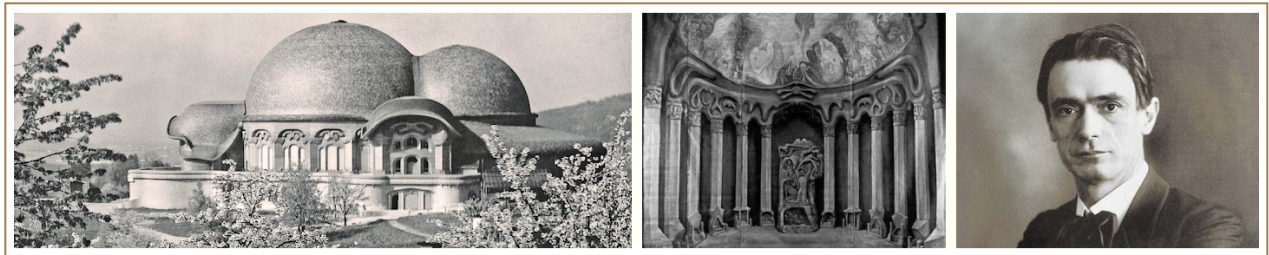


# The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

## How Can the Destitution of Soul in Modern Times be Overcome?

GA 168



*I have pointed out that the fifth post-Atlantean epoch [our time] is beset with difficulties on account of its pressing forward in a certain direction, to the development of the consciousness soul. The consciousness soul — just because it should develop as such — must encounter opposition and pass through trials.*

### **Anthony's Prefatory Note:**

World War One had been raging for over two years when this lecture was given in Zürich, Switzerland while the Battle of the Somme (1 July 1916 – 18 November 1916, 141 days), raged only 420 miles to the West. He was speaking to a gathering of those who undoubtedly were involved in some way with the construction of the First Goetheanum (banner above), started in 1913, in Dornach, Switzerland, 54 miles to the West. It is important to understand that the First Goetheanum, constructed under the darkness of the First World War was achieved by individuals from 17 different nations — most of whose nations were at war with one another and at the time of this lecture killing one another in the Battle of the Somme.

*Headers have been added to highlight particular subjects. Added emphasis (bolding) is also mine. ~Anthony*

10 October 1916, Zürich

The truths we look for in spiritual science should not be dead facts, but should bring with them understanding of such a vital kind that it finds entrance into life in all circumstances and at every point. Taken in the abstract, as is often the case at present, spiritual science may seem to offer a diluted and unproductive kind of knowledge, and it is natural that people who know very little about it should be induced to ask: What, after all, is the use of learning that man consists of such and such parts; that humanity has developed, and will develop further, through different epochs of culture, and so on? Those who feel that a realistic attitude is demanded by modern life find spiritual science unprofitable. And it is often applied in an unprofitable way, even by its most devoted adherents.

Nevertheless, spiritual science itself is infinitely alive, and is something which in the course of time can and must bring life into our most external concerns. I should like to make this clear today by a particular example. Most of us know that our present age was preceded by the so-called fourth post-Atlantean culture epoch, during which the most important peoples were the Greeks and Romans; that the following centuries down to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries continued to be influenced by impulses preceding from that epoch; and that since the fifteenth century mankind has been living in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, into which we ourselves in our present incarnation have been born and in which humanity will be living for many hundreds of years to come. We know furthermore that in man in the fourth post-Atlantean period of civilisation — the Graeco-Roman epoch — was built up pre-eminently the so-called intellectual soul through external culture and work and that cultivation of the consciousness soul is our present task. What does the cultivation of the consciousness soul mean? This abstract statement, rightly understood, contains the destiny of mankind for our entire fifth post-Atlantean period. In order that the consciousness soul may be brought to expression, the various peoples of this period of culture should work together. All the conditions and circumstances of life proclaim this truth; on all sides we find it confirmed that our age stands for the development of the consciousness soul.

Human life was completely different in the preceding Graeco-Roman period when, according to the stage of development mankind had reached, the faculties of intellect and of feeling were bestowed upon them. Intellect covers a wide field; today this is not sufficiently understood. In their soul-life the Greeks and Romans were dependent upon it in a different way from ourselves in the fifth post-Atlantean period. They received the intellect, in so far as they needed to make use of it, "ready-made", as a natural tendency of their stage of development; there was no need to cultivate it as we must do at present, and as will be increasingly necessary in the further course of the fifth post-Atlantean period — it developed as a natural tendency. The child grew up, and as his natural tendencies developed, the natural intellect — in a certain sense — developed with them. Growing up in ordinary conditions in a particular incarnation he either possessed an intellect, or he did not. The latter case was considered pathological, or at any rate abnormal, out of the common.

And so it was with heart-and-feeling. Appropriately to the fourth post-Atlantean period heart-and-feeling developed. And though history tells us little of such things, it is nevertheless true that two people meeting for the first time knew how to tune in to each other. In this respect there is a great difference between the preceding centuries down to the fifteenth century, and our own time. People, then, did not pass each other by with the complete indifference often shown nowadays. At present we are slow, as a rule, to make friends. We must know a great deal about each other before confidence can be established. But what is now only to be arrived at after long acquaintance — if at all — in former centuries, particularly during the Graeco-Roman period of civilisation, could be won at a stroke. In virtue of their respective individualities people were drawn rapidly together, without so much need to exchange feelings and thoughts. Acquaintance was quickly made, in so far as it might be good for the two persons concerned, or necessary to a group of people forming themselves into a community. Heart-and-feeling in the one could still reach out more spiritually and make immediate contact with heart-and-feeling in the other. Up to the present, through the medium of our senses, we can still accurately distinguish the colours, and so forth, of plants; but it will no longer be possible to do this spontaneously in the seventh post-Atlantean epoch when learning to know nature will necessitate special conditions. And there is a resemblance between our actual connection with plants and human connections in the fourth post-Atlantean epoch. We must remember that this kind of feeling-and-heart connection was well adapted to that age, but a very different network of feelings and sensations spans the world of today. In the fourth post-Atlantean epoch human relationships and undertakings depended to the greatest possible extent upon personal contacts. The art of printing which has done so much up to now, and will do more and more in the future, to establish impersonal

relationships, belongs to the fifth post-Atlantean epoch; and modern terms of intercourse are such that, fundamentally speaking, connections formed at a stroke are no longer even beneficial, and people can only approach one another on far more impersonal grounds.

Towards this, modern man is developing; he is no longer possessed of a ready-made heart-and-feeling with its spontaneous reactions, nor of a penetrating intellect, but impelled by the consciousness soul to develop something far more detached, more individual, more dependent upon egoism, upon human loneliness inherent in the organisation of his own body, than was the intellectual soul or mind soul. Through the consciousness soul man is much more an individual, a solitary traveler through the world. And the tendency people now show to withdraw into themselves is becoming [a] more and more pronounced characteristic of our time. The hallmark of the consciousness soul is the urge towards an isolated life, secluded from the rest of mankind. Hence the difficulty of getting to know one another, especially of establishing confidence, without the transition period of formal acquaintanceship.

The significance of all this becomes clearer if we give due weight to the spiritual-scientific truth that in the present age we are not thrown together by chance with other people. That the path of life brings us into contact with certain people and not with others depends upon the working out of individual karma. For we have entered upon a period of human evolution which brings man's preceding karmic developments to a culminating point. Think how much less karma had been accumulated in the earlier periods of earth evolution! With every incarnation fresh karma is made. At first, people had to meet under totally new conditions, with the possibility of forming fresh connections. But through repeated earth-lives we have gradually reached a point at which, as a general rule, we do not meet anyone with whom in former incarnations we have not shared this or that experience. And these experiences bring us into contact again with those who shared them. We meet other people as it would appear by chance but in reality because in former incarnations we had already met, and on the strength of this are brought together again.

Now the self-contained consciousness soul can only develop — and its development is destined to take place in our time — when less importance is attached to what takes place at present between one person and another than to what works inwardly in solitude as the result of former incarnations. In the Graeco-Roman period two persons meeting for the first time made an impression upon each other which worked with the immediacy of a blow. At present, if a meeting is to take place that is to further the development of the consciousness soul, the moving factor between them must be what emerges in one or [the] other as the result of previous incarnations. This takes longer than recognition at first sight; it implies the gradual coming to the surface, little by little in a feeling, instinctive way, of what they formerly lived through together. What we ask today is that in becoming acquainted individual corners should be rubbed off. Because it is in the becoming acquainted, this rubbing off of corners, that the still unconscious, instinctive reminiscences and after-effects of former incarnations strike upwards. The consciousness soul can only develop when our contacts with other people are made from within; whereas the intellectual and mind soul develops more through immediate contact.

**What I have now described for the fifth post-Atlantean epoch is only in its initial stage. And as the epoch continues it will become increasingly difficult to bring ourselves into a right relationship with others, because this demands inner development, inner activity. A beginning has been made, but what has begun must continue to spread and become more and more intensive. How hard it is already in this present time for people drawn together by karma to understand each other, perhaps because owing to other karmic connections they have not the force instinctively to conjure up all the relations leading over from former incarnations. Stirred by certain after-effects of previous earth-lives,**

**people are drawn together in love; but other forces work against these rising memories, and friends grow apart again. And this putting the durability of their relationship to the test is not only for those who meet in life as friends; it will also be increasingly difficult for children to understand their parents, parents their children, brothers and sisters each other. Reciprocal understanding will become more and more difficult, because of the increasing need to free what is karmically imprisoned within us, and to let it rise to the surface.**

Now this negative prospect of ever increasing difficulty in reciprocal understanding in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch requires of us that we should not dream our lives away in the dark, nor close our eyes to the condition of evolution, because this is an absolutely necessary condition. If the difficulty of coming to mutual understanding were not hanging over fifth post-Atlantean humanity, the consciousness soul could not develop, and people would have to live their life in common dependent upon their natural tendencies. And cultivation of individuality — which belongs to the consciousness soul — would not be able to develop either. This must take place. Men will have to undergo this test.

## **The Future of Humanity Lies with the Individual**

Nevertheless, if only this negative aspect of evolutionary conditions in the fifth post-Atlantean period were to prevail, war and strife would inevitably arise, and find their way into even our most unimportant concerns. I need refer only to one thing and it will be plain to all of us how the remedy is to be sought for one of our necessary ills — for the difficulty we find in understanding each other. I need only say — because we are living in the age of the consciousness soul, as the fifth post-Atlantean epoch proceeds more and more conscious interest will have to be felt for SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING. In this term needs are summed up which in the fourth post-Atlantean period did not exist to at all the same extent. Anyone able accurately to study the history of ancient Greece and Rome knows that for these peoples the individual was not yet possessed of the abilities that can now be made use of by European humanity, and by their American connections. This becomes clearer if we compare human beings with an animal species. Why do animals of the same species live, within certain limits, harmoniously together? For through their group soul, the soul of their species, they have this inborn faculty; it is inherent in the species, and a matter of course. But this represents a stage of development at which the animal remains stationary, but which man must outgrow. **Every single human being must develop himself as an individual, and particularly in our modern age of the consciousness soul this self-culture of the individual is one of the most important matters. The Graeco-Roman civilisation is still coloured by a group-soul element. We find its peoples making part of a social order, the structure of which, though certainly derived more from moral forces, is in itself a fixed structure and will in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch be increasingly broken up. This group-soul element in the fourth post-Atlantean epoch has no longer any meaning for the fifth. A conscious form of social understanding must take its place, proceeding from a deep knowledge of the true being of the human individual. And it is spiritual science which will first develop this understanding. When spiritual science blossoms more and more out of the abstract into the concrete, into fullness of life, among its adherents a very special knowledge of, a very special interest in, humanity will be aroused. There will be people with special gifts for teaching others about the different temperaments and characterological tendencies, how this person with a particular temperament should be taken in such a way, whereas that other person with the same temperament but with a different trend of character requires different treatment. These specially gifted men will say to those who are ready to learn: "Look carefully; there is this type of person and there is that other type, and, with each, must deal differently." Practical psychology, practical knowledge of the soul, but also a practical knowledge of life, will be cultivated, and out of this true social understanding for human development will grow.**



What have we had up to now in the shape of social understanding? All kinds of abstract ideals, concerned with national welfare and human happiness, this or that form of socialism, have made their appearance. And only when certain sociological ideas are really on the point of being put into practice, is the acknowledgment of their impracticability forthcoming. What in the first place is important is not to found sects and societies with fixed programmes, but to spread the knowledge of men, notably such knowledge of human nature as will enable us to understand the growing, developing human being, to understand the child, and how each child develops according to its particular individuality. In this way we shall learn so to adjust ourselves in life that when confronted by karma with a personal connection to be made, a connection to be drawn closer, we shall establish a real and enduring relationship, of the kind which can prove itself in life to be most truly fruitful. Practical knowledge of man, practical, effectual interest in humanity, this is what counts. Up to the present mankind has gone only a short way along this path and with small success. For how do we judge a person whom we meet nowadays? As being agreeable to us, or the reverse. Look about you and you will find that this is, in most cases, the sole criterion, or if more than one opinion is pronounced there is only one point of view; "This man appeals to me, another does not. I like this about so-and-so, but I do not like that." Foregone conclusions! We make for ourselves an idea of what someone should be, and when we find that they differ from it we criticise. No progress will be made towards a true practical understanding of man until we do away with these prejudices and fancies for this person or that, and make up our minds to take people as they are.

How often, when two people meet for the first time, one of them arouses instantaneous antipathy in the other, whom he dislikes so much that afterwards whatever they have to do with each other is coloured by this dislike. As a consequence the karmic connection between them can be entirely blotted out, or set on a false track, and will have to be laid aside until the two meet again in their next incarnation. Sympathy and antipathy are the greatest enemies of true social interests, though only too little heed is paid to the fact. But to anyone deeply aware of the importance of true social understanding for the further development of mankind, it is distressing to watch the effect teachers in a school often have upon their pupils, when out of prejudice they show preference for one rather than another, whereas it is important to take each of them as he is able and to make the very most of that.

But here we are up against regulations. Our regulations and social laws often so implacably wipe out individuality in the teacher himself, that any real effort to uphold individuality as such is impossible.

Understanding for spiritual science would cause practical knowledge of the human soul and practical knowledge of man to become matters of general interest. This is a necessity for social understanding if it is, to some extent, to create the opposite pole to the difficulty of understanding one another. It is what must come in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch of the consciousness soul is to develop fully. Man must go through trials and provings, for the opposing forces set snares in our way. And accordingly feelings of sympathy and antipathy will be widespread, and it is only by consciously combating these superficial feelings that we shall bring the consciousness soul safely to birth. Social understanding between man and man will also be more and more powerfully opposed by those nationalistic feelings and emotions, which only assumed their present form in the nineteenth century but are gaining the upper hand more and more. And since good is to be found only in the overcoming of them, these national antagonisms, these national sympathies and antipathies, [as they arise] are so strong that they are fearful testings for mankind. Were they to gain the upper hand, as they bid fair to do, we should dream away the development of the consciousness soul, because nationalism works in the opposite direction, and stands in the way of man's independence by tending to make of him a mere reflection of this or that national group. This is the first thing to bear in mind if we want the otherwise empty saying to become a reality in our souls: that the fifth post-Atlantean

epoch is in particular for the development of the consciousness soul. And further to this development: if as individualism increases religion does not adapt itself to the needs of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, but remains as it was suitable for the fourth post-Atlantean period, a certain drying up of the religious life must take place.

## On Religion, The Church

Religious groups were bound to arise in the fourth post-Atlantean epoch because at that time mankind lived more as groups. It was necessary for authority to pour out dogmas, principles of religion, religious thought, upon groups of people, as common to them all. But because the urge to develop individuality through the consciousness soul in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch is becoming stronger and stronger, that which speaks out of the group religions can no longer find its way to human hearts, and individual human souls. And what comes from these group religions will simply not be understood. In the fourth post-Atlantean epoch it was still possible out of the group to teach people about Christ. But in the fifth period Christ is already actually entering the individual soul. Already, unconsciously or subconsciously, we all carry Christ within us. But through ourselves alone we must find the way to understand Him anew. This will not come from the imposing of fixed dogmas, only from doing all we can to further what will make Christ universally comprehensible, to further the spread of universal religious knowledge in general, and to search out everything which can work to this end. Hence in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch the need for more and more tolerance, particularly where thought in connection with religious experience is concerned. And whereas in the fourth post-Atlantean epoch those who worked to spread religious truths did so by imposing certain dogmas and fixed principles, in the fifth period this must all completely change. It is a question of something entirely different. Because men are becoming more and more individual an attempt should be made for anyone to describe his inner experiences completely freed from dogma to another, in such a way that the latter might also be able to develop his own free life of religious thought as an individual. It is a fact that dogmatic religion, the fixed dogmas of the religious confessions, will kill the religious life of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. So that a fresh start from this age must consist in making it clear that in the first centuries of the Christian era this or that may have been adapted to man's development at the time, and that in the following centuries something different is needed. Also that there are different religions. We must try to make the essential nature of the different religions intelligible, to make clear different aspects of the Christ-conception. In this way we bring to every soul what it requires for its particular deepening. But we do not ourselves intervene in the moulding of the soul; we leave the soul, especially in the sphere of religion, its own liberty of thinking and scope to unfold this liberty.

Just as social understanding is necessary for the fifth post-Atlantean period at the point I have described, so is liberty of thought on religious grounds a fundamental condition for the development of the consciousness soul. SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE SPHERE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS. LIBERTY OF THOUGHT IN THE SPHERE OF RELIGION — of the religious life.

## The Decline of the Church's Influence

This effort of ours to understand the religious aspect of life more and more, to penetrate it, and by so doing to come to terms with our fellow men even though each of them may have his own religious life to unfold, must be kept clearly in view because it is a basic need of the fifth post-Atlantean period and something humanity must acquire by consciously drawing upon their own strength. In this very age of the consciousness soul, the ahrimanic powers are most fiercely renewing their attack upon liberty of thought — the nerve and sinew in the stream of the spiritual scientific conception of life — and we know what opposition it encounters from the religious confessions in general, and what calumnies are directed from every side upon spiritual science, on account of its complete and luminous acceptance of the birth of the consciousness soul, and its refusal to take part in propagating

the kind of religious life which is still dependent upon the support of the intellectual or mind soul, as in the fourth post-Atlantean period. The various forms assumed by Christianity were established in the fourth post-Atlantean period according to the requirements of the Graeco-Roman civilisation. As Church-forms they are already unsuitable and will become ever more unsuitable for the growth of free thought which must take place.

And in the age which prompted by modern life feels the first stirrings of a need to think freely, we find the opposing power at work in the so-called Jesuitism of the different religions — although much comes under this heading which would have to be described in detail <sup>[1]</sup>. It is actually brought to life in order that the strongest possible resistance may be offered to liberty of thought, so vital a necessity for the fifth post-Atlantean period. It will become more and more necessary to exterminate Jesuitism, the enemy in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch of free thinking, because from religion outwards liberty of thought must spread over every sphere of life. But as it must be striven for independently, mankind is put, as it were, to the proof, and difficulties spring up everywhere. These difficulties will increase as men of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch advance towards clear consciousness, yet feeling this at first to be a disadvantage, and in many respects stupefying themselves.

So we find the clash of sharp conflict between germinating liberty of thought and the principle of authority which works into our times like a hang-over from the past. And there is a passion for dulling the consciousness and for self-deception where belief in authority is concerned. In our time putting faith in authority has become so great and so intensified that under its influence people are losing their power of judgment. In the fourth post-Atlantean epoch they were endowed by nature with sound understanding; now they must acquire it, develop it, and their belief in authority holds them back from doing so. We are becoming bound hand and foot to our belief in authority. Only think how helpless human beings appear when compared to the unreasoning animal creation! How completely the animal is guided by instincts which lead it in a sound way even from sickness back to health; whereas modern man fights against sound judgment in this respect and submits himself entirely to authority. He has very little wish to acquire discernment for healthy conditions of living, although it is true that praiseworthy efforts are made in this direction by various societies and institutions. But these efforts need to be very much intensified; above all we must realise that we have increasingly to contend with our own trust in authority, and that whole theories are being built up which in their turn will become the basis of convictions only serving to uphold belief in authority.

## The Opposition to the Individual's Personal Growth

In medicine, in law and in every other sphere people declare themselves from the outset incompetent to judge, and accept what science tells them. The complications of modern life make this understandable. But under the pressure of authority we shall become more and more helpless. And systematically to build up this force of authority, this habit of authority, is actually the principle of Jesuitism. And Jesuitism in the Catholic religion is only a special instance of other less noticeable performances in other directions. It begins in the sphere of ecclesiastical dogma with the tendency to uphold papal authority projected over from the fourth post-Atlantean period into the fifth where it can do no good. But the same Jesuitical principle will gradually transfer itself to other spheres of life. In a form hardly differing from the Jesuitism of dogmatic religion, we already find it in medical circles where a certain dogmatism strives after more power for the medical profession. This is typical of Jesuitical aspiration everywhere; and it will grow stronger and stronger. People will find themselves more and more tied down by what authority imposes upon them. And in face of this ahrimanic opposition — for such it is — salvation for the fifth post-Atlantean epoch will be found in asserting the rights of the consciousness soul which is wishing to develop. But as the gift of reason is no longer bestowed upon us like our two arms by Nature, as was still to some extent the case in the fourth

post-Atlantean epoch, this can only come about through our good will to develop the faculties of understanding and sound judgment. The development of the consciousness soul demands liberty of thought; and this can flourish only in a particular aura, in a certain atmosphere.

I have pointed out that the fifth post-Atlantean epoch is beset with difficulties on account of its pressing forward in a certain direction, to the development of the consciousness soul. The consciousness soul — just because it should develop as such — must encounter opposition and pass through trials. We see what tremendous and growing opposition there is to social understanding and liberty of thought. But this opposition is not acknowledged to be such; it is looked upon in the most extensive circles as right and proper, as something in no way to be condemned but on the contrary most carefully to be fostered.

There are, however, a great many people whose sincerity and clear vision make them fully aware of what dangers modern man is exposed to and who have a keen sense for what is already plain to see: that karmic connections having entered the period of crisis described above, the moment has come when parents and children, brothers and sister peoples and nations will no longer understand each other. There are already a sufficient number of people who realise that these necessary conditions can work for good only when they are faced with the understanding which rises from the very life of the heart. For the impulse for this new world-working must be consciously wrung out of the heart's blood. What comes spontaneously brings estrangement between individuals. We must consciously strive after what springs from the human heart. Every single soul has difficulties to encounter in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch because the consciousness soul can develop only through the testing occasioned by the overcoming of these difficulties.

How often nowadays one hears: "I don't know what to do with myself, I don't know how to organise my life." This comes from inability to see clearly what the needs of the present time are, and what man's position is with regard to them. Many people are reduced by existing conditions to physical illness, physical strain and loss of balance. And a real understanding for this must be more and more intensively cultivated because what threatens us, and is at the same time a necessity for the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, is the danger of DESTITUTION OF SOUL — destitution of the particular "shade" described in today's lecture. Many people see what this means and feel how necessary it is that we should come to social understanding on the one hand and liberty of thought on the other. But today very few are inclined to make use of the right means to this end. For social understanding, what would be necessary to achieve it, is only too often served by a hotch-potch [hodge-podge? — e.Ed] of high-sounding phrases. There is a lot of talk nowadays about the necessity for the individual treatment of the growing child. What long-winded theories are devised in every branch of pedagogy! Very little of this is to the point. Whereas an intelligent circulation of as many positive descriptions as possible of how the human being actually develops, a positive natural history of individual development, is needed. Wherever possible we should describe how the human beings A, B and C have developed and enter lovingly into such human development as takes place before our eyes — this is what we need. Above all the study of life is necessary, the will to gain knowledge of life itself, rather than to make out programmes. The theoretical programme is the enemy of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch of culture.

Now when a society is formed, this should take place in accordance with the aims of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. This means that the members of it must constitute the chief reason for its existence, and the exchange of ideas between these actual men should yield the best results possible; and if sufficient attention is given to this, very individual results will show themselves. At present, what is the usual procedure? It begins with a drawing up of rules. This can be quite good, and may be necessary, because external conditions demand rules and regulations. But on our own ground we must be very clear that talk about programmes and regulations is merely a concession to



the outside world; that what concerns us must be the life in common as individuals, what issues from actual human beings; that reciprocal understanding is what counts. This will make it possible even in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch — which has centuries yet before it — that from among those who understand such things, understanding could go forth for vital individual development in the world generally, which at present puts everything into sections and regulations as if into a straight jacket. From thence come the high-sounding doctrines which from pulpit and platform proclaim the art of living. Theories crop up on every hand, dripping with abstractions and demonstrating every imaginable idea and ideal. So importance can be attached to them, but only to what is concrete, and to a comprehending penetration of the actualities of life. How can this come about?

It stands to reason that to what has been said the following objections would be justified: "Yes, indeed — but we are not qualified to pronounce an opinion upon what experts nowadays officially give out. Only consider" — it might be objected — "what the medical student has to learn! That he should learn it is right and proper, but we could not; and then add to this what the lawyer must know, and the art student, and so on." — It is certainly out of the question that we should learn these things; but we are not called upon to be creative, we need only be capable of judging. We must allow the expert to create, but we must be able to criticise the expert. And this faculty of judgment we shall not acquire by specialising, but only by cultivating in an all-round way our powers of understanding and our faculty of judgment. This, however, can never come about through expert knowledge in some particular branch of science, but only through the all-embracing knowledge of the Spirit.

Spiritual science must be the centre around which all the sciences revolve; for it not only throws light upon the connections in human evolution, but the way of thinking peculiar to it develops in us sound understanding, and this must be produced and given out from far deeper depths than during the Graeco-Roman civilisation of the fourth post-Atlantean epoch. The construction of concepts and representations necessary for spiritual science, and peculiar to it, does not qualify us to become experts in any particular sphere, but it gives us the power of judging. And the reason for this will become more and more plain to see. There are mysterious forces in the human soul, and these forces, these mystery forces, will link the human soul with the spiritual world, and through our participation in spiritual science this link will enable us to use our judgment when we stand in the presence of authority. We shall not have expert knowledge but when in certain cases the expert acts on the strength of what he knows, we shall be able to form our own judgment about it.

**Emphasis must be laid upon the fact that spiritual science not only teaches us but in this connection develops our faculty of judgment — that is to say, it makes possible and fosters the freedom and independence of our thinking. Spiritual science may not qualify us to enter the medical profession, but if we can penetrate to its reality it makes us capable of forming a right judgment upon the results of medicine in public life. If what I mean by this could once be fully understood, there would be understanding as well for the many, many life-giving forces of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. For very much is contained in what I mean by saying that spiritual science will, as it were, remodel the human Intellect in such a way that man's critical faculty may be able to unfold itself, and in releasing his intellectual life from the life of his soul he may be able to develop true liberty of thought.**

## The View of the Angels

I should like now, if you will allow me, to put these thoughts before you in a more pictorial, imaginative way» We are told in spiritual science of a concrete spiritual world; of elemental beings surrounding us; of the Hierarchies, Angels, Archangels and so forth. The world becomes peopled for us with real spiritual content, spiritual forces and spiritual beings. That we should know nothing about

these spiritual beings is no longer a matter of indifference to them as to some extent it still was in the fourth post-Atlantean period. But if in the fifth post-Atlantean epoch men on earth know nothing about them it is as though, a part of their spiritual nourishment was being withheld. The spiritual world is in close communication with our present physical world of earth. You will understand this better when I tell you something which may seem strange now, but is quite simply true; and although at present it is still not possible to say very much, yet certain truths must be given out because humanity should no longer be without them.

From the point of view of humanity on earth we are perfectly justified in saying: With the Mystery of Golgotha Christ entered earth-life, and He has remained in earth-life since then; and from this point of view we can feel it as good fortune for earth-life that Christ should have entered it. But now let us consider this from the standpoint of the Angels — which is no invention of mine, but follows as a reality from occult investigation — let us transfer ourselves to the standpoint of the Angels. Their experience in the spiritual sphere was quite different, it was the reverse of ours. Christ left the sphere of the Angels to come to mankind; He forsook their world. Speaking for themselves they could say: Christ left our world to go through the Mystery of Golgotha. **And they would have as much reason to sorrow over this as we have to rejoice that Christ in His healing power should have come to us in as far as we live on earth in our physical bodies. This is a real train of thought, and anyone with actual knowledge of the spiritual world knows that there is only one way for the Angels to find solace, and I described it rightly when I said that men on earth in their physical bodies should live with the Christ-thought in such a way that it can shine upwards as a light to the Angels — since the Mystery of Golgotha — shine up to the Angels as a light. Men say: Christ has entered into us, and we can develop in such a way that He will be able to dwell in us — "not I, but Christ in me." The Angels say: Christ has gone from the sphere of our inner life, and He shines up to us now like so many stars in the Christ-thought of individual men; He shines up to us since the Mystery of Golgotha, and there we find Him again. There is a real connection between the spiritual world and the human world. And this is also shown by the fact that the spiritual beings who apart from ourselves inhabit the spiritual world look with satisfaction and approval upon our thoughts about their world. They can help us only if we think about them; and although we may not have attained to clairvoyant vision into the spiritual world, if we know about these spiritual beings they can help us. In return for our study of spiritual science help comes to us from the spiritual world. It is not merely the things we learn, the knowledge we acquire, it is the beings of the higher Hierarchies themselves who help us when we know about them. And if in future, as the fifth post-Atlantean epoch proceeds, we face the authority of the expert, it will be good to have behind us not only our own human understanding but also what the spiritual beings are able to weave into it through our knowing about them. They qualify us to confront authority with sound judgment. The spiritual world helps us. We have need of it, we must know about it, and unite ourselves with it through conscious understanding. This is the third thing which must come to pass in the fifth post-Atlantean period.**

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1. RECIPROCAL UNDERSTANDING IN SOCIAL LIFE.

2. THE ACQUIRING OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT.

3. LIVING KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLDS THROUGH SPIRITUAL SCIENCE.

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These three things must be the great true ideals of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. We must have reciprocal understanding in the social sphere, liberty of thought in religion and in the other branches of community life; and in the sphere of knowledge we must have knowledge of the spiritual worlds.

**SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING, LIBERTY OF THOUGHT, KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLDS.** These are the three great aims and impulses of the fifth post-Atlantean period. In the light of these impulses we must develop, for they are the true lights of our time. Many people feel strongly that some change is necessary, particularly in the social sphere where a quite different way of living must be adopted, and that we must have different concepts. But out of ignorance or unwillingness they evade the ultimate conclusions. This can be seen from the attitude of so many towards the aspirations of spiritual science. And here we need not confine ourselves to deliberately malicious calumny of it or of Theosophy. We need only consider the sincere will that abounds among men today, sincere will that aims at the creation of impulses tending in the direction post-Atlantean humanity should take.

Only think how many reformers there are in every sphere, pastors and preachers on social matters; preachers too who do not belong to theological or religious circles. How they all take the floor! And often prompted by the best will possible. How is that to lead humanity in the direction towards which modern life is striving today? Good intentions are to be found everywhere, so let us for the moment consider what comes, not from bad intentions, but from good. And yet these good intentions do not help so long as they consist only in vague talk, however warm the feelings which underlie it; because the three great true ideals of human understanding, liberty of thought and knowledge of the spiritual worlds cannot reach fulfilment unless the knowledge which comes only from spiritual science is quickened into life. At present, however, except for the little company rallied round the spiritual-scientific conception of the world, understanding for such things has not yet reached even its initial stage.

But we come nowadays upon fine and lofty theories tending in this direction. And, as an example, I should like to tell you of something which happened — "by chance", as we say — to myself. Actually it came about through karma that looking one day into a shop window my eye was caught by the title of a little book which I bought. The subject of it is modern man, what he is in search of, under what impressions he grows up; it describes the many advantages of modern times which make life easy and comfortable — the convenience of steam and electricity, and so on — all set forth in detail. Emphasis is laid upon the jostle and rush of modern life, but also upon its increased possibilities; allusion is made to the outstanding discoveries and inventions of our time in comparison with the duller, poorer, more instinctive way of living in former times — all this is described with a kind of fervour and delight. But then follows a description of the difficulties of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, which I have pointed out today, only without any indication that these things proceed from the peculiarities of the age itself and its demand that the consciousness soul should be developed. What stands out is a complete lack of clear vision, in spite of an open compassionate heart. I will quote: "It is strange that a description of our modern civilisation, which begins on a high note of joy in existence, must end upon the deep note of inner destitution of soul. What we experience here in a small way" (he means by 'a small way' the place where he lives) "is in a far greater sense the experience of our age. An abundance of culture beyond compare, a display of beauty and power in life scarcely to be equaled in history, and side by side with it all a spiritual destitution mounting upwards to lay hold on every class."

And now, having given evidence of so much perspicacity, the author goes on to review various possibilities whereby the true impulse in modern humanity may find its right outlet. And among these possibilities, Theosophy, as he sees it, comes into consideration. Here, among its many enemies, we find a well-wisher of Theosophy, someone who with all good-will takes the trouble to interest himself

in it and for this reason claims our attention. Indeed it is not without good reason that I bring these things to your notice; it is essential that we should concern ourselves with what are the positive connections of spiritual science with the outside world.

After passing "pseudo mysticism" in review as a means of deepening life and as a remedy for destitution of soul, the writer goes on to say; "Theosophy is a near neighbour to mysticism. Many people see it only as a substitute for more trustworthy forces, or as a tendency to syncretism or to eclecticism" — that is to say a hotch-potch [hodge-podge, again — e.Ed] of religious confessions and world-conceptions, just as people who do not wish to go into spiritual science call it warmed-up gnosticism and so on. But the author of this book goes a step further, for he says; "Those who see it only as a tendency to syncretism and eclecticism, equivalent to individual inclinations, confuse it with still more doubtful symptoms of modern life such as superstition, spiritualism, apparitions, symbolism and similar trifling with the mystery-loving element in human nature. But this is not the case. We do this Movement an injustice by refusing to acknowledge its deep inner connections and values," — Thus we stand indeed in the presence of a well-wisher. — He continues: "Where Steiner's circle at least is concerned, we must try to understand it as a contemporary religious Movement, although perhaps more syncretic than original, but going to the roots of all life." Let us hope that as this man shows so much goodwill, he may yet find his way to the "originality" of our Movement. "We may look upon it as a Movement dedicated to the satisfying of man's super-sensible interests, and therefore as having outgrown the realism attached to the senses. Above all we may recognise it as a Movement which exhorts men to consider their moral problems, to work for inner re-birth through scrupulous concentration upon self-education." As I have already said; I am not reading this to you out of silly sentimentality, but considering the many things said from other points of view about Anthroposophy, it seems not irrelevant that we should make ourselves acquainted with a criticism such as this: — "One has only to read Steiner's book on Theosophy to be struck by the earnestness with which he enjoins upon his readers the necessity for purification and self-improvement. The speculations contained in it upon the super-sensible are in themselves a reaction to materialism; of course" — and now comes something to which I must beg that you will pay particular attention — "here the book loses touch with reality, and soars into the realms of hypothesis and clairvoyant fantasy, into a world of dreams in which there is no place for the realities of individual and social life. Nevertheless theosophy must be registered as a corrective phenomenon in the cultural progress of our time."

And so there is just one thing to which the author of this book takes exception, and that is the ascent, to knowledge of the spirit, to concrete knowledge of the spirit; which means that he would be glad of the impulse towards man's moral improvement which, by his own showing, springs from Theosophy, but he does not yet understand that for the fifth post-Atlantean epoch moral improvement can only come about through concrete spiritual knowledge. He cannot perceive the roots, and he wants the fruits without them. His range of vision cannot embrace the whole connection. And he is so extraordinarily interesting for just this reason: that, as we see, he has given deep thought to the study of my book "Theosophy" and yet cannot understand that the one is impossible without the other. He would like to cut off the book's head and keep its body because the latter he feels to be important.

This bears out what I have been saying that such people acknowledge the need for social understanding and liberty of thought — this they understand; but that the third, namely, knowledge of the spirit, must form the basis of our fifth post-Atlantean epoch they are not willing to admit; it is something they cannot rise to. And one of the most important tasks in the world-conception of spiritual science is to arouse understanding for this. People often say that rising to the spiritual worlds is a fantastic illusion. They do not see that it is the loss of this knowledge which has brought materialism upon us, with the incapacity for social understanding to which it is allied, with the materialistic way of living, and attitude towards life. And it is by studying our well-wishers that we



can realise how difficult it is for people to admit the existence of concrete spiritual worlds. Because of this we must try the harder to gain understanding for such impulses as those I have brought forward today in my lecture.

The title of the little book I mentioned is "Die Gedankenwelt des Gebildeten, Probleme and Aufgaben" by Prof. Dr. Friedrich Mahling, published in Hamburg in 1914, and it is the reprint of a lecture given by Dr. Mahling at Hamburg on the 23rd September 1913, during the 37th Congress for the Inner Mission. I am only surprised that no one in our circle has ever mentioned the book, for since its publication in 1914 it might easily have come under the notice of any one of us. And although it is important to concern ourselves with the various crossing and re-crossing threads between different spheres of thought at this present time, and with the various shades of abuse and mockery by which our Movement is attacked, we ought also to interest ourselves when, for once in a way as in this case, we are met by an honest effort to understand, and when we could learn from it something about the difficulties such an effort encounters.

### Three Concrete Ideals

The purpose of this lecture has been to point out what should be the three great concrete Ideals of our fifth post-Atlantean epoch; **reciprocal understanding in social life, liberty of thought, knowledge of the Spirit**. In the future it will be for these three great ideals to direct the sciences. It will be for them to refine and purify life, to inspire morality with fresh impulses, to direct, penetrate and further the life of modern humanity to the greatest extent possible. But the first two demands, social understanding and liberty of thought, cannot be satisfied unless the third, knowledge of the Spirit, is added to them, because the consciousness soul should be developed. And the highest stage of the consciousness soul is the spirit-self, the natural predisposition for which will appear in the sixth post-Atlantean epoch. But it cannot develop without the preparatory stage of inner self-dependence, only to be attained by man through the unfolding of the consciousness soul. And we must remind ourselves as part of our endeavour in spiritual science that what may seem to us abstract truths have in them magic power which has only to be released for clear light to pour over the whole of life. And wherever we are placed, as scientists or practical workers in whatever sphere, however small our part, if we know how to quicken into life, for whatever that sphere may be, the abstract truths we take in during our meetings, we shall be fellow-workers at the greatest tasks of our time. And our souls will then be filled with a gladness which is not superficial good cheer, but has its part in the life-giving seriousness that increases our strength; and instead of allowing life to degenerate into a mere excuse for enjoyment makes of us true workers in life.

In this sense the three great concrete social ideals and ideals of cognition will enable the consciousness soul in the fifth post-Atlantean period to understand the Mystery of Golgotha, and to receive Christ in a new way. For we forge a real link with the spiritual worlds by learning to know how these worlds also stand to the central impulse of earth evolution, to the Christ impulse. The Christ impulse will become our real link with the spiritual worlds under the influence of the thoughts which stream from them earthwards, and which we offer up again in our thinking about Christ; because in earth existence since the Mystery of Golgotha the thoughts of human souls shine upwards consolingly like bright stars, as I have described, even to the world of the angels who lost Christ from their sphere in order that they might find Him again shining up to them from the sphere of human thinking.

No, knowledge of the Spirit may not be described as fantastic. It is knowledge of the Spirit which first, of all endeavours to find a way of influencing the actual conditions under which destitution of soul, necessarily bound up with the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, arises. It is of these things that I wished to speak to you today. Let us hope that we may meet again here at a not too distant date, and that until then we may be united in thought and continue to work in the spirit of our Movement.

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# Notes

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**Etymology of the word "jesuitism" as Dr. Steiner uses it here. Definitions are drawn from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary.**

Full interpretation of the meaning is left to the intellect of the reader. ~A

**Jesuit**

one given to intrigue or equivocation

**intrigue**

the practice of engaging in secret schemes

a secret scheme : MACHINATION

**machination**

a scheming or crafty action or artful design intended to accomplish some usually evil end

**equivocation**

deliberate evasiveness in wording : the use of ambiguous or equivocal language

an ambiguous or deliberately evasive statement

**equivocal**

subject to two or more interpretations and usually used to mislead or confuse

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