

Spiritual Science



Deep Dive Article

The Sixth Epoch

Preparing for the future

Source: [NeoAnthroposophy](#)



The Woman clothed with the Sun who has the Moon under her feet

Every conscious free deed of love builds that spiritual edifice of love in the etheric world of the future. We must kindle love for everything in existence.

How Do We Prepare for the Future Sixth Epoch?

[Pure science has pneumatology (the study of spiritual beings or phenomena) as its foundation.] All materialistic beliefs including science, too, will be regarded as antiquated superstition.

Preparing for the Sixth Epoch, Lecture XIII, The Secret of Death, Rudolf Steiner, Dusseldorf, June 15, 1915, GA 159

Something does not yet exist in the human community what will be there in the sixth culture-epoch with those human beings who reached the aim of the sixth culture-epoch (3573-5733) who did not lag behind this aim; they are not among those who are maniacs or barbarians in the sixth culture-epoch. In the sixth culture-epoch the culturally leading human beings will have a moral characteristic, as it were, as one of the most important characteristics.

Now only a little of this characteristic is to be noticed within humankind. Today the human being must be organised more sensitive if it should hurt him in his soul that except his own existence he has to look at other human beings in the world who have it worse than he has it. Indeed, already today more sensitive souls also feel grief because of the grief which is poured on many human beings in the world — but these must be more sensitive souls. In the sixth culture-epoch, those human beings who are at the peak of this culture not only feel as pain what we today feel as pain of misery, grief, and poverty which are wide-spread, but then the human being feels any grief of another human being as his own grief. If he sees a starving human being, he feels the hunger so lively in his physical nature that this hunger of the fellowman is intolerable to him. What is indicated here that it is not in the sixth culture-epoch any more as it is still in the fifth epoch, that rather it is a moral characteristic of the sixth culture-epoch that the welfare of the single human being completely depends on the welfare of all the human beings. As well as now only the welfare of a single human member depends on the health of the whole body, and if the whole human being is not healthy, also the single member is not in the mood to do this or that, a common characteristic seizes the civilised humankind of the sixth culture-epoch. The individual human being will share, like a member of the totality, all the suffering, all the need, all the poverty or wealth to a much higher degree. This is the first, mainly moral characteristic of the civilised humankind in the sixth culture-epoch.

Source: Rudolf Steiner – GA 159 – THE MYSTERY OF DEATH: 13. Common Ground Above Us, Christ In Us – Düsseldorf, 15 June 1915

In the the sixth epoch, our bodily form will then obtain its expression from the series of our incarnations. The human beings will differ very much from one another and their features will be strongly marked. When we encounter somebody, we shall then know exactly: This is a good person and that is an evil one. The human countenance will thus more and more express the moral qualities.

During the sixth epoch, even the outward physiognomy (inner character or quality revealed outwardly) of our environment will have a very changed aspect. Particularly those animals which now supply meat for human consumption, shall then have died out. In the future, a great hymn of praise will be sung to vegetarianism, and people will tell one another, as if they were speaking of some ancient memory, that their ancestors used to eat meat. Not all the animals shall then have died out, but only certain species; particularly those animals shall have disappeared from the earth that have taken on the most rigid forms. Thus, even the earth and its outward physiognomy will undergo certain changes.

Let us bear in mind the fact that if our etheric body is to be strong, so that it may be able to correct the mistakes of our physical body, its strength should be evident through the fact that we learn to consider the things which come to us from the etheric world as something very earnest and real. This will be the attitude which will be able to exercise a more and more healing influence. It will be necessary above all that we should take up spiritual science, so as to be prepared for the moment when the etheric shape of Christ shall appear to us, and so that we may take this up with due earnestness and in the right spirit.

Challenge of the Times, Lecture V, Specters of the Old Testament in the Nationalism of the Present, Rudolf Steiner, December 7, 1918, GA 186

After the great War of All against All (Seventh Epoch) there will be two kinds of human beings. Those who had previously tried to follow the call to the spiritual life, who cultivated the spiritualizing and ennobling of their inner spiritual life, will show this inward life on their faces and express it in

their gestures and the movements of their hands. And those who have turned away from the spiritual life, represented by the community of Laodicea, who were lukewarm, neither warm nor cold, will pass into the following epoch as those who retard human evolution, who preserve the backward forces of evolution which have been left behind. They will show the evil passions, impulses and instincts hostile to the spiritual in an ugly, unintelligent, evil-looking countenance. In their gestures and hand-movements, in every-thing they do, they will present an outer image of the ugliness in their soul. Just as humanity has separated into races and communities, in the future it will divide into two great streams, the good and the evil. And what is in their souls will be outwardly manifest, they will no longer be able to hide it.

Apocalypse of John, Lecture IV, Rudolf Steiner, Nuremberg, June 1908, GA 104

Everything which causes a man to strive to lose his "I" and dissolve it into a universal consciousness, is the result of weakness. He alone understands the "I" who knows that after he has gained it in the course of cosmic evolution it cannot be lost; and above all man must strive for the strength to make this "I" more and more inward, more and more divine.

Thus the "I" will be the pledge for the highest goal of man. But at the same time, if it does not discover love, if it hardens within itself, it is the tempter that plunges him into the abyss. For it is that which separates men from one another which brings them to the great War of All against All, not only to the war of nation against nation but to the war of each single person against every other person in every branch of life; to the war of class against class, of caste against caste and sex against sex. Thus in every field of life the "I" will become the apple of discord; and hence we may say that it can lead on the one hand to the highest and on the other hand to the lowest. For this reason, it is a sharp two-edged sword.

After the War of All against All, there will be two streams in humanity: on the one hand the stream of Philadelphia will survive with the principle of progress, of inner freedom, of brotherly love, a small group drawn from every tribe and nation; and on the other hand, the great mass of all those who are lukewarm, the remains of those who are now becoming lukewarm (Laodicea).

After the great War of All against All, gradually the evil stream will be led over to good by the good race, by the good stream. This will be one of the principal tasks after the great War of All against All; to rescue what can be rescued from those who after the great war will only have the impulse to fight one another and to allow the "I" to express itself in the most external egoism. Such things are always provided for in advance in the spiritual guidance of humanity.

Consider that through the evil separating from the good, the good will receive its greatest strengthening. For after the great War of All against All, the good will have to make every possible effort to rescue the evil during the period in which this will still be possible. For in this next great epoch men will understand how to set occult forces in motion. The good will have the task of working upon their brothers of the evil movement.

The most capable must be chosen and prepared to live beyond the period of the great War of All against All when men will confront those who bear in their countenances the sign of evil; they must be so prepared that as much good force as possible will flow into humanity. It will still be possible for those bodies, which are to a certain extent soft, to be transformed after the War of All against All by the converted souls, by the souls who will still be led to the good in this last epoch. In this way much will be accomplished. The good would not be so great a good if it were not to grow through the conquest of evil. Love would not be so intense if it had not to become love so great as to be able even to overcome the wickedness in the countenances of evil men. Those who are being prepared in their souls by such teachings, so that in the future they will, be able to accomplish this great task of education, are the pupils of the Manichaeian School. Manes is that exalted individuality, who is repeatedly incarnated on the earth, who is the guiding spirit of those whose task it is to transform evil.

(The refined parts of what Rudolf Steiner calls the Consciousness Soul will become the Spiritual Soul, a type of higher ego of the physical world that will be able to speak and communicate with the individual's Spirit Self through Manasic thinking that is also called Moral Imagination. This type of Moral Imagination is direct communication with beings who live in the realm of angels.)

There will be absolutely nothing in this seventh epoch that can be hidden in any way.

Even those belonging to the sixth epoch will be unable to hide anything from him who has the necessary vision. An evil man will express his evil, a good man will express the good that is within him; but in the seventh epoch it will be quite impossible by speech to hide what is in the soul. Thought will no longer remain dumb so that it can be hidden, for when the soul thinks, its thought will ring forth outwardly. It will then be just as thought is already to the initiates today. To them, thought now rings out in Devachan. But this Devachan will have descended into the physical world, just as the astral world will have descended into the physical world in the sixth epoch. Even now the sixth epoch can be found in the astral world and the seventh in the heavenly world.

The sixth epoch is the descended astral world, that is to say the images, the expressions, the manifestations of it. The seventh epoch will be the descended heavenly world, the expression of it. And then the earth will have reached the goal of its physical evolution. The earth, together with all its beings, will then change into an astral heavenly body. Physical substance as such will disappear. The part which until then had been able to spiritualize itself, will pass over into the spirit, into astral substance. Imagine all the beings of the earth who up to that time have been able to express what is good, noble, intellectual and beautiful in their external material form; who will bear an expression of Christ Jesus in their countenances, whose words will manifest Christ Jesus, for they will ring out as resounding thoughts – all these will have the power to dissolve what they have within them as physical matter, as warm water dissolves salt. Everything physical will pass over into an astral globe. But those who up to that time have not progressed so far as to be a material and corporeal expression of what is noble, beautiful, intellectual and good, will not have the power to dissolve matter; for them matter will remain. They will become hardened in matter; they will retain material form.

Beings become capable of dissolving matter through taking love into their souls. The more the soul is warmed by love the more powerfully will it be able to work on matter; it will spiritualize the whole earth and transform it into an astral globe. But just as love dissolves matter, as warm water dissolves salt, so will the opposite of love press down – again throughout seven stages everything which has not become capable of fulfilling the earth mission. The contrary of divine love is called divine wrath, that is the technical expression for it. Just as in the course of the fourth stage of civilization this love was imprinted in humanity, just as it will become warmer and warmer through the last stages in our epoch, the sixth and seventh, so on the other hand there is growing that which hardens matter

around itself the divine wrath. In the last epoch, the epoch of the sounding of the trumpets, you would with spiritual vision see how men consist of delicate, spiritualized bodies; and how those who have hardened the material principle in themselves have preserved in themselves what today are the most important constituents of matter; and how this will fall as husks into the material globe which will be left after the epoch indicated by the sounding of the trumpets. (The eighth sphere)

Man's outer body will thus become an expression of the good by his receiving the highest message, the highest teaching there is on this earth; and this highest teaching is the message of Christ Jesus on the earth. We must take it up thoroughly, not merely with the understanding; we must take it into our innermost being, just as one takes nourishment into the physical body. And as humanity develops further it will take up the joyful message into its inner being more and more. It is just this reception of the message of love which it will have to regard as the result of the earth's mission.

Apocalypse of John, Lecture VIII, Rudolf Steiner, Nuremberg, June 1908, GA 104

Christ [is] the god of the human being on the earth.

This sixth epoch will be radically different from ours. Great, tumultuous catastrophes will precede it, for the sixth epoch will be just as spiritual as ours is materialistic, but such a transformation can only occur through great, physical upheavals. Everything that will be formed in the course of the sixth epoch will call into existence the possibility of a seventh epoch which itself will form the end of these post-Atlantean cultures and will know completely different conditions of life from our own. This seventh epoch will end with a revolution of the elements, similar to the one that brought an end to the Atlantean continent.

Human beings always carry within themselves what they will see around them in future times. All that presently exists around us actually came forth from us in preceding ages.

What human beings possess today as their inner soul life, their thoughts, their feelings, will similarly be revealed externally and become the environment in which people live. The future resides in the hearts of men and women. The choice is ours to decide for a future of good or of evil. Just as it is true that the human being once left behind something that then became the world of animals, so too, what is evil in the human being will one day form a kind of degenerate humanity. At the present time, we can more or less hide the good or evil within us. A day will come when we can no longer do this, when the good or the evil will be written indelibly on our forehead, on our body, and even on the face of the earth. Humanity will then be split into two races. In the same way that we encounter boulders or animals today, in the future we will encounter beings of pure evil and ugliness. When a human being's facial features become an expression of that individual's karma, then people will separate themselves according to the stream in which they apparently belong. Everything depends on whether human beings have conquered the lower nature within them or whether this lower nature has triumphed over the spirit.

Reading the Pictures of the Apocalypse, Cosmogony, Rudolf Steiner, Paris, June 14, 1906, GA 104

Our fifth epoch will be followed by another, the sixth. This sixth epoch will see the development of brotherhood among men, clairvoyance and creative power. What will Christianity be in the sixth epoch? To the priest in the Mysteries before Christ, there was harmony between science and faith. Science and faith were one and the same. When he looked up to the heavens, the priest knew that the soul was a drop of water from the celestial ocean, led down to Earth by the great streams of life flowing through space. Now that the attention of men is wholly directed to the physical world, faith has need of a refuge, of religion. Hence the separation between science and faith. Faith in the Person of Christ, of the God-Man on Earth has temporarily replaced Occult Science and the Mysteries of antiquity. But in the sixth epoch, the two streams will again unite. Mechanical science will become spiritually creative. This will be Gnosis-spiritual consciousness. This sixth epoch which will be radically different from our own, will be preceded by mighty cataclysms. It will be as spiritual as ours has been material. But the transformation can only be brought about by physical catastrophes. The sixth epoch will prepare for a seventh epoch. This seventh epoch will be the end of the Post-Atlantean civilizations and conditions of earthly life will be entirely different from those we know.

At the end of the seventh epoch there will be a revolution of the elements analogous to that which put an end to Atlantis, and the subsequent eras will know a spirituality prepared by the two preceding Post-Atlantean periods.

All that lives today in the inner being of man, his thoughts, his feelings, will find expression in the outer world and become his surroundings. The future lies within man. He is free to make it good or evil. Just as he has already left the animal kingdom behind him, so the evil in him today will form a race of degenerate beings. In our age, man can to a certain extent hide the good or evil within him. But a time will come when he will no longer be able to do so, when the good and the evil will be written in indelible characters upon his countenance, upon his body, nay even upon the very face of the Earth.

Humanity will then divide into two races. Just as today we see rocks or animals, in that future age we shall encounter beings who are wholly evil, wholly ugly. In our time it is only the clairvoyant who is able to see moral goodness or moral ugliness in human beings. But when man's very features express his karma, human beings will divide into groups of themselves, according to the stream to which they manifestly belong, according to whether the lower nature has been conquered or whether it has conquered the Spirit. This differentiation is beginning to operate little by little. When we derive understanding of the future from the past, and strive to realize the ideal of this future, its plan begins to unfold before us. A new race will come into being to be the link between the man of the present and the spiritual man of the future.

It was taught in Manicheism that from our age onwards the souls of men would begin to transmute into good the evil which will manifest in full force in the sixth epoch. In other words: human souls must be strong enough to bring good out of evil by a process of spiritual alchemy.

When the Earth begins to recapitulate the previous phases of its evolution, there will first be a re-union with the Moon, and then of this Earth-Moon with the Sun. The re-union with the Moon will mark the culminating point of evil on the Earth; the re-union with the Sun will signify, on the other hand, the advent of happiness, the reign of the 'elect.' Man will bear the signs of the seven great phases of the Earth. The Book with the Seven Seals, spoken of in the Apocalypse, will be opened. The Woman clothed with the Sun who has the Moon under her feet, refers to the age when the Earth will once again be united with Sun and Moon. The

Trumpets of Judgment will sound for the Earth will have passed into the Devachanic condition where the ruling principle is not light but sound. The hallmark of the end of earthly existence will be that the Christ-Principle permeates all humanity. Having become like unto Christ, men will gather around Him as the hosts around the Lamb, and the great harvest of evolution will constitute the new Jerusalem.

An Esoteric Cosmology, Lecture XVIII, The Apocalypse, Paris, May 25-June 14, 1906, GA 94

We are going forward to an age when, as I indicated recently, men will understand what the atom is, in reality. It will be realized – by the public mind too – that the atom is nothing but coagulated electricity. The thought itself is composed of the same substance.

The attainment of selflessness alone will enable humanity to be kept from the brink of destruction. The downfall of our present epoch will be caused by lack of morality. Our epoch and its civilization will be destroyed by the War of All against All, by evil. Human beings will destroy each other in mutual strife. A tiny handful of men will make good and thus insure their survival in the sixth epoch of civilization. This tiny handful will have attained selflessness.

In the seventh epoch of civilization, this War of All against All will break out in the most terrible form. Great and mighty forces will be let loose by the discoveries, turning the whole earth-globe into a kind of self-functioning live electric mass. In a way that cannot be discussed, the tiny handful will be protected and preserved.

Nation, race, sex, position, religion ... all these work upon human egoism. Only when man has overcome them will he be free of egoism.

The Work of Secret Societies in the World, The Atom as Coagulated Electricity, Rudolf Steiner, Berlin, December 23, 1904, GA 93

Manes will prepare for that epoch in which the men of the Sixth Root Race will be led by themselves, by the light of their own souls. Manes will create an overlapping stream, a stream which goes further than the stream

of the Rosicrucians. The stream of Manes goes over to the Sixth Root Race which has been in preparation since the founding of Christianity. Christianity will appear in its perfected form in the Sixth Root Race.

A number of human beings must be formed into an organization, a form, in which the Christianity of the sixth root race can find its place. In this sixth root race, good and evil will form a far greater contrast than they do today. In the sixth root race, evil will appear, especially in the spiritual. There will be men who are mighty in love and goodness. But evil will also be there as a mood and a disposition without any covering, within a large number of human beings. They will extol evil. The task of the sixth root race is to draw evil again into itself through gentleness. It must express itself in the forming of a community which has to spread above all things: peace, love, and non-resistance to evil.

The Manicheans, Rudolf Steiner, Berlin, November 11, 1904, GA 93

The main characteristic of the sixth epoch will be that very definite feelings regarding what is moral and what is immoral will arise in the souls of men. Delicate feelings of sympathy will be aroused by compassionate, kindly deeds and feelings of antipathy by malicious actions. The sixth epoch will be followed by the seventh, when the moral life will be still further deepened. Whereas in the sixth epoch man will take pleasure in good and noble actions, in the seventh epoch the natural outcome of such pleasure will be a moral impulse, that is to say there will be a firm resolve to do what is moral. The essential characteristic of the following epoch will be aesthetic pleasure in the good, aesthetic displeasure in the evil.

Let us think once again of the phases of evolution through the fifth, sixth and seventh post-Atlantean culture-epochs in order to grasp how intellectuality, aestheticism and morality will come to expression in men's life of soul. In the sixth epoch, that is, from about the third millennium onwards, immorality will have a paralyzing effect upon intellectuality. The mental powers of a man who is intellectual and at the same time immoral will definitely deteriorate and this condition will become more and more pronounced in the future evolution of humanity. A man who has no morals will therefore have no intellectual power for this will depend entirely upon moral actions; and in the seventh epoch, cleverness without morality will be non-existent.

And during the next three thousand years the number of those able to behold the etheric Christ will steadily increase, until in about three thousand years, reckoning from the present time, there will be a sufficient number of human beings on the Earth who will need no gospels or other such records, because in their own life of soul they will have actual vision of the Christ.

Hence during the next three thousand years men will have to acquire in the physical world the power to behold the super-sensible Christ, and it is the mission of the Anthroposophical Movement to create, first of all, the conditions which make understanding of Christ possible on the physical plane, and then the power to behold Him.

The Christ-Individuality was on the Earth in the body of Jesus of Nazareth for three years only and does not come again in a physical body; in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch He comes in an etheric body, in the sixth epoch in an astral body, and in the seventh in a mighty Cosmic Ego that is like a great Group-Soul of humanity.

We therefore see how starting from a physical man on Earth, the Christ gradually evolves as Etheric Christ, as Astral Christ, as Ego-Christ, in order, as Ego-Christ, to be the Spirit of the Earth who then rises to even higher stages together with all mankind.

The words uttered by the Maitreya Buddha will contain a magic power that will become moral impulses in the men who hear them. The utterances of the Maitreya Buddha will be permeated in a miraculous way with the power of Christ.

Buddha and Christ, The Sphere of the Bodhisattvas, Rudolf Steiner, Milan, September 21, 1911, GA 130

Just think how orderly the plants grow; each plant grows toward the sun and there is only a single sun. When in the same way, in the course of the sixth cultural epoch, that Spirit-Self draws into human beings, a Spiritual Sun will actually be present, toward which all men will incline, and in which they will become harmonized. That is the great perspective which we have in prospect for the sixth epoch.

But we now see clearly that an epoch will come, the sixth, which will be a very important one; important, because it will bring Peace and Brotherhood through a common Wisdom. Peace and Brotherhood, because not only will the Higher Self sink down into its lower form as Spirit-Self or Manas in certain chosen human beings, but also in that part of humanity passing through a normal evolution. A union of the human ego, as it has been gradually evolved with the higher, the unifying Ego, will then take place. We may call this a spiritual marriage and the union of the human ego with Manas or Spirit-Self was always so called in Esoteric Christianity. What is to happen to mankind in the sixth epoch must be slowly and gradually prepared. The power and force of what is to take place within mankind in the sixth epoch has to come from without.

Gospel of John, Lecture X, The Effect of the Christ Impulse Within Mankind, Rudolf Steiner, Hamburg, May 5-31, 1908, Ga 103

Concerning the Shedding of Desire

For the ego there are two kinds of desires in life: the desires that have their source in the bodies, and therefore must be satisfied within these bodies, ceasing with the disintegration of these bodies, and the desires that have their source in the spiritual nature of the ego. As long as the ego is within the bodies, these desires also are satisfied by means of bodily organs, for in the manifestations of the bodily organs the hidden spirit is at work, and in all that the senses perceive they receive at the same time something spiritual.

This spiritual element exists also after death, although in another form. All spiritual desires of the ego within the sense world exist also when the senses are no longer present. If a third kind of desire were not added to these two, death would signify merely a transition from desires that can be satisfied by means of the senses to those that find their realization in the revelation of the spiritual world. This third type of desire is produced by the ego during its life in the sense world because it finds pleasure in this world also in so far as there is no spirit manifest in it.

The basest enjoyments can be a manifestation of the spirit. The gratification that the hungry being experiences in taking food is a manifestation of spirit because through the eating of food something is brought about without which, in a certain sense, the spirit could not evolve.

The ego can, however, transcend the enjoyment that this fact of necessity offers. It may long for good tasting food, quite apart from the service rendered the spirit by eating. The same is true of other things in the sense world. Desires are created thereby that would never have come into being in the sense world had the human ego not been incorporated in it. But neither do these desires spring from the spiritual nature of the ego. The ego must have sense enjoyments as long as it lives in the body, also in so far as it is spiritual; for the spirit manifests in the sense world and the ego enjoys nothing but spirit when, in this world, it surrenders itself to that medium through which the light of the spirit radiates. It will continue to enjoy this light even when the sense world is no longer the medium through which the rays of the spirit pass.

In the spirit world, however, there is no gratification for desires in which the spirit has not already manifested itself in the sense world. When death takes place, the possibility for the gratification of these desires is cut off. The enjoyment of appetizing food can come only through the physical organs that are used for taking in food: the palate, tongue, and so forth. After throwing off the physical body man no longer possesses these organs. But if the ego still has a longing for these pleasures, this longing must remain ungratified. In so far as this enjoyment is in accord with the spirit, it exists only as long as the physical organs are present. If it has been produced by the ego, without serving the spirit, it continues after death as desire, which thirsts in vain for satisfaction.

Source: Rudolf Steiner – GA 13 – An Outline of Occult Science: III: Sleep and Death
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