

HOW CAN THE SOUL NEEDS OF THE TIME BE MET?

A Lecture by Rudolf Steiner in Zurich, Switzerland on October 16, 1916

The truths of the science of spirit which we are seeking should not form for us dead knowledge, but a knowledge which lives, and which really enters into life at every point, into life's most important concerns. It is only natural, and quite easy to understand, that today the science of spirit still is often taken in a very abstract way; and that then a kind of remote knowledge may come about, which proves at first of little value for life, and gives rise to the question, particularly among people who have little knowledge of the science of spirit: What is the use of it all, if one knows that man consists of so many supersensible members, and that humanity has developed through various cultural epochs and will go on developing etc.? To people who believe that they want to stand thoroughly in practical life according to the demands of our present time, the science of spirit often seems quite valueless for life. And indeed it is often studied in a way that is of little value for life, even by these who have a certain feeling and understanding for it.

Nevertheless, in itself the science of spirit is something infinitely alive, something which can have its influence right in the most external, practical matters of life, and indeed must have this influence in the long run. This can be made clear by a particular example.

Most of us have often considered the fact that our time has been preceded by what is called the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, in which the Greeks and Romans were the most significant peoples (though the centuries that followed right up to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were still influenced by the impulses of this fourth post-Atlantean epoch) and that since the fifteenth century we are standing within the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, into which we have been born in this present incarnation. For many centuries men will continue to live in this epoch. We know further, that in the fourth epoch, the civilization of Greece and Rome, through the whole of external culture and the external work of men, what is called the Mind-Soul was principally developed; and that now our task is to develop the Spiritual Soul.

What does this mean: The Spiritual Soul has to be developed? If it is rightly understood, what has now been said abstractly includes the whole destiny of our fifth post-Atlantean period. The various peoples of our fifth post-Atlantean period should co-operate in order to bring the Spiritual Soul to expression. This really shows itself in all the relationships and circumstances of life. If we observe life in the right way, it confirms everywhere the truth that the Spiritual Soul manifests itself in our time. All human life was different in the preceding period, the age of Greece and Rome. At the stage at which humanity was standing during the fourth post-Atlantean period, humanity was endowed with the power of the mind and the power of sensibility. Mind is an inclusive term. This is not seen quite clearly today; the Greeks and Romans depended upon their minds in a way that was different from that of the humanity of our present fifth period. In a sense they received an understanding mind, in a way in which they needed it, ready-made, included among their natural capabilities. A man grew up, and in the same way as his natural capacities were developed, his natural understanding developed too. The natural understanding had not to be educated in the same way as is necessary today, and as

will become more and more necessary throughout the fifth post-Atlantean epoch. It developed in a natural way. And either a man proved to have understanding, if he developed under natural circumstances, or he did not. But this latter was then something pathological. It was indeed an abnormal, not a normal condition.

And it was the same with human sensibility. This developed in a way appropriate for the fourth post-Atlantean period. When one human being encountered another, he knew how to adapt himself to the other. History says little of this, but it was so. Here there is a great difference between the men of previous centuries, up to the fifteenth century, and men of our present time. In these earlier centuries men did not pass each other by with so little interest in one another as often happens at the present time.

Today we often need a long time, when human beings meet, before they really get to know one another. They have to learn this or that about each other before there begins to be any mutual confidence. What today is only achieved after long mutual acquaintance, and very often not even then, in earlier centuries, and particularly during the time of the Greek and Roman civilization, used to be achieved at once when human beings encountered one another. How they were able to approach one another through their individualities showed itself quickly, thoughts and feelings did not need to be exchanged over so long a time. People knew each other quickly, insofar as this knowledge was for the benefit of both the human beings concerned, or for the benefit of a number of men united in a community in a degree in which it was needed. The sensibility of one human being worked over in a much more spiritual way into the sensibility of the other.

Today we can recognize the colors of plants accurately through our senses—in the seventh post-Atlantean epoch this too will no longer happen directly, but special efforts will be necessary in order to know nature—it was the same in regard to men. We must realize that this way of achieving relationships of the heart between men was appropriate for the fourth post-Atlantean epoch. Today the world includes a quite different complex of feeling relationships from that of the earlier time. Remember that by far the largest part of the relationships of human beings in the fourth post-Atlantean period depended upon personal meetings; what had to be arranged among human beings was agreed through personal meetings.

The art of printing, which has shaped our dealings in an impersonal way up to the present time, and will do so more and more, belongs to the fifth post-Atlantean age. And modern communications brought human beings close to one another in such a way that, fundamentally speaking, relationships which were formed at a moment's notice could not be beneficial. Thus through modern communications men encounter one another in a very much more impersonal way.

This is the way in which mankind is developing; we no longer receive a ready-made sensibility, which works instantaneously, or a ready-made understanding, which works in a penetrating way. Through the Spiritual Soul something much more separate and individual is developed than the Mind Soul was—something more adapted to egoism, to human solitude within one's

own body. Through the Spiritual Soul man is much more a solitary individual, a hermit wandering through the world, than he was through the Mind Soul. This has already become the most important characteristic of our time, and will become so more and more, that human beings will shut themselves off within themselves. The Spiritual Soul imparts the characteristic of shutting oneself off from the rest of mankind, of living more in isolation. Hence there are greater difficulties in getting to know the other person, and in getting to trust one another; a detailed process of getting to know one another is necessary.

What significance this all has, we shall best see when we ponder the truth of the science of spirit, which tells us: The way we men meet one another today in life is truly not a mere matter of chance, The paths of life bring us together with certain human beings, and do not bring us together with others. This depends today upon the effects of individual karma. For we have entered a period in the development of humanity which has brought to a certain culmination the development of karma by human beings from earlier times.

Think how much less karma human beings had gathered during the first periods of earthly evolution. Every time we are incarnated, new karma is formed. At first human beings had to meet on earth without having been together before; they were able to develop quite new relationships. But through the fact that we have been incarnated in the world so often, we have gradually come to the point that as a rule we do not encounter any human beings with whom we have not had some common experience in earlier incarnations.

Through the experience of earlier incarnations, we are led to meet other human beings. Such meetings appear a matter of chance; in reality this all depends upon earlier incarnations, in which we have already met, and where the forces were developed through which in some way we are brought together again.

Now the separate Spiritual Soul can only develop as it should in our time, if what happens between man and man today plays a lesser part than what can begin to work within us, in our hermit solitude, as the results which arise from earlier incarnations. In the age of Greece and Rome it was still so that when two human beings met they made an impression upon one another, which worked instantaneously. Today when we meet, it should take a different course, so that the Spiritual Soul, which has a more isolated existence in man, can be developed. When one man meets another, what arises in one of them as a result of earlier incarnations should begin to work.

This needs longer than an immediate acquaintance based on external appearances for this; human beings have to allow their common experiences with the other to arise within them like instinctive feelings. This is what is needed today; that we get to know one another, that the individualities rub one another into shape. For in this getting to know one another, this shaping of individualities, there arise in a way that is still unconscious and instinctive, the memory and the effects of earlier incarnations. Only when a man forms a relationship to others more from within himself, can the Spiritual Soul develop, while through the instantaneous mutual knowledge based on an external meeting, more comes about for the development of the Mind

Soul.

What I have now described to you is still applicable to the fifth post-Atlantean age, which is only in its beginnings. Men will find it more and more difficult, as this fifth post-Atlantean age takes its course, to achieve a right relationship to one another, because this will require the exertion of inner development, inner activity. This has already begun, but what has begun will become more and more widespread, more and more intensive. Indeed, it already happens that frequently human beings who are brought together by karma find it difficult to understand one another directly, because perhaps through other Karmic relationships they do not find the strength to become aware instinctively of all the connections which exist from earlier incarnations!

Human beings meet and love one another; certain influences from earlier incarnations bring this about. But other forces work against this, when a memory of this kind arises; they separate from one another. Not only must human beings who have met one another in life in this way put to the test whether what arises within them is really sufficient to establish a lasting relationship, but it will become more and more difficult for sons and daughters to understand their fathers and mothers; it will become more and more difficult for parents to understand their children; it will become more and more difficult for brothers and sisters to understand one another.

Mutual understanding becomes increasingly difficult, because it becomes more and more necessary for human beings to allow what lives within them karmically to rise up truly out of the depths of their souls.

You will see what perspective of a negative kind opens up here for the fifth post-Atlantean age. Human beings will find difficulty in understanding one another. It will be necessary to see this condition of evolution clearly. We should not wish to live on in a dream toward a future that remains obscure; it is necessary that evolution take this course. If it were not the fate of humanity during the fifth post-Atlantean period that it will be difficult for men to get to know one another, it would not be possible to evolve the Spiritual Soul, and men would have to live more collectively in accordance with natural capacities. The individual element in the Spiritual Soul would not develop. It must be so; they have to live through this trial.

But if this negative side of the evolutionary conditions of the fifth post-Atlantean age were to appear alone, war and conflict would have to arise' in all the relationships, even the smallest.

I need mention only one word, and at once it will become clear how a remedy can be sought for this one direction which human development must necessarily take, a remedy for the difficulty of understanding one another. I need only mention that a sense must more and more be awakened—in a conscious way because we live in the age of the Spiritual Soul—during this fifth post-Atlantean age, for SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING. This expresses the needs which were not present during the fourth post-Atlantean age in the same way. Anyone who can rightly study the social order of Greece or of Rome knows that within Greece and Rome there was not the same disposition to individualism as there is today in Europe, and in the American

population of European origin.

You will understand this particularly well if you compare men to a species of animal. Why do a species of animal live together in a certain unity? For the reason that they have a predisposition to do so through their group soul. It is inborn in a species of animal, it is there a matter of course and they cannot grow out of it, they remain within it.

Man has to grow out of it. Each single man has to develop himself individually, and especially in our present time, the time of the Spiritual Soul, this individual self-development is one of the chief things.

In Greek and Roman culture there is still a strong trace of the Group-soul element. There man was still placed into a social order which even if it had its form mainly through moral forces, nevertheless did possess a definite form. During the fifth post-Atlantean age such forms tend to be dissolved more and more. This trace of the Group-soul element, which remained throughout the fourth post-Atlantean age, no longer has meaning for the fifth age. In its place, social understanding must arise in a conscious way; there must arise everything which proceeds from a deeper understanding for the truly individual human essence. Only the science of spirit will develop this right understanding.

When the science of spirit grows more and more away from abstractions into concrete life, there will appear among the circles which occupy themselves with this science of spirit, a special kind of human social understanding, a way of awakening human interest. There will then be people who have certain capacities for teaching their fellow-men about the different human dispositions, how a man with this or that temperament should be treated, and how another man with a disposition of this kind, and with this temperament, must be treated in another way. Men who have a special gift for this will teach other men, who are to learn from them, such things as this: Look carefully, there exist this and that type of human being, and one must treat one man in one way, the other in another. A practical psychology, a practical study of the soul and of life, will be cultivated, and a truly social understanding of human evolution will result.

What has appeared up to now in the way of social understanding? Up to now there have appeared abstract ideals; the most varied abstract ideals about the happiness of humanity and of the nations or this and that kind of socialism. If one were really to attempt to carry out the social ideas which appear here or there, it would become obvious that they cannot be carried out. What is important is not to begin with founding societies or sects with definite programs, but to spread an understanding for the human being, and in particular a knowledge of man which makes it possible for us to comprehend the development of a human being as he grows up, to understand rightly how every child develops with his own individuality. In this way we learn to place ourselves into life so that we can develop the right Karmic consequences which are within us, when through our Karma we meet another human being with whom we are to achieve a closer relationship, so that we develop the right lasting relationships, which can be most fruitful for life. A practical understanding of man, an interest for humanity which works

in a practical way, these are the important things. But mankind has not yet gone very far in this realm.

What sort of judgment do we form today when we meet another human being? We like him or we do not like him. Go about in the world, and you will see that in most cases this is the only judgment, or when several judgments are made, they are still governed by the same point of view: I like him, I do not like him, I do not like that quality in him. All a matter of prejudice! One thinks: man ought to be like this—and if one then sees that he is different in this or that way, one condemns him. Unless this way of liking or disliking a man because of one's prejudices, and one's special preferences for this or that kind of character, is overcome—and unless the mood is developed which takes a man as he is, no progress can be made in real practical knowledge of man.

Consider how often it happens when two people meet today under some circumstance or other, straight away in one of them a dislike arises, and then everything that he does to this man is put in the light of this dislike. Very often a karmic relationship is entirely dissipated in this way, brought into an entirely wrong course, and has to be postponed until the next incarnation when these human beings find each other again.

Likes and dislikes are the great enemies of real social interests. This is often not considered. One who knows how necessary is real social understanding for the future development of mankind, often observes with a heavy heart those teachers in a school, who because of particular prejudices, straight away find one of their pupils likeable or not. That is terrible! It is necessary to take each one as he is and make the best of what he is.

The shape of our institutions is concerned in this. Our institutions and social laws, which often have destructive effects upon the individuality of the teacher, prevent the development of a real understanding of individuality. A true understanding of the science of spirit must have the effect of inspiring general interest in the practical understanding of the soul and of man. This is necessary in order to create the other pole of social understanding, when mutual understanding becomes difficult.

All this is particularly necessary in the fifth post-Atlantean age, in order that humanity may develop the Spiritual Soul to the full. Men have to go through trials in these things, in which they encounter the forces of opposition. Thus feelings of liking and disliking will become widespread, and only in a conscious struggle against superficial likes and dislikes will the Spiritual Soul be able to be born in the right way.

Social understanding between man and man will also be opposed by those nationalistic feelings, which have come to dominate life, in the form in which they appear at present, only since the nineteenth century. These feelings are thoroughly opposed to social understanding, and to real interest between man and man. The oppositions between nations, the likes and dislikes on a national scale, as they arise today, are a great and terrible test for humanity, for mankind's salvation can lie only in overcoming them. Were the feelings of sympathy and antipathy, arising

out of nationalistic emotion, to continue to be predominant in the way that they have begun, humanity would dream away the development of the Spiritual Soul. For nationalistic feelings go in the opposite direction; they have the tendency not to permit a man to become independent, but to make him a mere echo or image of the qualities of this or that group and nation.

But something else must appear in this fifth post-Atlantean period for a real development of the Spiritual Soul. As human beings become more and more individual, religious life will necessarily wither and dry up if it does not adapt itself to the fifth post-Atlantean age, but tries to remain in the form that was right for the fourth post-Atlantean period. For the fourth post-Atlantean period it was necessary that group religions arose, because men were still predisposed for life in groups. What could be held in common as dogmas and religious principles and religious thought had in a way to be imposed by force upon groups of men. But because through the Spiritual Soul the impulse toward individualism will grow stronger and stronger in the course of the fifth post-Atlantean period, it will come that what is spoken out of group religions will not reach the heart and individuality of particular souls. Men will simply not understand what comes from the group religions.

During the fourth post-Atlantean period it was still possible to instruct men about Christ in a way appropriate for groups; in the fifth post-Atlantean period, Christ enters in reality into the individual soul. Unconsciously or subconsciously we all carry Christ within us already. But He must be brought to understanding within us once more. This does not happen through forcing fixed and frozen dogmas upon men, but through the attempt to do everything which can make Christ comprehensible to men in a many-sided way. Religious understanding must be developed in a many-sided way; the attempt to do this must be made. Thus in the fifth post-Atlantean period, tolerance must arise more and more with regard to the thoughts in which religious experience is expressed.

While in the fourth post-Atlantean period a man who worked for religion did so by passing on a number of dogmas or fixed principles, in the fifth post-Atlantean period it must become entirely different. Today, since human beings have become more and more individual, the attempt must be made to get entirely free from dogma, and to bring to another man what one can describe to him of one's own personal, inner experience. This must really be brought to him in such a way that he can develop his own free, religious life of thought quite individually. The dogmatic religions, the fixed dogmatic confessions, will have the effect of killing real religious life, during the fifth post-Atlantean period.

The right beginning for the fifth post-Atlantean period is to make more and more comprehensible for men that this was appropriate for the first centuries of Christianity, and something else in the centuries that follow; but there are other religions too. One attempts to make the essence of other religions comprehensible; one attempts to bring about understanding for the different ways in which Christ can be regarded.

In this way one can bring to each soul something which can deepen it. But one does not impose a form upon the soul, but particularly in the religious field, leaves to it the development of its

own freedom of thought.

Just as there is a necessity for social understanding in relation to the characteristic I have described for the fifth post-Atlantean period, in the same way freedom of thought in the religious field is a fundamental condition for the development of the Spiritual Soul. In the realm of human relationships, social understanding; in the realm of religion, freedom of thought.

The attempt, which we are making to permeate religious life more and more with understanding so that we can understand our fellow men, even when each develops his own religious life, This must be taken more and more seriously, for it is a fundamental necessity for the fifth post-Atlantean period. Humanity must achieve it consciously through its own effort.

Just in the time of the Spiritual Soul, the Ahrimanic powers attack this freedom of thought most violently; and we see how the confessions everywhere treat with enmity one of the fundamentals of the spiritual scientific stream, the spreading of freedom of thought. We see how often the science of spirit is slandered simply because it approaches the birth of the Spiritual Soul with full and illumined understanding, and does not desire to spread a religious life which still depends upon the needs of the Mind-soul, as was appropriate for the fourth post-Atlantean period. The forms of Christianity were founded in the fourth post-Atlantean period according to the needs of the Greek and Roman cultures. As forms of church, they are already unfitted, and will become so more and more, to permit freedom of thought to arise, as it must do increasingly.

At the same time, when in modern life the first seed began to quicken of the need of freedom of thought, the opposing power also began to work in what can be called the Jesuitism of the various religions (in which description much is included which really needs to be described in detail.). This was brought into existence to oppose in the strongest possible way freedom of thought, which is a necessity for life in the fifth post-Atlantean period. It will become increasingly necessary to overcome in every field the Jesuitism which opposes freedom of thought in the fifth post-Atlantean period; for shining out from the religious life, freedom of thought must develop more and more in every realm. But since each man must achieve it independently, mankind is faced with a trial, and everywhere the greatest difficulties arise. They will become all the greater during the fifth post-Atlantean period while mankind has the task of developing clarity of consciousness. But to begin with men feel this as something uncomfortable, and therefore in many ways befuddle themselves.

Thus we see that a conflict exists between the arising of freedom of thought and the kind of authority which works over from the past into the present. And there is a desire not to see clearly the intensity of this faith in authority, to have illusions about it. For in our time faith in authority has grown tremendous, and under its influence men have become helpless in forming judgments. In the fourth post-Atlantean period man was given a healthy understanding as a natural gift; now he must achieve it by his own development. In this he is held back by faith in authority. We become entirely tied up through our faith in authority.

Consider how helplessly men behave, compared to the animals, which do not possess reason. How well equipped an animal is with instincts, which lead it in a way that is healthy, lead it from a condition of illness into full health again, and how much in man today prevents him from forming a judgment in such matters. Here modern humanity submits itself entirely to authority.

It is not easy for modern humanity to form a judgment about healthy conditions of life. Certainly, admirable attempts are made by all sorts of societies and the like. But these attempts must become much more thorough; it must be understood how we slip more and more into faith in authority, and how whole theories are formed on which a mood can be based which supports this faith in authority.

In the field of Medicine, in the field of law, and in every other field, men are prepared to declare themselves unqualified to achieve comprehension, and simply accept what science says. Modern life is so complicated that this is quite understandable. But under the influence of a power of authority of this kind, men become more and more helpless; and to develop the power of authority, and the mood of acceptance of authority, in a systematic way, is really the principle of Jesuitism. Jesuitism in the Catholic religion is only a special form of what is achieved in other realms as well, where it is not so noticeable.

Jesuitism began its work in the ecclesiastical field, with the tendency to maintain the power of the Papacy, which comes from the fourth post-Atlantean period, on into the fifth post-Atlantean period, for which it is no longer fitted. But the same Jesuitical principle will be carried over gradually into other fields of life. We see today how in Medicine a form of Jesuitism arises, which hardly differs from the Jesuitism in the field of dogmatic religion. We see how the attempt is made, out of a certain medical dogmatism, to increase the power of the physicians. And that is the essence of Jesuitical ambitions in other fields as well. This will become stronger and stronger. Human beings will be more and more bound by the decisions of authority.

The salvation of the fifth post-Atlantean period will consist in this: that the right of the Spiritual Soul, which is seeking to develop, will assert itself against this Ahrimanic resistance, for this is what it is. This can only be achieved through the will of human beings (who no longer receive a natural power of understanding as they receive their two arms—as happened in the fourth post-Atlantean period, pictorially speaking) to really develop their understanding, their healthy power of judgment. The development of the spiritual demands freedom of thought, but this freedom of thought can flourish only in a certain definite aura, a certain definite atmosphere.

I have directed your attention to the difficulties which exist in the fifth post-Atlantean period. For the fifth post-Atlantean period is struggling in a definite direction toward the development of the Spiritual Soul. But this Spiritual Soul, which must be developed consciously, has to meet with resistance and must go through trials.

Thus we see that both social understanding and freedom of thought have to meet the strongest

opposition. And today it is not even understood that this opposition is there, for in widespread circles this opposition is simply regarded as the right thing, which should not be opposed, but should be specially furthered!

Nevertheless, there are many, many people who have an open heart and a good understanding for the situation of modern man. They have an open recognition and a good understanding for the fact that can already be seen, that since human karmic relationships have reached the crisis which has just been described, children no longer understand their parents, parents no longer understand their children, brothers and sisters no longer understand one another, and there is no mutual understanding among the nations.

There are men enough already who with a bleeding heart watch this situation, which is indeed necessary, but will only have its right consequences if it is penetrated with understanding. The impulses for a new way of working in the world will have to be won consciously from the heart's blood. What will happen of its own accord is the estrangement of individuals from one another. What will flow from the human heart has to be sought consciously. Every individual soul in the fifth post-Atlantean period has to meet difficulties. For only in the overcoming of these difficulties will those trials come about, through which the Spiritual Soul can be developed.

Many come today and say: I have no feeling for what I should make of myself; I do not know how to place myself into life. The cause of this is that they have not yet found the right possibility of thinking clearly about the needs of the present time, and the way in which a man stands within it. With many human beings today such situations lead even into physical illness, physical need, and the loss of resistance.

We must seek more and more intensively for a right understanding of this. The danger of acute distress in the soul, in the particular form described here, will spread as a danger over humanity, because this is necessary during the fifth post-Atlantean period. Many people see this, as I have described it, and feel the necessity for social understanding on the one side, and for freedom of thought on the other. But very few are inclined to turn to the right means of help. The attempt is made to bring about social understanding in the way that is necessary, by means of all sorts of phrases which have an idealistic sound.

How much is written today about the necessity of treating young human beings in an individual way! What detailed theories are thought out in all sorts of pedagogical fields! But little is not the real necessity. As many descriptions as possible of how human beings really develop—what I would like to call the positive natural history of individual human development—these must be disseminated in an understanding way. Wherever we can, we should describe how this or that person developed—we should be able to give a loving account of a human development which we have observed. The study of life is needed, the will to an understanding of life, not to the making of programs. For theoretical programs are the enemies of the fifth post-Atlantean period.

When societies arise, this should come about according to the purpose of the fifth post-Atlantean period in such a way that the human beings who are united in these societies are the main thing, with the purpose of achieving what can follow from the dealings of these actual people with one another. If this is realized, truly individual results will be achieved. But what is usually done today? The first thing is that statutes are drawn up. That may all be very good. It may indeed be necessary, because outer circumstances demand statutes. But in our field we should be quite clear that all talk about programs and statutes is only a concession to the world, and that the important thing must be the individual life together, what follows from these actual people. Mutual understanding is the decisive thing.

There are still many centuries of the fifth post-Atlantean period before us. In the course of this time there will be opportunities for the understanding which exists within a limited circle, to reach out into the world in general, the understanding for individual, living development. Today the world tries to fit everything into paragraphs or regulations or something of the kind. From the pulpits everywhere, and from other authoritative positions, we see teachings imparted which sound as if they would be helpful, but are only full of abstractions, putting all sorts of ideas and ideals before mankind. But this is not what is needed; it is a matter of penetrating into real, concrete life in an understanding way. How is it to come about?

Of course, the reasonable objection can be made: We cannot all learn to form a judgment about the statements which are made today by various authorities. People will say: Think what has to be learned by someone who wishes to become a physician! He has to learn it, but we cannot all learn it, and in addition learn all that has to be acquired by a lawyer, and then what has to be learned by a painter as well! We cannot do that: Certainly we cannot, but we need not be creators in these fields, we need only to be capable of judgment.

We must indeed be able to let the authority do his work, and yet be in a position to form a judgment about it. This is not achieved through entering into all the special fields of study, but through acquiring something which develops our understanding and capacity for judgment in a comprehensive way. This cannot happen through material knowledge of the special fields of study, but from a comprehensive knowledge of the spirit.

The science of spirit must become the central kind of knowledge. For this, the science of spirit will not only give information about the connections in human development, but through the kind of thought which it cultivates, it will develop in us a healthy power of understanding. Today this has to be acquired from greater depths than had to be reached in the Greco-Roman period, the fourth post-Atlantean period. The way of forming conceptions and ideas which is necessary for the science of spirit and which is different from that of the other kinds of science, does not enable us to become an authority in this or that field, but to become capable of forming a judgment.

The reason for this will gradually be understood. There are mysterious powers in the human soul, powers related to the Mysteries, which will join the human soul to the spiritual world, and through this link which comes about through the study of the science of spirit, these forces will

enable us in particular cases, when we confront some kind of authority, to be capable of judgment. We will not know what the authority knows, but when the authority knows something, and takes action in a particular case, we shall be capable of forming a judgment about it.

We must emphasize this particularly as something which must be brought about by the science of spirit. The latter will not simply instruct human beings, but will make them capable of forming a judgment in this way, and thereby give them the possibility of freedom of thought, of independence of thought. The science of spirit does not make us all into physicians, but enables us to form a judgment about what is done by them in public life if only we enter into the science of spirit in the right way. If one day what I mean by these words is understood, very much will be understood about the forces which bring healing to the fifth post-Atlantean period. For a very great deal is said by what I mean here: that the science of spirit will in a way transform human understanding, so that men become capable of forming judgments, and through releasing powers of understanding from the depths of their soul life, become able to achieve real freedom of thought.

If I may now speak more in pictures, I would like to express this thought to you in the form of an Imagination. We hear in the science of spirit about a real spiritual world, and about elemental beings which surround us; we hear about the Hierarchies, the Angels, Archangels, and so on. The world becomes inhabited for us with concrete spiritual content, with spiritual powers and spiritual beings. It is not a matter of indifference to these things living in the spiritual world that we know about them! It was still more or less a matter of indifference to them in the fourth post-Atlantean period; but in the fifth post-Atlantean period it is no longer so. It is as if they were deprived of some spiritual nourishment when men here on Earth knew nothing about them. The spiritual world is in close connection with this earthly physical world. You will understand this best when I say something to you which will perhaps seem paradoxical to you, but which is simply true. And although one cannot say much yet, certain truths must today be spoken out, because men should not live without these truths.

For men who live here on the Earth, it is right to say: With the mystery of Golgotha, Christ entered earthly life and is since then present in earthly life. From a certain point of view it can be felt as a source of happiness for earthly life that Christ has entered into it. But if one puts oneself into the point of view of the Angels (and this point of view is no invention of mine, for this point of view is found as something quite real by the true spiritual researcher), the Angels in their spiritual sphere experienced it differently; they experienced the opposite. Christ has gone from their realm to men. He left their realm. For them they have to say: Through the Mystery of Golgotha Christ has departed from our world. They have reason to be as sad about this, as men can feel it is for their salvation that Christ has come to them, as dwellers in a physical body.

This sequence of thought is real. One who truly understands the spiritual world knows that there is only one salvation for the Angels, for whom what I have just expressed is correct, and that is that men on Earth in their physical bodies so live with the thought of Christ that the

thought of Christ shines up as a light to the Angels, since the time of the Mystery of Golgotha. Men say: Christ has entered our being, and we can develop ourselves in such a way that He lives within us: "Not I, but Christ in me." But the Angels say: For our realm Christ has departed from our inner being, and shines up to us like many stars in the Christ-filled thoughts of individual men. There we recognize Him again, from thence He shines up to us since the Mystery of Golgotha. It is a real relationship between the spiritual world and the human world.

This real relationship is expressed in this way too, that the spiritual beings inhabiting the spiritual world outside us, look with happiness and satisfaction and recognition at the thoughts which we are able to form about their world. They can only help us when we are able to form thoughts about them, even though we have not reached the point of being able to look clairvoyantly into the spiritual world. They can help us if we know about them.

In return for our study of the science of spirit, help reaches us from the spiritual world. We are not simply helped by things which we learn, by so many pieces of knowledge. We are helped by the beings of the higher hierarchies themselves, when we know about them.

When we have to confront the authorities as the fifth post-Atlantean period proceeds, it will be for our benefit if we do not have behind us merely our own human understanding, but that as well, which the spiritual beings can bring about in our understanding, if we know about them. They give us the capacity to form a judgment about the authority. The spiritual world helps us. We need it; we must know about it; we must receive it into conscious understanding. That is the third thing which must come about for the fifth post-Atlantean period.

The first thing is **social understanding of man**, the second is **achievement of freedom of thought**, and the third is **living knowledge about the spiritual world through the science of spirit**. These three things must be the great, genuine ideals for the fifth post-Atlantean period. In the realm of social life there must come social understanding. In the realm where souls are gathered in community, through the religious life or in other ways, there must be freedom of thought. And in the realm of knowledge there must come knowledge of the spirit. Social understanding, freedom of thought, knowledge of the spirit—these are the three great aims, the great impulses of the fifth post-Atlantean period. We must develop in their light; they are the right lamps for our time.

Many people feel intensively that something of this kind is necessary, and particularly that another kind of community life must be developed, and that there must be new conceptions. But either the good will or the knowledge of men is insufficient to reach the final consequences. This can be seen in the relationships which many people have to the efforts of the science of spirit, of Anthroposophy. We need not think of the malicious slanders which are made against the science of spirit, or Anthroposophy, or of other malicious and hostile attitudes to it, arising from this or that reason. We can think of honorable good will (which in indeed sufficiently present among contemporary mankind) which has the aim of creating impulses in humanity, moving in the direction of the impulses of the fifth post-Atlantean period. Think of the many reformers who appear in the most varied fields, of the many socially-minded clergymen, and of

other teachers in the social field, who may stand quite outside theological and religious circles. All this is often inspired by the very best will. It often has the intention of leading men toward something, which life in our time is seeking. Much good will is present, and at this moment we will look at all that comes from good will, not from malice. But as long as this good will remains in general phrases, however warm the feelings by which they are sustained, it cannot help, unless this knowledge comes to life, which can only be derived from the science of spirit, that these three great, genuine ideals can be fulfilled: Social Understanding of Man, Freedom of Thought, and Spiritual Knowledge. But human understanding in the present has not even reached the beginning of this insight, except among the little groups, which have gathered in the study of the science of spirit.

These three concrete Ideals should in the future give the various sciences their direction. They must purify and ennoble life, must give impulses to morality, and must become something that penetrates and guides life for modern humanity in the most comprehensive way. The first two needs, Social Understanding and Freedom of Thought, cannot be fulfilled unless Spiritual Knowledge is joined to them as the third; for the Spiritual Soul must be developed. This Spiritual Soul has as its highest level the Spirit Self, which must be prepared in the sixth post-Atlantean period. This cannot be developed if it is not preceded by that inner independence of the human being which is achieved through the development of the Spiritual Soul.

This must be taken into consideration in all spiritual scientific work, that all our knowledge, achieved at first in the form of abstract truths, has really the magical power within it, which has only to be released, in order to throw a strong light upon the whole of life. Wherever an individual may stand in life, in this or that field of science, or in this or that field of practical work, of however limited a kind, he can, if he knows how to bring to life for his own field of work the knowledge we receive in our gatherings in the form of abstract truths, cooperate in the great tasks of our time in the right way. And then men will feel real happiness, not happiness which is just a gay superficiality, but one which is united with that seriousness which sustains our lives, and enhances our powers, and does not cause us to merely enjoy life, but which makes us people who do a genuine work in life.

Thus these three concrete ideals for social life and knowledge will also give the Spiritual Soul the capacity to understand the Mystery of Golgotha and to receive the Christ in a new way in the course of the fifth post-Atlantean period. For we must develop a real connection with the spiritual worlds, and learn how these too are related to this central impulse earthly evolution, to the Christ impulse. The Christ impulse will develop in us under the influence of thoughts which enter our earthly existence from the spiritual world for since the Mystery of Golgotha there can light up in earthly existence the thoughts in human souls, which shine up like bright stars bearing in comfort, as I have described, even to the world of the Angels, who have lost Christ from their realm, in order to see Him shining toward them from the realm of human thoughts.

The science of spirit should not be described as something fantastic; the science of spirit is something which has the purpose of influencing reality in such a way that the distress of soul, which is inevitable in the course of the fifth post-Atlantean period, can be overcome.

