

Art as Seen in the Light of Mystery Wisdom

GA 275

IV. Cosmic New Year: the Dream Song of Olaf Asteson

31 December 1914, Dornach

Our end-of-year festival will begin with Frau Dr. Steiner giving us a recitation of the beautiful Norwegian legend of Olaf Åsteson, of whom we are told that at the approach to Christmas he fell into a kind of sleep which lasted for thirteen days; the thirteen holy days that we have explored in various ways. In the course of this sleep he had significant experiences, that he was able to narrate when he awoke.

During these past days we have examined various things that make us aware that the spiritual-scientific outlook gives us a new approach to an understanding of gems of wisdom which, in past times, people realised belonged to spiritual worlds. Time and again we shall encounter this prehistoric knowledge of the spiritual worlds in one instance or another, and we shall continually be reminded that what was known in former ages, was due to the fact that the human being was so organised at that time that he had the kind of relationship with the whole of the cosmos and its happenings that we would now call being immersed with his human microcosm in the laws or the activities of the macrocosm, and that in this process of immersion in the macrocosm he was able to experience things that deeply concern the life of his soul, but which are hidden from him as long as he lives as microcosm on the physical plane and is equipped only with a knowledge given him by his senses and an intellect bound to the senses.

We know that only a materialistic outlook can believe that man is the only being in the world order equipped with thinking, feeling and willing, whereas a spiritual point of view must acknowledge that just as there are beings below the human level, there are also beings above the human stage of thinking, feeling and willing. The human being can live his way into these beings when, as microcosm, he immerses himself in the macrocosm. However, in this case we should have to speak of the macrocosm not only as a macrocosm of space, but as if the course of time were of significance in cosmic life. Just as in order to kindle the light of the spirit within him when he wants to descend into the depths of his own soul, man has to shut himself off from all the impressions his environment can make on his senses and has, as it were, to create darkness round him by closing off his sense perception, likewise the spirit we can call

the spirit of the earth has to be shut off from the impressions of the rest of the cosmos. The outer cosmos has to have least effect on the earth spirit if the earth spirit is to be able to concentrate its forces within. For then the secrets will be discovered that man has to discover in conjunction with the earth spirit, because the earth has been separated as earth from the cosmos.

The time when the outer macrocosm exercises the greatest effect on the earth is the time of the summer solstice, midsummer. And many accounts of olden times connected with festive presentations and rituals remind us that festivals like these take place at the height of summer; that in the midst of summer, the soul, in letting go the ego and merging with the life of the macrocosm, surrenders in a state of intoxication to the impressions from the macrocosm.

On the other hand, the legendary or other kind of presentations of that which could be experienced in olden times remind us that when impressions from the macrocosm have least effect on the earth, the earth spirit, concentrated within itself, experiences within the eternal All, the secrets of the earth's life of soul, and that if man enters into this experience at the point of time when the macrocosm sends least light and warmth to the earth, he learns the most holy secrets. This is why the days around Christmas were always kept so sacred, because whilst man's organism was still capable of sharing in the experience of the earth, man could meet the spirit of the earth during the point of time when it was most concentrated.

Olaf Åsteson, Olaf the son of earth, experiences various secrets of the cosmic All whilst he is transported into the macrocosm during the thirteen shortest days. And the nordic legend which has recently been extricated from old accounts, tells of these experiences Olaf Åsteson had between Christmas and New Year up till the 6th January. We often have reason to remember this former manner in which the microcosm took part in the macrocosm, and we can then take these things further. First of all, however, let us hear the legend of Olaf Åsteson, the earth son, who during the time in which we are now, experienced the secrets of cosmic existence in his meeting with the earth spirit. Let us listen to these experiences.

The Dream Song

I

Come listen to my song!
The song of a nimble youth.

Of Olaf Åsteson will I sing,
Who lay and slept so long.

II

He laid him down on Christmas Eve
And soon lay deeply sleeping.
Nor could he awaken
Until the people went to church
Upon the thirteenth day.

Of Olaf Åsteson will I sing,
Who lay and slept so long.

He laid him down on Christmas Eve
And he slept long indeed!
He could not awaken
Until the bird was on the wing
Upon the thirteenth day.

Of Olaf Åsteson will I sing,
Who lay and slept so long.

Olaf could not awaken
Until the sun shone o'er the peaks
Upon the thirteenth day.
Then saddled he his nimble horse
And rode in haste to the church.

Of Olaf Åsteson will I sing,
Who lay and slept so long.

The priest was at the altar
Reading holy mass
When Olaf alighted at the gate
To tell the many dreams
That had passed through his soul
When he did sleep so long.

Of Olaf Åsteson will I sing,
Who lay and slept so long.

Then old and young they all gave heed,
To Olaf's words they harkened
That told them of his dreams

Of Olaf Åsteson will I sing,
Who lay and slept so long.

III

'I laid me down on Christmas Eve
And soon lay deeply sleeping.
Nor could I awaken
Before the people went to church
Upon the thirteenth day.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

I was borne up into the clouds
Thrown down to the ocean's depths,
And whosoever will follow after
Good cheer he will not find.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

I was borne up into the clouds
Then hurled into murky swamps,
And I saw the horrors of hell
And also heaven's light.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

I had to go through deep, dark clefts
Where heaven's rivers rushed and roared.
The power to see them was not mine
Yet I could hear their roaring.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

My coal-black horse he did not neigh,
Nor did my good hounds bark,
The bird of morning did not sing
For a wonder lay on all.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

I had to travel in spiritland
Through stretch on stretch of thorny heath,
My scarlet mantle was torn to shreds
The nails of my feet likewise.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

Then I came to the Gjallar Bridge
Suspended in the windblown heights,
Studded it is with rich red gold
And the nails thereon have sharp points.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

The spirit snake he struck at me
The spirit hound bit me,
And lo! the bull did bar the way.
These are the three beasts of the bridge,
Most wicked are they all.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

The hound he is a snappish beast
The serpent waits to strike,
The bull is ready to attack!
And no one may pass o'er the bridge
Who will not honour truth!

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

I passed o'er the Gjallar Bridge
On dizzy heights and narrow.
I who had waded in the swamps
Behind me now they lie!

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

I had waded in the swamps
There seemed no foothold I could find
As I passed o'er the Gjallar Bridge
Earth did I feel within my mouth
As the dead who lie in their graves.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

To the waters then I came,
'Twas where the icy masses gleamed
Like unto flames of blue. . . .
And God did guide me in my steps
That I did not come close.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

So I went on the wintry way
And saw on my right hand:
Like unto paradise it was,
Light shining far and wide.

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

God's Holy Mother then I saw
Amidst most wondrous glory!
'Now take thy way to Brooksvalin,
the place where souls are judged!'

The moon shone bright
And all the paths led far away.

IV

In other worlds I tarried then
Through many nights and long;
And God alone can know
The suffering I saw there—

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

I could see a young man
Who in life had killed a child.
Now he must carry him always
And stand in mud to his knee

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

Also I saw an old man
Wearing a cloak of lead;
Thus was he punished,
The miser on earth,

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

And men appeared before me
Wearing apparel of fire;
So does their dishonesty
Weigh on their poor souls

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

Children I also saw,
Glowing coals beneath their feet,
In life they did their parents ill,
Now must their spirits feel it

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

And to a house I had to go
Where witches toiled in blood;
This was the blood of those
Who had enraged them whilst on earth,

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

Now there came riding from the North
Wild hordes of evil spooks,
Led by the Prince of Hell,

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

This horde riding from the North
Was the wickedest ever seen;
And the Prince of Hell rode out in front,
And he rode on his coal-black steed

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

Yet now came a host from the South
Bringing holy calm,
And at their head rode Saint Michael
At the side of Jesu Christ

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

The souls weighed down by sin
Had to tremble in anguish and fear!
Their tears ran down in streams
To hear of their wicked deeds

In Brooksvain, where souls
World judgment undergo.

Michael stood in majesty
And weighed the souls of men
Upon his heavenly scales,
And near him, judging, stood
The Lord of Judgment, Jesu Christ

In Brooksvalin, where souls
World judgment undergo.

V

Blessed is he who in earthly life
Gives shoes unto the poor;
He does not need, with naked feet,
To walk on the heath of thorn.

Thus speaks the Balance,
And World truth
Sounds forth in spirit heights.

Blessed is he who in earthly life
Unto the poor gave bread!
For nothing of harm can come to him
From the hounds of spiritland.

Thus speaks the Balance,
And World truth
Sounds forth in spirit heights.

Blessed is he who in earthly life
Gave corn unto the poor!
The horns of the bull are no threat to him
When he crosses the Gjallar Bridge.

Thus speaks the Balance,
And World truth
Sounds forth in spirit heights.

Blessed is he who in earthly life
Unto the poor gives clothes!

He need not fear the freezing wastes
Of ice in Brooksvalin.

Thus speaks the Balance,
And World truth
Sounds forth in spirit heights.

VI

And young and old they all gave heed,
To Olaf's words they harkened
That told them of his dreams.
You have slept long indeed. . . .
Awaken now, O Olaf Åsteson!

My dear friends, we have just heard how Olaf Åsteson fell into a sleep that was to reveal to him the secrets of worlds that are hidden from the world of the senses and ordinary life on the physical plane. This legend brings us tidings of ancient knowledge and insight into the spiritual worlds, which we shall regain once more through what We call the spiritual-scientific world outlook.

You have often heard the words that are included in all proclamations concerning the human soul's entry into the spiritual world, namely, that man beholds the spiritual world only when he experiences the gates of death and then enters into the elements. This means that the elements of earth existence do not surround him in the way they do in ordinary life on the physical plane, in the form of earth, water, air and fire, but that he is lifted above this sensory exterior of the elements and enters into what these elements really are when you know their true nature, where beings exist that have a relationship with man's soul experience.

We could feel that Olaf Asteson experienced something of this descent into the elements when we come to the part where Olaf reaches the Gjallar Bridge and crosses over it on to the paths of the spiritual world that all led far away. What a vivid description we are given of his experience as he descends into the element of earth. It is described in such detail that he tells us he himself feels earth in his mouth like the dead who lie in their graves. And then there is a clear indication of his going through the element of water, and of all that can be experienced in the watery element when one also experiences its moral quality. Then he also indicates how man meets with the elements of fire and of air.

All this is described in a wonderfully graphic way and centred in the experience of the human soul meeting the secrets of the spiritual world. The legend was found at a later date; it was collected at the place where it lived orally among the people. Parts of the legend in their present form are no longer the same as in the original. No doubt the graphic description of the experiences in the earth realm originally came first and then the experiences in the realm of water. And the experiences in the realms of air and of fire were no doubt far more differentiated than they are in the feeble after-echo that we have today, and which was found centuries later.

The conclusion was undoubtedly also much more impressive and less sentimental, for in its present form it does not in the least remind us of the sublime language of olden times, nor of the capacity to raise one on to a superhuman plane that used to exist in folk legends. The present conclusion merely moves on on a human level, and the reason why it is moving is purely because of its connection with such deep secrets of the macrocosm and of human experience.

If we rightly understand the season of the year in which we now are, we have a strong urge to remember the fact that humanity used to possess a knowledge—even if it was less defined and clear-cut—that has been lost and which has to be regained. And the question can arise in us, that as we surely recognise today that that particular kind of knowledge has to return if mankind is to be made whole, then should we not consider it one of our most urgent tasks to do everything we can to bring knowledge like that into the culture of the present?

Many things will have to happen in order for this change to come about in the right way, in what I would like to call the feeling content of man's world conception. One thing will be particularly necessary—I say one, for it is one among many, but you can only take one at a time—it will be essential for human souls to acquire on the basis of our spiritual-scientific world conceptual stream, reverence and devotion for what was known in ancient times in the old manner about the deep secrets of existence. People must arrive at the feeling that during the materialistic age they have neglected the development of this reverence and devotion.

We must get the feeling of how dried-out and empty this materialistic age is, and how proud of our intellectual knowledge mankind was in the first centuries of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, in face of the revelations of ancient religion and knowledge handed down from former times, which, when approached with the necessary reverence, truly give us the feeling that they contain the most profound wisdom. Fundamentally speaking we have no reverence for the Bible nowadays, either! Disregarding the kind of atrocious modern research that tears the whole Bible to shreds, we have merely to look at the dry and empty way we approach the Bible today armed, as it were, only with the knowledge of the senses and ordinary intellectual powers, and

at the way we can no longer muster a feeling for the tremendous greatness of human perception that comes to meet us in some of its passages. I would like to refer to a passage from the second Book of Moses, chapter 33, verse 18:

And Moses said to God, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.'

And the Lord said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.'

But then the Lord said, 'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.'

And the Lord said, 'Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I shall put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.'

If you gather together various things we have taken up in our hearts and souls during the years we have been working with spiritual science and then approach this passage, you can have the feeling that infinite wisdom is speaking to us there and how, in the materialistic age, human ears are so deaf that they hear nothing of the infinitely deep wisdom that comes to us from this passage. I would like to take this opportunity to refer you to a booklet that has been published under the title *Worte Mosis* by Bruns Publishing Co. in Minden, Westphalia, because certain things out of the five Books of Moses have been translated better in this booklet than in other editions. Dr. Hugo Bergmann, the publisher of *Worte Mosis*, has taken a lot of trouble over the interpretation.

The fact that man, if he wants to penetrate to the spiritual world, has to acquire a totally different relation to the world than that which he has to the sense world, has often been stressed. Man has the sense world all about him. He looks at the sense world and sees it in its colours and forms and hears its sounds. The sense world is there, and we are in the midst of it, feeling its influence, perceiving it and thinking about it. That is how we relate to the sense world. We are passive and the sense world, as it were, works its way into our souls. We think about the sense world and make mental images of it.

Our relationship is quite different when we penetrate into the spiritual world. One of the difficulties consists in getting the right idea of what a person experiences when he enters the spiritual world. I have attempted to characterise some of these difficulties in my booklet *Die Schwelle der geistigen Welt* ('The Threshold of the Spiritual World'). We make mental images of the sense world and we think about it. If we go through all a person has to go through if he wants to follow the path of initiation, something occurs that can be described like this: We ourselves relate to the beings of the higher hierarchies in the same way as the things around us relate to us; they make a mental image of us, they think us. We think the objects around us, the minerals, plants and animals; they become our thoughts, whereas we are the conceptions, thoughts and perceptions of the spirits of the higher hierarchies. We become the thoughts of the Angeloi, Archangeloi, Archai and so on. They take us in, in the same way as we take in the plants, animals and human beings. And we must feel their sheltering protection when we say, 'The beings of the higher hierarchies think us, they make mental images of us. These beings of the higher hierarchies take hold of us with their souls'. In fact we can actually picture that when Olaf Asteson fell asleep he became a mental image of the spirits of the higher hierarchies, and in the course of his sleep these beings of the higher hierarchies experienced what the beings of the earth spirit were experiencing (these are, of course, a plurality for us). And when Olaf Asteson sinks back into the physical world he remembers what the spirits of the higher hierarchies experienced in him.

Let us imagine for a moment that we are setting out on the path of initiation. How can we relate to the spiritual world, which is a host of spiritual beings of the higher hierarchies, into which we wish to enter? How can we relate to them? We can appeal to them and say 'How can we enter into you, how do you reveal yourselves to us?' And then, when we have acquired an understanding of the different kind of relationship the human soul has to the higher worlds, there will sound forth to us, as it were from the spiritual worlds, 'You cannot perceive the spiritual world the same way as you perceive the sense world, the way the sense world appears before you and impinges on your senses. We must think you, and you must feel yourself in us. You must feel the kind of experience in you which a thought you think in the sense world would have if it could experience itself within you. You must surrender yourself to the spiritual world, then the beings of the higher hierarchies who can reveal themselves to you will enter into you. This will stream into your soul and live within it, bringing grace, in the same way as you live in your thoughts when you think about the sense world. If the spiritual world wishes to favour you and have compassion on you, it will fill you with its love!'

But you must not imagine that you can approach spiritual beings in the same way as you approach the sense world. Just as Moses had to creep into the cave, you must go into the cave of the spiritual world. You have to put yourself there. Like a thought lives in you, you must be

taken up into the life of the spiritual beings. You yourself must live as a universal thought in the macrocosm. To have experiences there of your own accord is not possible during earthly life between birth and death, but only after you have passed through death. No one can experience the spiritual world in this way before he has died, yet the spiritual world can come close to you, bless you and fill you with its love. And if after, or whilst you are within the spiritual world, you develop your earthly consciousness, the spiritual world will shine into this consciousness.

Just as when an object is outside us we confront it, and when it enters our consciousness it is inside us, the soul of man is within the cave of the spiritual world. The spiritual world passes through him. Here, man confronts things. When man enters the spiritual world the beings of the higher hierarchies are behind him. There, he cannot see their face, just as a thought cannot see our face when it is within us. Our face is in front and the thoughts are behind, so they cannot see our face. The whole secret of initiation is concealed in the words Jehovah speaks to Moses.

And Moses said to God, 'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.'

And the Lord said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.'

But then the Lord said, 'Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live.'—Initiation does indeed bring you to the Gate of Death.

And the Lord said, 'Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I shall put thee in a cleft of rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.'

It is the opposite of the way we perceive the sense world. You must muster a lot of the spiritual-scientific effort you have developed over the years, in order to encounter a revelation like this with the right kind of reverence and devotion. Then human souls will gradually acquire more and more of this feeling of reverence towards these revelations; and this reverence, this

devotion, is among the many things we need in order that the change we have been speaking of can come about in mankind's spiritual culture.

The time when the macrocosm sends down least influence to the earth, the days from Christmas over New Year until roughly the 6th of January, can be a suitable time not only for remembering the facts of spiritual knowledge, but also for remembering the feelings we have to develop as we take up spiritual science. We are really and truly taken up again into the life of the spirit of the earth, together with whom we form a whole, and in which ancient clairvoyant knowledge lived, as this legend of Olaf Åsteson shows us. Humanity in the materialistic age has in many ways lost this reverence and devotion for spiritual life. It is most essential to see to it that this reverence and devotion come back, for without them we shall not develop the mood to approach spiritual science in the right way. Unfortunately the mood with which spiritual science is approached to start with is still the same mood we have for ordinary science. A thorough change will have to come about in this respect.

Having lost the understanding for the spiritual world, mankind has also lost the proper relation to the being of man, to humanity. The materialistic world conception produces chaotic feelings about universal existence. These chaotic feelings about the world and humanity were bound to come in the age of materialism. Think of a time—and this is our time, the first centuries of the fifth post-Atlantean cultural epoch—when people no longer had any real awareness that the being of man is threefold: a bodily nature, soul and spirit. For it really is like that. The threefold nature of man, which, to us, is one of the basic elements of spiritual science, was something that people did not have the slightest notion of from the first four centuries of the fifth post-Atlantean cultural epoch right into our time. Man was just man, and any talk of membering his being in the way we do into body, soul and spirit was considered complete nonsense.

You might imagine that these things are valuable only in the sphere of knowledge, but that is not so. They are important not only as knowledge, but for the whole manner in which man faces life. In the fourth century of modern times, or, as we say in our language, during the fifth post-Atlantean cultural period, three great words came to the fore in which people saw, or at least endeavoured to see, the essence of human striving on earth. Important though these words are, what made them significant was the fact that they appeared at a time when mankind knew nothing of the threefold nature of man. Everyone heard of liberty, equality and fraternity.

It was a profound necessity that these words were heard at a certain time in modern civilisation. People will only really understand these words when the threefold membering of the human being is understood, because until then they will not realise the significance these words can have with regard to man's real being. Whilst these words are being approached with the

sort of chaotic feelings that are engendered by the thought that man is man, and the threefold membering of man is nonsense, human beings will find no guidance in these three words. For the three words, as they stand, cannot be directly applied to one and the same level of human experience. They cannot be. Simple considerations which do not perhaps occur to you because they seem too simple for such weighty matters, can go to show that if they are taken on the same level, what these three words mean can come into serious conflict.

Let us start by looking at the realm where we find fraternity in its most natural form. Take human blood relationship, the family, where there is no need to instil brotherly love because it is inborn, and just think how it warms the heart to see real genuine brotherhood among a family, to see everyone united in a brotherly way. And yet—without losing any of the wonderful feeling we can have about this brotherly love—let us have a look at what can happen to a family fraternity just because of this brotherliness. Brotherliness is justified within a family, yet a member of a family can be made unhappy by it, and can long to get away from it because he feels he cannot develop his own soul within the family fraternity and must leave it in order to develop in freedom. So we see that freedom, the unfolding in freedom of the life of the soul, can come into conflict with even the best-meant brotherliness.

Obviously a superficial person could maintain that it is not proper brotherliness if it does not agree with a person's freedom. But people can say anything they like. No doubt they can say that everything agrees with everything else. I recently saw a thesis in which one of the articles that had to be proved was that a triangle is a quadrangle. You can of course plead for a thing like that, you can even prove exactly that a triangle is a quadrangle! And you can also fully prove that fraternity and freedom are compatible. But that is not the point. The point is that for the sake of freedom many a realm of brotherliness has to be—and in fact is—forsaken. We could give further examples of this.

If we wanted to count up the discrepancies between fraternity and equality it would take us a long time. Obviously we can say *in abstracto* that everyone can be equal, and can show that fraternity and equality are compatible. But if we take life seriously it is not a question of abstractions but of looking at reality. The moment we realise that the human being has a bodily nature that lives on the physical plane, a soul nature that actually lives in the soul world, and a spiritual nature that lives in the spiritual world, we have the right perspective for the connection between these profound words. Brotherliness is the most important ideal for the physical world, freedom is for the soul world, and insofar as man enters into the realm of the soul we ought to speak of the freedom of the soul, that is, of the kind of social conditions that fully guarantee the soul its freedom. If we bear in mind that in order to develop the spirit and enter spirit land we, that is, each one of us, has to strive for spirit knowledge from our own point of

view, we shall soon see where we would get with our spiritual conceptions if each one of us only went his own way and we all filled ourselves with a different content.

As human beings we can only find one another in life if we seek the spirit, each one for himself, yet can arrive at the same spiritual content. We can speak of the equality of spiritual life. We can speak of fraternity on the physical plane and with regard to everything that has to do with the laws of the physical plane and which affects the human soul from the physical plane; liberty with regard to all that comes to expression in the soul in the way of laws of the soul world; equality with regard to everything that comes to expression in the soul in the way of laws of the spirit land.

So you see, a Cosmic New Year must come about, where there will be a sun that will increase in power to give warmth and to radiate light: a sun that must bring light-filled warmth to many a thing that lived on during the age of darkness, yet was not understood. It is characteristic of our time that many a thing is striven for and expressed in words, yet is not understood.

This, too, can bring us to feel reverence and devotion for the spiritual world. For if we ponder on the fact that many people strove for fraternity, liberty and equality in the fourth century of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch and uttered these words without understanding them properly, it is possible for us to see an answer to the question, 'Where did these words come from?' The divine-spiritual universal order implanted them into the human soul at a time when we did not understand them, in order that key words of this kind might lead us on to true universal understanding. We can notice the wise guidance in world evolution even in things like this. We can observe this guidance everywhere, whether in past ages or in more recent times, observing that often we do not notice until afterwards that something we did previously was actually wiser than the wisdom we had at our command at the time. I drew attention to this at the very beginning of my book, *The Spiritual Guidance of Man*.

However, if you look, for instance, at the fact that in world evolution, in the evolution of man, a part is played by directional words that can only gradually be understood, you might be reminded of an image we can use when we want to characterise this period of the fifth post-Atlantean cultural epoch that is drawing to a close. In many respects it can really be compared with the season of Advent where the periods of daylight grow shorter and shorter. And now in our time, when we can begin to have knowledge of revelations of the spiritual worlds again, evolution is entering the phase that we can picture as the days growing longer and longer, and we can speak of this season really being comparable to the thirteen days and to the time of increasing daylight.

But it goes deeper than this. It would be absolutely wrong if we were only to find bad things to say of the materialistic age of the past four centuries. Modern times were ushered in by the great discoveries and inventions that are called 'great' in the materialistic age, sailing round the world, for instance, discovering lands that were not previously known and starting to colonise the earth. That was the beginning of materialistic civilisation. And then the time gradually came when people were almost stifled by materialistic civilisation. The time arrived when all our spiritual forces were applied to understanding and grasping material life. Insights, understanding and visions of the spiritual world existing in ancient knowledge were forgotten more and more, as we have seen.

Yet it is wrong to have nothing but bad things to say about this age. It would be far better to put it this way: 'The human soul has been thinking materialistically and founding a materialistic science and culture in the part of it that is awake, but this human soul is a totality.' If I wanted to put it schematically I could say that one part of the human soul founded materialistic civilisation. This part was inactive before that, and people knew nothing about external science and outer material life; at that time the spiritual part was more awake. (He did a drawing.) During the past four centuries the part of the soul was awake that founded materialistic civilisation, and the other part was asleep. And, in truth, during the age of materialistic culture, the seeds were being sown in the sleeping parts of the soul for the forces we can now develop in humanity to bring us to spirituality again. During these centuries mankind was really an Olaf Asteson as far as spiritual knowledge was concerned. That really was so. And humanity has not yet woken up! Spiritual science must awaken it. A time must come when both old and young must hear the words that are being spoken by the part of the human soul that was asleep in the age of darkness.

The human soul has slept long indeed, but world spirits will approach and call to it, 'Awaken now, O Olaf Asteson!'—Only we have to prepare ourselves in the right way, so that it does not happen that we are faced with the call, 'Awaken now, O Olaf Åsteson!' and have not the ears to hear it. That is why we are engaged in spiritual science, so that we shall have the ears to hear, when the call to be spiritually awake sounds in human evolution.

It is a good thing if man remembers sometimes that he is a microcosm and that he can be receptive to certain experiences if he opens himself to the macrocosm. As we have seen, the present season is a good one. Let us try to make this New Year's Eve a symbol for the New Year's Eve that has to come to mankind in earth evolution, a New Year's Eve that will herald a new era bringing ever more light, soul light, vision, knowledge of what lives in the spirit and which can stream and flow into the human soul from out of the spirit. If we can bring the microcosm of our experience on this New Year's Eve into connection with the macrocosm of hu-

man experience over the whole earth, we shall then have the kind of feelings we ought to experience, sensing as we do the dawning of the great new Cosmic Day of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, at whose beginning we stand, and the midnight of which we want to understand worthily.

The Dream Song: Draumkvaedet, see collection *Norske Folkeviser*, edited by Thorwald Lammers, Kristiania 1910, by Aschehoug & Co.

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the Norwegian Dream Song of Olaf Asteson on 1st January 1912, 7th January 1913 and 31st December 1914, and his talks were always accompanied by Marie Steiner-von Sivers reciting the Dream Song. These three lectures or addresses were put together as a volume and published in 1958 as an enlarged new edition of the lecture 'Cosmic New Year'. Ingeborg Möller-Lindholm, the Norwegian poetess (1878–1964), drew Rudolf Steiner's attention to the old legend, and it is largely due to her initiative that this extraordinary folk epic has acquired such an important place in the anthroposophical movement. Through her help we are in a position to include in this edition the notes she made of her conversation with Rudolf Steiner. We have also included in the references, several points from a lecture Ingeborg Möller-Lindholm gave on the Dream Song of Olaf Asteson, which she kindly put at our disposal in translation, and which we have attributed accordingly.

Notes on the Dream Song by Ingeborg Möller-Lindholm of Lillehammer

In June 1910 Dr Steiner held a cycle of lectures in Oslo entitled *The Mission of the Individual Folk Souls in Relation to Teutonic Mythology*. As I lived in Oslo and had a large room at my disposal, I invited to tea about forty anthroposophical friends who had come to Oslo for this occasion. Dr Steiner and Frau Marie Steiner had also agreed to come. I asked Dr Steiner the previous day whether he could tell us something about the unusual Norwegian folk epic, 'The Dream Song of Olaf Åsteson'. Rudolf Steiner smiled amiably and said he would first have to have read or heard it. I saw the point of this. Then he himself made the suggestion that he should arrive the next day an hour before the other guests, so that I could read the song to him and make a rough translation. And that is what happened.

While I read it to him, Dr Steiner sat with his eyes closed and listened intently. He was obviously deeply affected by the unusual content of the song. After tea the Dream Song was read out in Norwegian by a member of the Society, whereupon Dr Steiner gave a short but moving lecture on the song. In particular he dwelt on the fact that these events

took place during the time of the twelve holy nights when extraterrestrial influences are at their strongest. He also gave special mention to the name of Olaf Asteson. Olaf or Olcifr means the 'one left behind' after his predecessors have gone. He is the one who passes on the blood of the father of the generations. Ast means love; so he is 'the Son of Love'.

Dr Steiner asked me to translate the song into German. He himself did not know Norwegian, let alone the old dialect in which the Dream Song had been written down, and which was difficult even for modern Norwegians. To begin with I made the excuse that I did not have a sufficient command of the German language to convey the wonderful musical rhythm. Dr Steiner said that did not matter, I should just translate the song literally word for word, so that he could get an exact picture of the content. I did this in the course of the autumn and sent him the translation, which was very prosaic and in many respects extremely inadequate. Later on Rudolf Steiner put the song into its own characteristic rhythms and gave several lectures on it. It was also used for eurythmic presentation, especially at Christmas time.

Dr Steiner told me in 1913 that I should not think that Olaf the Saint was the *original* Olaf Åsteson. (St. Olaf, a Norwegian king, died in 1035 at the battle of Stiklestad, championing the cause of Christendom.) There had been several people with the name of 'Olaf Åsteson', said Dr Steiner. It was a kind of mystery title.

Dr Steiner was in Norway again after the First World War, in 1921 and 1923. On these occasions he stayed with engineer Ingero. Mrs Ragnhild Ingero, who died a few years ago, told me that Dr Steiner had talked to her about the Dream Song. He had meanwhile gone into it further and discovered new things. One of these was that the song was much older than people believed. It originated about 400 AD. At that time there was a great Christian initiate in this country. He founded a mystery school in Southern Norway; the place was not mentioned. His mystery name was Olaf Asteson, and the song describes his initiation. Originally, so Dr Steiner says, the song was much longer and had twelve sections, one for each sign of the zodiac. The song describes Olaf Asteson's journey through the whole zodiac and what he saw and experienced there. Today we only have fragments of the original song. The aforesaid mystery school continued into the early Middle Ages. The leader was always called Olaf Åsteson

Dr Steiner said that in course of time he would publish these facts and other important things connected with the song. However he did not want to do this until he had found certain external proofs of his findings. He thought he would be able to find these. But the burning of the Goetheanum, excessive work and finally illness and death prevented this intention being realised. Now these indications are all we have.

I have given much thought to these findings of Dr Steiner's and have come to the conclusion that this mystery school was possibly in Skiringssal. This place is or rather was in Vestfold, a region in south-western Norway. In old legends it has always been described as a holy place. Vikings who died on foreign soil wished to be buried in Skiringssal. There was also a *kaupang* there (market). Archaeologists are excavating things at present which they assume to be remains of this market. Up to now, though, nobody has been able to prove conclusively where Skiringssal is. At the time of the mystery school it lay on the coast; however loam deposits have now 'pushed' the place further inland. Skiringssal means 'The Hall of Purification'. Skim means baptism or purification (old Norwegian)

Where did the first Olaf Asteson come from? It has been historically proved that Irish-Scottish monks were in this country long before Christianity was officially introduced. According to legend, Joseph of Arimathea came to the British Isles as early as the first century AD, and began his missionary work there. There have been mystery centres in Ireland since very early times. The tribes on the neighbouring islands were heathen. The Irish-Scottish Church, also called the Culdee Church, arose as a result of the confluence of the work of the Christian missionaries and ancient Druid wisdom. It flourished in many places as early as 300 to 400 AD. There were churches, schools and monasteries, despite the fact that these were always under attack from powerful heathen tribes of the neighbourhood. Many priests and monks died a martyr's death. This Culdee Church was based in particular on the Gospel of St. John and the preaching of the apostle John. It was like the first communities of Christians and contrasted strongly with the Petrine or Roman Catholic Church. But the latter was victorious. The Culdee Church was destroyed and dissolved in the year 664 AD. It sent a lot of missionaries to various European countries both before and after being externally destroyed. This Church was definitely of an *esoteric* nature. Many things suggest that the first Olaf Asteson was a representative of this spiritual stream.

'Among these Norwegian people, who still possess many things in their *popular tongue* that approach very closely the threshold of occult secrets, possibilities existed for souls to remain connected longer with everything living and working behind outer material phenomena,' said Rudolf Steiner in his lecture on Olaf Asteson in Berlin on 7th January 1913, in *Der Zusammenhang des Menschen mit der elementarischen Welt* (Man's Connection with the Elemental World), GA 158, 1970.

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