soul in the Kamaloka (in Christian terminology called purgatory). Which soul forces we let pass into the astral world, better or worse, depends essentially on our earthly way of life. At the same time, we create better or worse conditions for those human individualities who are just descending to a new earthly embodiment - for they must draw the soul forces from which they build up their drive and sensation bodies from this very astral world.

The 7 Regions of the Astral World

The soul world is manifold in itself and is divided, beginning with the lowest region, according to Rudolf Steiner, into the following areas (Lit.:GA 9, p. 68), which at the same time correspond to certain planetary spheres (Lit.:GA 141, p. 172ff):

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Region of soul life | Sun sphere |
| Region of active soul force | Venus sphere |
| Region of soul light | Mercury sphere |
| Region of liking and disliking | |
| Region of wishes | Moon sphere (Kamaloka) |
| Region of mobile sensitivity | |
| Region of burning desire | |

The lowest 3 regions of the astral world (burning desire, mobile sensitivity and region of wishes) overlap with the 3 uppermost regions of the physical-etheric world (light ether, sound ether and life ether) and it is here that the Kamaloka is to be found:

„If we start from the physical plan, we have here (it is drawn) seven sub-divisions of the physical plan; then would come seven sub-divisions of the astral plan. Of these, the three lowest coincide with the three highest of the physical plan. We must regard the astral plan as being pushed together with the physical plan in such a way that the three uppermost sections of the physical plan are at the same time the three lowermost sections of the astral plan. We can speak of a marginal zone, that is, the one which our souls cannot leave after death, when they are still bound to the earth by desires. It is called kamaloka.“ (Lit.:GA 101, p. 223)

The astral world is woven of such images, but these images are the expression of spiritual beings. After death, all human beings are themselves wrapped in such images, some of which are very colourful and rich in form. Thus, when a human being falls asleep, his astral body can be seen in flowing and changing forms and colours. All astral entities appear in colours. If a person can see astrally, he perceives these astral entities in a flood of colours.

Now this astral world has a peculiarity which seems strange to those who hear this for the first time: everything is present in the astral world as if in a mirror image, and therefore you as a pupil must first gradually get used to seeing correctly. For example, you see the number 365, which corresponds to the number 563. It is like that with everything you perceive in the astral world. Everything that emanates from myself, for example, that seems to come towards me. It is extremely important to take this into account. For when, for example, such astral images come about through states of illness, one must know what to make of them. In delirium such images occur very often, and such people can see all kinds of grimaces and image-forms coming towards them, because in such morbid states the astral world is open to the human being. These images, of course, look as if things were rushing towards the person, when in fact they are pouring out from him. Doctors must know this in the future, because such things will be more and more frequent in the future due to the suppressed religious longing. The motif for the well-known painting "The Temptation of St. Anthony", for example, is also based on such an astral image experience. If you think all this through to the last end, it will no longer seem droll to you that time also reverses itself in the astral world. The experiences of the dream already give you a hint of this. Remember the example of the dreamed duel just mentioned. Everything runs backwards here, and so does time. Thus, in the astral experience of the tree, one can first trace the fruit, then the blossom and back to the germ.

And so also after death - this is therefore the time of weaning - the whole life runs backwards through the astral world, and you live through your life again from backwards to forwards and conclude it with the first impressions of your childhood. But this happens much faster than here in the physical world and lasts about a third of your life on earth. You also experience many other things during this backward passage of life. Let us assume that you died at the age of eighty and are now living life back to the age of forty. For example, you once slapped someone in the face, which caused them pain at the time. Now, in the astral world, this sensation of pain also occurs, as it were, in a mirror image; that is, now you experience the pain that the other person experienced at that time through your slap. And the same is naturally the case with all joyful events. - And only then, when the human being has lived through his whole life, does he enter the heavenly world. Religious documents are always truths to be taken literally. If you bear in mind what has just been said, you will see without further ado that man can really only enter the spiritual world - and by the spiritual world is meant what is called in the Bible the "kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of the heavens" - when he has first lived through his whole life backwards to childhood. And this is in truth the basis of Christ's words: "If you do not become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. For then, when man has again arrived at the stage of his childhood in retrogression, he strips off the astral body and enters the spiritual world." (Lit.:GA 100, p. 48ff)

The perception of the physical, astral and devachanic world

„The physical plan is there as long as one sees, hears, touches, and when man develops inner abilities, then the astral beings become distinguishable to him between and within the physical. There, where such beings enter our consciousness, which cannot be perceived with physical organs, the astral plan begins. But when does the devachanic plan begin? Now there is the possibility of indicating boundaries between the astral and devachanic plan, although they blur into one another; there is certainly an outer and an inner possibility of recognising the ascent from the astral to the devachanic plan. The outer possibility is as follows: When man develops his clairvoyant consciousness, he must first have moments in life when he leaves the physical world in a certain respect. That is already a higher degree of human development when he sees, so to speak, simultaneously the physical

world and then in it, interspersing it, the astral world, thus seeing, for example, the physical of an animal and the astral body of an animal. But this can only be achieved with a certain degree of development, after one has gone through something else, namely, that one does not see the physical world when one sees the astral world.

This living of the human being at the beginning of his development in the astral world is shown by the fact that the following takes place. Man is in a certain place. He hears all kinds of things around him, sees the objects, feels them, tastes them. When man gradually becomes clairvoyant in the astral world, these sensual impressions first begin to recede further and further from him, so that the sound seems to be far, far away, and then disappears altogether. It is the same with the tactile perceptions: The human being will gradually perceive that which is otherwise palpated as not being immediate; he will penetrate the bodies with certain feelings, feel into them. Likewise the world of colour, the world of light; the human being spreads out, he lives into this world of light. Thus that which is the sensuous world withdraws from the human being, and in its place appear the phenomena as we have just discussed. The first thing that must be observed is that where the astral world is really entered by man, the perception of sound, the perception of hearing, the world of sound, the world of tones is, so to speak, completely extinguished. This is not present at all in the astral world for a time. Man has to go through this abyss, so to speak, of living in a soundless world. However, this world is distinguished by the fact that it contains manifold impressions, especially a differentiated world of images. As he rises higher in his development, he comes to know something that is quite new to him, namely, that which can be described as a spiritual counter-image to the world of sound. He first becomes acquainted with what is new in the astral world as spiritual hearing. Of course, this is difficult to describe.

Now suppose the following: You see a luminous figure. Another comes towards it; they approach and penetrate each other. A third comes, crosses the path and so on. Now, what presents itself to you, you do not merely look at with clairvoyant consciousness, but it gives you the most manifold feelings in your soul. Thus it can be that feelings of spiritual pleasure arise in you, then again displeasure, but the most differentiated feelings, when the beings penetrate each other, or when they approach or move away. And so the soul, becoming clairvoyant, settles in, so that the interaction on the astral plane gradually becomes suffused and interspersed with sublime or contradictory feelings of a purely spiritual kind. This is the spiritual music which is perceived. But at the moment when this occurs, one is already in the region of the devachan. Devachan begins externally, where the tonelessness begins to cease, which is partly a terrible tonelessness on the astral plane. For man has no idea what it means to live in an infinite tonelessness which not only offers no sound, but which also shows that it has none in itself. The feeling of deprivation in the physical world is a trifle compared to the feelings of the soul when this impossibility is felt that something can sound out of the infinitely expanding space. Then come the possibilities of perceiving the interaction of the beings, their harmony and disharmony, the world of sound begins. This is the Devachan, seen externally in the forms.“ (Lit.:GA 108, p. 26ff)

Exercise for Experiencing the Astral Light

„It is of great importance for the learner, for the one who is developing into a higher power of vision, into clairvoyance, if he does exercises such as the following: He imagines the room to be dark without any external light having an effect on him - be it in the darkness of the night or by closing his eyes - and then gradually seeks to penetrate by his own inner strength to the idea of light. If the human being can form this idea intensively enough, it will gradually become brighter, and he will then see a light that is not a physical light, but a light that he now creates for himself, that he generates within himself through inner strength. And that is a light that will be radiated by wisdom, in which the creating wisdom appears to him. That is what is called astral light. Through meditation, man comes to generate light through inner power. This light is a harbinger of what man will one day see - not with physical eyes, but with finer sense organs. It will become the dress for really existing spiritual be-

ings, such as the Elohim are. If man does this exercise in the right way, it is a means of coming into relationship with these higher beings. This is how those have done it who know something of the spiritual world from their own experience.“ (Lit.:GA 101, p. 149f)

The good and the evil astral world

The astral world is in a sense a double world. The upper astral world, the world of good, is situated above the physical plan. The lower astral world, the world of evil, on the other hand, is situated below the realm of the physical world.

„If we wish to describe the higher worlds in more detail than we have done before, we must realise that there is, after all, another difference between the astral world and the Devachanic world. Our astral world, as we live in it and as it permeates our physical space, is in a certain sense a double world, while the devachanic world is in a certain sense a single one. This is something we want to mention as a preparation today. There are, so to speak, two astral worlds, and the two differ in such a way that one is, so to speak, the astral world of good, the other the astral world of evil, whereas in the case of the Devachanic world it would still be incorrect to make this distinction in such a harsh way. So we must say, if we look at the worlds from top to bottom: first the higher devachan, then the lower devachanic world, then the astral world, and then the physical world. Then we do not yet consider the totality of our worlds, but we have to consider even lower worlds than the physical. There is still a lower astral world lying beneath our physical world. That which is the good lies above the physical plan, that which is the evil lies below it, and this too practically penetrates the physical world. Now the most diverse currents pass over to the beings of the astral world. Here we must distinguish that currents of good and bad qualities go out from human beings to the astral entities. Those that are good currents also go to a good entity, and the bad currents go to a corresponding bad entity of the astral world. And if we take the sum of all the good and bad beings of the astral world, we have in a certain way two astral worlds. If we look at the Devachanic world, we will see that this is not the case with it to the same extent. So there are two worlds in the astral world which interpenetrate each other and which have a relationship to man in the same way. These two worlds are to be distinguished from each other above all things in regard to their mode of origin.“ (Lit.:GA 107, p. 23f)

The World of the Holy Spirit

In Christian esotericism the astral plan is also called the world of the Holy Spirit (Lit.:GA 100, p. 205). In the Jewish Kabbalah it is called Briah or *Briyah* (Hebrew: עולם בריאה *Olam Briyah*, "the world of creation") and it comprises the second triad of the Sephiroth, namely Chesed (freedom), Geburah (strength) and Tifereth (beauty). The descriptions in the first chapter of Genesis refer primarily to this world.

Literature

- Rudolf Steiner: *Theosophie. Einführung in die übersinnliche Welterkenntnis und Menschenbestimmung*, GA 9 (1904), Kapitel *Die Seelenwelt* English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)
- Rudolf Steiner: *Über die astrale Welt und das Devachan*, GA 88 (1999), ISBN 3-7274-0880-4 English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)
- Rudolf Steiner: *Grundelemente der Esoterik*, GA 93a (1987) English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)
- Rudolf Steiner: *Vor dem Tore der Theosophie*, GA 95 (1978), Zweiter Vortrag, Stuttgart, 23. August 1906 English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)

- Rudolf Steiner: *Menschheits-Entwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis*, GA 100 (1981), Vierter Vortrag, Kassel, 19. Juni 1907 English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)
- Rudolf Steiner: *Mythen und Sagen. Okkulte Zeichen und Symbole*, GA 101 (1992), ISBN 3-7274-1010-8 English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)
- Rudolf Steiner: *Geisteswissenschaftliche Menschenkunde*, GA 107 (1988), ISBN 3-7274-1070-1 English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)
- Rudolf Steiner: *Die Beantwortung von Welt- und Lebensfragen durch Anthroposophie*, GA 108 (1986), ISBN 3-7274-1081-7 English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)
- Rudolf Steiner: *Das Leben zwischen dem Tode und der neuen Geburt im Verhältnis zu den kosmischen Tatsachen*, GA 141 (1997), ISBN 3-7274-1410-3 English: rsarchive.org German: [pdf](#) [pdf\(2\)](#) [html](#) [mobi](#) [epub](#) [archive.org](#)



References to the work of Rudolf Steiner follow Rudolf Steiner's Collected Works (CW or GA), Rudolf Steiner Verlag, Dornach/Switzerland, unless otherwise stated.

Email: verlag@steinerverlag.com URL: www.steinerverlag.com.

Index to the Complete Works of Rudolf Steiner - Aelzina Books

A complete list by Volume Number and a full list of known English translations you may also find at Rudolf Steiner's Collected Works

Rudolf Steiner Archive - The largest online collection of Rudolf Steiner's books, lectures and articles in English.

Rudolf Steiner Audio - Recorded and Read by Dale Brunsvold

steinerbooks.org - Anthroposophic Press Inc. (USA)

Rudolf Steiner Handbook - Christian Karl's proven standard work for orientation in Rudolf Steiner's Collected Works for free download as PDF.

Retrieved from "https://en.anthro.wiki/index.php?title=Astral_world&oldid=9832"