Living with the Angelic Hierarchies

A lecture by Thomas Mayer

September 25, 2025, Rudolf Steiner House, London



At every moment, we are surrounded and permeated by angels of the nine hierarchies.

How do the angels work in our lives and in our aura?

How do our angels accompany us in sleep and after death?

How do angels experience us human beings?

Image on the front page:

The Nine Hierarchies of Angels with Christ as King of Heaven, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window. The upper part of this window depicts the Nine Hierarchies of Angels, while the lower part depicts scenes from the life of Saint Apollinaris of Ravenna.

This text is the written version of the lecture given by Thomas Mayer on September 25, 2025, at the Rudolf Steiner House in London.

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Introduction

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

At every moment, we are surrounded and permeated by angels of all nine hierarchies. The angelic hierarchies are much closer to us than we usually think. We are subtenants of the angelic hierarchies. Without them, we would be nothing.

Without my angel, I would not be able to feel myself or experience myself as a self, an I. Without him, I would lose my confidence and balance of soul.

Without the archangels, I would be a limp rag. I would not be able to speak any language but could at most bark or chirp.

Without the archai, I would have no shared space of consciousness with other people in which to understand them.

Without the exusiai, the spirits of form, I would have no higher self. This is a gift from the exusiai: I am thought by these exalted angels. Moreover, the formed world in which we live would not even exist. Everywhere, no matter where I look, there are forms—behind them stand the exusiai.

Without the dynamis, the spirits of movement, the circulation of my blood would come to a standstill. Plants would not grow. Nothing would change. There would be no life.

The kyriotetes, the spirits of wisdom, bear the wisdom of the cosmos. They hold in their consciousness the blueprint of the Earth and the glory of the world. The Earth does not simply come into being; rather, lawful principals are at work. These laws do not exist in the abstract but are borne by particular angels of the rank of the kyriotetes. I hope that, from time to time, I may receive a small share of this cosmic wisdom.

Without the thrones, the spirits of will, I would have no will and could not move. I could not take a single step. The world outside would also lack formative power. The cosmic form-giving will comes from the thrones. They are often depicted as spinning wheels with wings.

Without the cherubim, the spirits of harmony, I would lack conscience and a sense of rightness. When I have a guilty conscience, ultimately a cherub is calling me to account. But the cherubim also work in the world; without them, there would be no harmonious order in the planetary and stellar system.

Without the seraphim, the spirits of love, there would be no world-embracing love. This love permeates all creation. Every stone, every drop of water, every speck of dust feels loved by the gods and the Trinity. This is mediated by the seraphim. I hope that you too can feel something of the world-embracing love of the seraphim.

The subject of the angelic hierarchies is very broad and comprehensive. We will only be able to touch on it this evening. I will speak on the basis of anthroposophy and my own experiences. Since my youth, I have been interested in the spiritual world and have striven to come to know it through direct experience. For me, it is always a matter of empirical spiritual research.

Dionysius the Areopagite's Doctrine of the Gods

I use Dionysius the Areopagite's terminology for the nine angelic hierarchies as well as the new renderings by Rudolf Steiner.

Dionysius the Areopagite was a close disciple of Paul. Through his experience at Damascus, Paul encountered the risen Christ and was transformed from Saul into Paul. It became clear to him that Christ had entered the Earth's aura and was living within it. This is why Paul said, "Not I, but Christ in me." This means that Christ himself lives—in a completely individualized way—within the human being as his true I. Paul had an existential inner experience of Christ and was thus a representative of esoteric Christianity.

His disciple Dionysius the Areopagite founded the doctrine concerning higher spirit beings and gods and taught it to select initiates. It was first written down in the sixth century by someone who also called himself Dionysius the Areopagite. To avoid confusion between the Dionysius of the sixth century and the Dionysius of the first century, he is also called "Pseudo-Dionysius."



Angels wave incense burners,
Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, bottom left

Rudolf Steiner emphasized that the essential features of the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius actually go back to Paul's disciple Dionysius, who initially passed on his deeply esoteric teachings only orally and to his closest disciples. As Rudolf Steiner explained (in GA 91, p. 86):

> *There was a watchword among Christians: "From mouth to ear." Written words can be misused, so the true initiates did not write anything down. Dionysius was the head of a mystery school. Such highly developed human beings do not remain in Devachan for as long as others do. They can soon return to a new incarnation. The heads of initiation schools usually do so; these schools are often fortunate enough to retain the same leading figure for many centuries. That was the case here. And it was not until the sixth century, when greater importance was attached to writing teachings down, that they were written down in this case.*
>
> *The original teachings of Christian esotericism come from this Dionysus. From him, one can study Christianity in its original form, and part of it is this conception of the highest beings.*

Dionysus had a deep understanding of the gods and the angelic hierarchies. These, however, are not something peculiar to Western Christianity, but a spiritual reality. They are active throughout the world, regardless of whether one believes in them or not. They appear in all cultures and eras. The representations and descriptions are of course different, but the spiritual beings at work in them are the same. It is very rewarding to immerse oneself in the worlds of the gods of different cultures and discover the inner—that is, esoteric—similarities and differences.

In Christianity, angels are usually depicted with wings. This means that they do not need a material, corporeal ground like we human beings do, but can sustain themselves and move in the spiritual world. Wings signify having a ground in the spiritual world. In direct experience, angels are above all spaces of consciousness. To make this less abstract, I would like to invite you to do a little exercise.



Archangels vanquish demons and doppelgangers with the "I-power" (lance) emanating from Christ (the cross),
Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, bottom right

Exercise:

- Become aware of yourself and the extent and quality of your present space of consciousness. We will allow some time for this.

- Now think of your guardian angel and keep your attention focused on him.

- The angel is usually in the aura behind and above us. Let your angel permeate you. Open your body so that the angel can flow, with his streaming gentleness, all the way to the tips of your toes.

- Observe the changes in your bodily sensations, your mood, and your space of consciousness.

- Now let us bring this short exercise to a close. What did you experience? I invite you now to share some of what you experienced.



Archai with a book; they hold the space of consciousness; the cedar cone symbolizes resurrection, eternal life and spiritual enlightenment, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, bottom center

My Most Significant Angelic Experience

Before we look more closely at the work of the angels, I would like to describe my most intense angelic experience. It was in 1992. At the time, I was living in Bonn, then the capital of Germany. We had founded the association "Mehr Demokratie e.V." (More Democracy) and were working to introduce the right of referendum at the federal level. Without referendums, there is no real democracy. Rather, what is called democracy today is a party oligarchy, a systematic disempowerment of the citizens. It doesn't have to be this way. Switzerland is a positive example in this regard. Every three months, Swiss citizens vote on issues concerning their municipality, canton, or the federal level. Almost all politically controversial issues ultimately go before the people for a vote. Politicians know this, and it has a strong influence on the political culture. Swiss citizens can experience themselves as sovereign; they can feel that the authority of the state emanates from them. In Germany, as in most other countries, people are unable to have this experience of sovereignty.

With the reunification of Germany in 1989, there should actually have been a new German constitution, as stipulated in the German Basic Law. The discussion about such a new German constitution gained some momentum, with one important point being the introduction of the right to ballot initiatives and referendums at the federal level. We were involved in the founding of the "Kuratorium für einen Bund Deutscher Länder" (Committee for a Federation of German States) and lobbied as best we could in the German parliament. The result was frustrating. The major parties do not want direct democracy because it would mean for them a loss of power. At the time, I experienced very clearly the arrogance of power and the unwillingness even to engage in substantive discussions. Nothing has changed in this respect to this day.

We spent a long time considering how we could get out of this deadlock. Whether the people want referendums is a question only the people themselves can answer. Asking the parties was the wrong approach from the beginning. So we came up with the idea of initiating a statewide referendum in Bavaria. In Bavaria, ten percent of eligible voters, around 900,000, can bring about a referendum by signing a ballot ini-



Exusiai with an upright posture and a sword symbolizing the power of form, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, center left

tiative. They have two weeks to do so, and they can only sign at their town hall. By comparison, in Switzerland, signatures from two percent of eligible voters are sufficient and can be collected over a period of eighteen months. The Bavarian hurdles are almost insurmountable, which is why there are virtually no statewide referendums. But nevertheless, in 1990, the ballot initiative"Das bessere Müllkonzept" (The Better Waste Concept) succeeded. That gave us the courage to undertake this crazy project. Of course, a Bavarian referendum cannot introduce a nationwide referendum, but it can introduce direct democracy at the local level. We talked about it for months, I meditated on it often, and the project gained more and more inner strength. We invited people to the first preparatory meetings, and so I travelled from Bonn to Munich several times.

I remember one journey as if it were yesterday. I was sitting on the train to Munich, concentrating on the planned "Ballot Initiative for More Democracy in Bavaria." I held my attention on the form the forces of this thought took and, in doing so, grasped my own I. This was a regular part of my meditation exercises. It consists in shifting my attention from the object of meditation to the activity that brings it forth and then going one step further and grasping myself as an I in that moment. This is a path to intuition, to becoming one with the beings at work behind the object of meditation. In this way, I entered the spiritual interior of the project "More Democracy in Bavaria."

What I experienced here was truly astonishing. I experienced how an immeasurably vast host of angels streamed down from the heights. This streaming down of the angelic host was unceasing; it had no end. These angels radiated great power and enthusiasm, and from their mouths rang out tones like those of a brass choir. However, I did not see any trumpets; I heard inwardly the sound of trumpets coming powerfully from the angels. I understood why angels with trumpets are mentioned several times in the Bible.

I came out of my meditation and looked at the passing landscape. I very rarely have imaginations, yet this one had an evident force of reality. I concentrated again on the thought-force formation of the planned ballot initiative and went through the steps of grasping my own I. The streaming down of the angelic host once again became living experience.



Dynamis in a dynamic posture and a scepter with leaves and the life force, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, center center

This was a deeply consequential experience for me. From then on, I knew that the ballot initiative "More Democracy in Bavaria" was supported and willed by the spiritual world. I decided to move to Munich with my young family and set up and head the ballot initiative's office there. I also became the spokesman for the initiative. Without this step, the ballot initiative would never have happened, because support and goodwill are not enough without an organized campaign and a campaign headquarters. The office grew larger and larger, and the period leading up to February 1995 was incredibly stressful. But through it all, I remained grounded in the angelic experience I have described. It was a foundation and a center of calm within my soul, and it carried me through that time.

Then the miracle happened. In February 1995, an amazing 1.2 million Bavarian voters signed the ballot initiative. On the final weekend, long lines formed on Marienplatz in Munich.

On October 1, 1995, the referendum took place, and the law introducing citizens' initiatives and referendums at the municipal and district levels was approved by 58 percent of voters. The governing party, the CSU (Christian Social Union), had also placed a counterproposal on the ballot, but only 39 percent of voters approved it. For Bavaria, this result was quite remarkable. It was the CSU's first statewide defeat in decades.

From 1995 to 2010, around 1,000 municipal referendums were held in Bavaria as a result of this statewide referendum. This was a breakthrough for direct democracy in Germany. In its wake, similar initiatives were launched in many other German states.

Without the hosts of angels streaming down from heaven, the ballot initiative would most likely not have taken place. Because it did, the miracle—the Bavarian people granting themselves more direct-democratic rights—could occur. Of course, the history books will not report on the spiritual dimension behind these historical events.

The angels involved were primarily angeloi, with higher angelic hierarchies working behind them.



Kyriotetes with a crown representing universal wisdom, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, center right

The Hierarchy of the Angeloi

The lowest of the nine angelic hierarchies is the rank of the angeloi. The angeloi are closest to us human beings. We are only one developmental stage behind them. Because they are so close to us, the angeloi are the most familiar to us. The higher angelic hierarchies are more difficult to comprehend.

We human beings are actually the tenth angelic hierarchy. Very few people are aware of this, however. Present-day humanity often does not behave in a manner worthy of a tenth angelic hierarchy.

The names of the hierarchies are not proper names, but names for levels of consciousness within our vast universe; they are ranks. In the course of world development, spirit beings advance from one level to another. Within each rank, there are countless individual spirits, each developing in a different way. There are, for example, lesser and greater archangels: archangels who until recently were still at the level of the angeloi, and archangels who will soon develop into archai.

There are also countless angels who have separated themselves from Christ and have left the hierarchical order oriented toward Christ. These are referred to as fallen angels. They became adversarial spirits—luciferic, ahrimanic, asuric, or soratic angels. The fallen angels are very significant for the development of the world and humanity. But let us now concentrate on the normal angelic hierarchies.

There is a semantic problem that I would like to point out in order to avoid misunderstandings. There is the hierarchical level of the angels—that is, the angeloi. At the same time, we speak of nine angelic hierarchies and use the term "angel" as an umbrella term for all of them. So when I speak of angels, I do not always mean only the angeloi; rather, I may also mean those belonging to higher hierarchical levels.



Thrones, spirits of the will, within a mandorla; as the first hierarchy, they are closest to the Trinity,
Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, top center

What Characterizes the Level of the Angeloi?

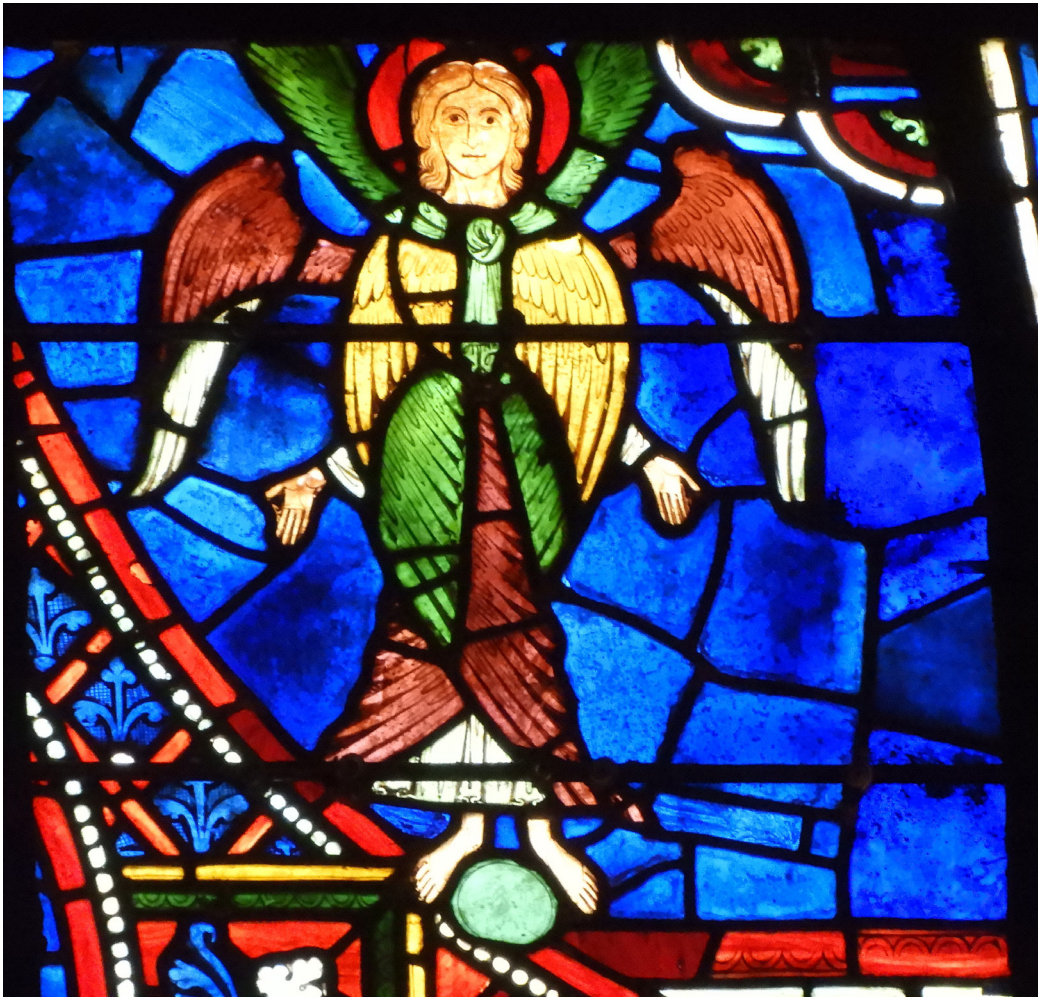
Anthroposophy describes the constituent members of the human being. We human beings of the present are reasonably aware of our physical body, the life force of the etheric body, the consciousness carried by the astral body, and the center of the self, the I. The future development of humanity consists in our permeating the astral body with the I and transforming it into the spirit self, also called manas. In this way, we will advance to the rank of the angeloi. When we have penetrated the etheric body with the I and transformed it into life spirit, or buddhi, we will ascend to the rank of the archangels. When we have transformed the physical body with the I into spirit man, or atma, we will ascend to the rank of the archai. That, of course, lies far beyond us in the remotest future.

At the present, our work is focused on the spirit self. Rudolf Steiner describes the spirit self as follows: "The spirit self is a revelation of the spiritual world within the I, just as, on the other hand, sense perception is a revelation of the physical world within the I. In what is red, green, light, dark, hard, soft, warm, or cold, one recognizes the revelations of the physical world; in what is true and good, the revelations of the spiritual world." (GA 9, p. 52)

Every body-free experience that is not based on sense perception is a part of spirit self. This happens in meditation. One remains awake through the power of concentration illuminated from within. One has a spiritual ground and requires none of sense perception. This is a goal of meditation, even if one achieves it only intermittently. One temporarily gains spiritual wings similar to those of angels. But they are only small wings and are only on loan for certain moments.

Angels, on the other hand, have fully developed the spirit self and live in it continuously. The spirit self is the center of their being, just as the I is the center of our being.

They stand one developmental stage above us human beings. They attained their "human consciousness" on "old Moon." Rudolf Steiner divides the development of our solar system into seven stages. He described these in detail in his book Occult Science. The "old Moon"



Cherubim, spirits of harmony, with three pairs of wings, balanced on a globe, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, top right

is the state of the world preceding our present "Earth state." This is followed by the "future Jupiter," which is the "New Jerusalem" of the Apocalypse of John. There, we human beings will have risen to the rank of the angeloi.

On the path of spiritual training and in meditation, we develop the spirit self—the awakening in the spiritual world. In this respect, we are already working in a very practical way on the "future Jupiter," the New Jerusalem. The angels help us human beings to develop our spirit self. They are our guides.

There are several other differences between us human beings and the angels. We human beings have a physical, material body. Angels do not have such a body; their constituent members extend only as far as the etheric body. The consciousness of the angels thus extends to the etheric world, but not to the physical world. Just as we human beings perceive the human world, the animals, the plants, and the minerals, angels perceive the angelic world, the human world, the animal world, and the plant world. They do not, however, perceive the mineral world; for them, it is a void. This is why communication with angels falters when they are asked about purely material things.

There is another difference. We human beings, with our physical bodies, exist next to one another in space. Only one person can sit on a chair. It is different with angels. Here, the principle of the interpenetration of beings applies, not the principle of separate, side-by-side existence. Countless angels can be in the same place—a spiritual place, naturally.

The principle of interpenetration also applies to the nine angelic hierarchies. They are like a Russian nesting doll. Every angel is permeated by the higher angelic hierarchies. These shine through him. All higher angelic hierarchies are present in the angel. Christ is also present. The cosmic Christ is the I of the gods, and the angelic hierarchies are aligned with him. That is why Christ shines through the angelic hierarchies. Some people are preoccupied with the question of whether they should connect with Christ or with their angel. You can do either; there is no fundamental difference. For Christ can shine directly within us or through our angel.



Cherubim, spirits of harmony, with three pairs of wings, balanced on a globe, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, top left

Another important difference between us human beings and angels is that angels always think in accord with the cosmic harmony. The angels are the fingers of the cosmic Christ, and all the angelic hierarchies are connected with one another. Thus, angels always keep the whole in view. The spirit self of the angeloi is a cosmic consciousness. There is no such thing as selfish thinking for angels, unless they have fallen and become adversarial spirits. When our guardian angel looks upon us, he has all of our incarnations in his consciousness at the same time. By contrast, we are blind fools who stagger about in life without any sense of direction.

The cosmic consciousness of the spirit self has another effect. We human beings have to build up to insights step by step, which takes a lot of time. Angels have it easier: they can grasp complex spiritual connections at a glance. Sometimes this also happens with human beings. When we are attuned to the angelic hierarchies, we can take on some of their immense powers of consciousness.

Mozart said something to the following effect: "How boring it is to listen to a symphony from beginning to end; how wonderful to hear it all in a moment!" Only in this way could Mozart compose his works. He heard the symphony inwardly, all at once, and then faced the difficult task of writing it down. By the time of his death at the age of thirty-five, he had composed over one thousand pieces at breakneck speed, and often without deletions or revisions. When composing, Mozart stood at the rank of the angels. This was recognized by others as well. Isaiah Berlin, a Russian-British philosopher, wrote: "When angels play for God, they play Bach; when they play for each other, they play Mozart."

Every human being has an angel. But not every angeloi has a human being. There are also angeloi who have taken on other tasks and, for example, look after churches and spiritual places. They sustain the spiritual power of the place and welcome those who enter, putting them in a different mood in a delicate, subtle way that leaves them free. Other angeloi take care of small human communities such as friendships or families. They then act as friendship angels or family angels. As soon as a human community has formed on the level of will, a community angel joins it. These are usually at the level of the angeloi, but in larger communities they can also be angels at the level of archangels.



Seraphim, spirits of love, veneration, and adoration of Christ, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, top left

The Angels Oversee and Administer the Karma of the Human Beings in Their Care

The angel who cares for a human being feels responsible for him. We are the angel's project. The angel accompanies his human being through successive incarnations. It is a long-term project extending from the beginning of individual incarnations in the Lemurian epoch to the end of Earth evolution. It is a process of give and take: the angel himself develops through guiding the human being and gains abilities that will eventually help him ascend to the rank of archangel.

Angels oversee and administer the karma of the human beings in their care. Sometimes an angel can intervene to prevent events that are not part of his human being's karma. For example, people may hear a voice shouting "Brake!" or "To the right!," thus preventing an accident. Or the angel catches his human being as he falls, so that it ends in nothing worse than bruises. Or someone gets a strong inner impulse to check on someone and follows this impulse, even though there is no rational reason to do so, and thus arrives at just the right moment in an emergency. There are many such stories about the work of guardian angels. You are surely familiar with stories like these from your own life and the lives of others. Of course, the angel does not work alone, but as part of a network with many other angels. The angelic world is a world of interpenetration.

When one is attuned to the flow of time and events and encounters unfold smoothly, this means, in concrete terms, that the angelic world is able to work freely. But for this to happen, the blockages by which we human beings hinder the work of the angels must first have been removed. Then the angels can arrange the most unlikely events and guide the actions of hundreds of people so that, in an unfamiliar place, at a particular second, you meet a particular person, which leads to a turning point in your life. Or, to take another concrete example: a young woman is grieving the death of her cat, Michael, and an acquaintance tells her that he has some old books he is getting rid of. In the pile she finds a book called "The Michaelites," picks it up out of grief for her cat, and in this way encounters anthroposophy. With that, a new life begins and everything changes. How complicated is it to organize such events? The people involved have free will; everything is in constant motion and changing. But for the angels, keeping track of it all presents no difficulty. Their capacities of consciousness are immense. Their ability to process events and information are far superior to any modern quantum computer.

The angel's gaze is always expansive, free, accepting, and objective. The angel sees us as we are. His loyalty and angelic patience are profoundly moving and touching.

In therapeutic soul work, the first step is always for the client to open up more to their angel. The word "angel" does not have to be used.



Seraphim, spirits of love, veneration, and adoration of Christ, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, top right

For feelings that are unbearable and therefore suppressed to become inwardly perceptible, the angel's power is needed within the soul. The angel does not judge; he perceives. The angel can lift the burden of self-condemnation.

The angel makes sure that old karma and negative, undigested feelings are not lost. We would prefer to banish painful feelings, but in doing so we would become mere shadows of ourselves. Each time we split off a part of ourselves, we become thinner and paler. The angel makes sure that we as souls are not lost and that the split-off parts of our soul remain present and connected with us. When the time seems right, our angel brings back our unredeemed karma so that we may accept, digest, and grow through it. Then feelings that challenge us may surface within us that we have never known before. But we can trust our angel. He will only confront us with tasks that we are ultimately equal to, even if at first they seem too much for us.

In resolving old karma, we encounter our angel. Karma itself is administered by the higher angelic hierarchies and by Christ. The angel acts in accordance with their counsels.

In this respect, the angel is a guardian of the threshold. He prevents us from awakening in the spiritual world unpurified and unprepared and from perceiving it distorted and polluted by our own projections. The greatest danger on a spiritual path arises when one turns away from one‘s angel and, through arrogance, lust for power, or drugs, forces one‘s way into the spiritual world and enters into connection with adversarial spirits and fallen angels, whom one then fails to recognize for what they are. A healthy spiritual path unfolds in modesty and humility and always seeks connection and attunement with one‘s guiding angel.

One is connected with the angel when one experiences: “I am one with myself” and “I feel myself.” When I am dissociated or “feel hollow,” then the connection with the angel is disturbed. Those who are content with themselves are in contact with their angel. The angel is the power of acceptance within the soul. This fundamental acceptance is present even when the gaze of the angelic world burns, for example because one has failed to live up to an ideal. The gaze of the angels and the higher hierarchies can be frightening. Their gazes may be stern and corrective when the angels look at us in our reality.

The angel is not the higher self of the human being, but it is only through the angel that one comes into contact with the higher self. Rudolf Steiner said: “And whether one says that the human being looks up to his higher self, whom he should resemble ever more closely, or whether one says that he looks up to his angel as his great role model—it is, at bottom, spiritually exactly the same.” (GA 105, p. 60)

The angel is involved in every supersensible perception. Whether one perceives something or not depends on whether the angel allows the perception or considers that something about it is not right. In that case, the perception is withheld. Therefore, one method of verifying supersensible perception is to check whether the angel, with his forces, is present in the perception. If he is present, then one can rely on the perception. If he is not, then it could have been an adversarial influence, and one should exercise caution and check everything thoroughly once again.

The loyalty and patience of angels are profoundly moving. I have never experienced an angel giving up on the human being in his care. The



The Cosmic Christ as King of Heaven and the Self of the Gods, Chartres Cathedral, Apollinaris Window, top center

angel can only work if a human being allows him to. There are people who have separated themselves so strongly from the divine world and developed such resistance that their angels are pushed aside, sitting helpless and sad on the sidelines. This costs the angels strength, and they grow weaker and weaker, but they never stop waiting patiently. This is true even in the most hopeless cases. Their loyalty seems infinite.

The more black magic is involved, the more taxing the angel's burden becomes. It is possible to drag an angel down. This begins with bindings caused by black magic, with fettered wings or a fettered aura. The

angel then becomes less able to act, yet remains in good spirits. It is a very long road before an angel falls completely, loses his inner anchor, and turns away from Christ. I believe that this happens only rarely. However, bindings on angels are more common. Strong black-magical possessions and curses can also affect angels if they are sufficiently powerful. These were common in the Atlantean era, for example, and persisted unresolved in old karma. Another cause can be the use of substances charged with black magic. In my experience, this is often the case with people who have died as a result of assisted suicide, and sometimes with people who have died after a COVID-19 vaccination.

It is therefore an important step in spiritual healing to check on the condition of the angel and, if necessary, to help him. This is done by opening the spiritual space to the other angels of the same hierarchy and calling upon Christ and the Michaelic hosts. In this way the binding can be released, and the weakened angel nursed back to health. Through the special gift of human freedom, we incarnated human beings have the possibility of opening points of access for the helping spirits. Since the blockage of an angel came about through human free will, the spiritual world cannot do anything until another free decision by a human being once again opens the space for the spiritual world to act.

The Angel in the Human Aura

The angel can be readily observed in the human aura. Children are normally completely enveloped by their angel. Rudolf Steiner rightly says that the angel speaks through the child and that a child is actually the lowest member of an angel‘s being. With newborns, this can be felt very strongly. They often fill the room with a holiness reminiscent of a sacred liturgy. This close connection with the angel also helps us understand the intensity of childhood experience.

During puberty, the angel takes a step back. He no longer envelops the human being in his aura but is now behind him. The soul feels alone. It is no longer held by the angel. This can lead to loneliness, emotional chaos, insecurity, and irritability during puberty. The young person must now, through the power of the I, accomplish what the angel did before.

As adults, we must actively maintain our connection with our angel. He is always there, but he must be invited. Thinking of one's angel once a day makes a big difference. Then the angel can draw near to us and envelope and permeate us with his wings.

But there are also people whose angels have been left behind, trudging along a few meters behind them.

Just as the angel works in the human aura, so too do the other angelic hierarchies. Behind the angel are the archangels, behind them the archai, behind them the exusiai, and so on. In this way, one can sense one's way through all nine angelic hierarchies in the aura. They envelop us like the layers of an onion; in the outermost layer of the aura, we are with the seraphim.

The hierarchies have other auric sites of activity as well. About 1.5 meters to the right of the body is the focal point of the exusiai, and about 1.5 meters to the left is the focal point of the dynamis. For some people, it is the other way around. About 1.5 meters in front of us, we find the kyriotetes assigned to us. One can readily experience the thrones by moving vertically down into the ground. Below the thrones one finds the cherubim and then the seraphim. The same is also possible by moving upward above one's head.

The Angels in Sleep

Let us stay with the activity of the angeloi a little longer. What does the angel do when we sleep?

Falling asleep means letting oneself fall into the arms of the angel. The cozy feather bed is an earthly reflection of the angel's feathered wings. Our relationship with the angel becomes all the more intimate at night when we bring with us into the night experiences from the day that go beyond the merely material and useful. Loving glances, artistic sensibility, spiritual thoughts, devout self-giving to the divine-spiritual world in the waking state—these offer the angel something nourishing. Then our encounter with the angel at night becomes more intimate. Thus, whether the angel can receive us in sleep depends on how we live during the day.

If the angel cannot properly receive us, we sleep poorly, do not reach deep sleep, and are pushed back into daytime consciousness.

During sleep, the angelic hierarchies refresh and renew us. During the day, we wear down the etheric and physical bodies. This is why we must step out with the I and astral body at night so that space opens up for the ocean of angels to flow in and rebuild the etheric and physical bodies.

Rudolf Steiner summarizes it as follows: The human being is only a subtenant in his body. Our body is at the same time temple and dwelling place for the spirits of the higher hierarchies. We ourselves could not set the tremendous processes in the physical body in motion; this is a working of the higher angelic hierarchies. (GA 228 p. 67)

The Angelic Hierarchies in Life After Death

It is possible to live an earthly life without awareness of the angelic hierarchies. There are enough other things to occupy oneself with. After death, this is different. There, the sensory world no longer exists; there are no more stones, plants, cars, roads, cities, mountains, or lakes. In the afterlife, the angelic hierarchies are our "outer world." The nine angelic hierarchies are the environment of the dead, just as the sensory world is the environment of the incarnated.

Life after death means gradually settling into ever higher angelic hierarchies. That is the path after death. There is no other; everything else is a blind alley leading to adversarial spirits.

After death, the key factor is whether the excarnated soul finds connection with its angel. If this connection is established, the soul has the strength to accept unredeemed and unpleasant feelings, and it can begin its journey into the Moon sphere through Kamaloka. The angel leads the soul onward through the planetary spheres—that is, into ever higher angelic hierarchies—up to the world midnight in the realm behind the fixed stars. Whether the soul can keep itself awake in the higher planetary spheres depends on the strength of the I and the connection to Christ it brings from its previous life. Many souls doze off in the higher spheres, just as one often cannot keep oneself awake in meditation.

If the excarnated soul finds no contact with its angel, life after death stalls. No development takes place. Today this is very widespread. The proportion of the deceased who are stuck in this way is likely to be around 50 percent.

In earlier centuries, there were daily ritual connections with the spiritual world. Prayers and a religious mood of soul carried people into the hands of their angel in the life after death, even if their thinking was materialistic. Until the fifteenth century, it was therefore normal for angels to come for the excarnated soul. Today, this no longer happens of itself. The deceased must turn to the angels. If he does not, nothing happens. The dead who remain stuck form a thick gray etheric and astral layer around the Earth.

In helping the dead, the connection to the angel is the decisive point. The work of accompanying and supporting the dead should continue until a sufficient connection to the angel has been cultivated. Then one can place the deceased in the angel‘s hands, knowing that the processes necessary after death can now take place.

The Angelic Hierarchies in Waking Consciousness

Angels also work in our daytime consciousness. The most visible arena of the angelic world is our thinking. A veritable spiritual battle is taking place here. For there are not only Christian angels but also luciferic and ahrimanic angels. These have largely taken over our thinking today.

The luciferic angels lead to a way of thinking that is closed in on itself, that does not come into contact with reality, while heightening the sense of self. The luciferic angels are very active in the modern esoteric world. They lead to fantastical thinking rather than true imagination. But they are also at work in today‘s science, media, and politics. The truth is of no interest; what matters is a semblance of truth. Bought-and-paid-for science, propaganda, and talk divorced from reality are usually brimming with self-assurance and full of luciferic angels.

Ahrimanic angels lead to a thinking without feeling, living experience, or perception. Thinking becomes machine-like, an automatic thinking without a thinker. Morality plays no role. Much of university and school

education is devoted to the connection with Ahriman. Today's universities are the temples of Ahriman.

Rudolf Steiner describes the work of angels and archangels in our thinking as follows. He emphasizes that what matters is not their pictorial form but their powers of consciousness: "We perceive the angels not by regarding their form as what defines them, but by feeling their gentleness flowing into us. We perceive the archangeloi, in turn, not by perceiving their form as what defines them, but by letting their strength, their power, stream into our feeling and our will." (GA 154 p. 97)

This is a daily question: Does my thinking take place within the workings of angels? Do I experience the flowing gentleness of the angels in my thinking? Do I experience the power and will of the archangels in my thinking, feeling, and willing?

It is not only about the content of our thinking, but also about our motivation and mood. I can think the same thought-content together with the flowing gentleness of the angel or with the deadening coldness of Ahriman. The content is the same, but the meaning and effect are entirely different.

So we can say: the human being thinks, the angels bring forth feeling in thinking, the archangels bring forth will in thinking, and Lucifer and Ahriman tempt us.

What Do the Angels Experience of Us Human Beings?

The angel continually participates in our inner life. He looks on from the inside.

Rudolf Steiner describes it this way: "First of all, these thoughts are in our consciousness, but they are not only in our consciousness. They are at the same time in the consciousness of the beings of the next higher hierarchy, the angeloi, the angels. While we have a thought, our entire world of thought is (...) the thought of the angels. The angels think our consciousness." (GA 148, p. 307)

The angel experiences and feels our thinking. He perceives our thinking more intimately than we do ourselves. He also perceives the states of

confusion and possession that we do not want to see. Fortunately, he has angelic patience.

When I become aware of my angel, I can feel my thinking together with him and observe it from a higher perspective.

Through our inner life, then, we continually offer nourishment to the angels and the archangels. This applies to the archai as well. Rudolf Steiner describes the following as a prerequisite for research in the akashic chronicle: “The soul offers itself as food to the primal beginnings, or archai.”

He goes on: “This is something that naturally sounds like madness to people who live wholly in the outer world today. Naturally! But nevertheless, as truly as the morsel of bread that enters our stomach becomes our nourishment—and as it would know, if it could reflect on the matter, that it has a meaning and purpose in life by becoming nourishment through us—just as truly do we have meaning as human beings in serving as nourishment for the archai. As we walk about here on Earth, we are at the same time beings who are continually being consumed, eaten by the archai.” (GA 148, lecture of December 18, 1913, p. 307)

I know that this only scratches the surface of the subject of living together with the angels, and I know that I have said a great deal about the hierarchy of the angeloi, while the other eight angelic hierarchies have received too little attention.

So I would now like to show you an overview of the hierarchies.

Overview of the Angelic Hierarchies

Trinity

God the Father **Christ** **Holy Spirit**

First Triad (concerned with the cosmos)

1st hierarchy: **seraphim** — spirits of love

2nd hierarchy: **cherubim** — spirits of harmony

3rd hierarchy: **thrones** — spirits of will

Descendents of the first triad: spirits of recurring cycles of time (alternation Sun–winter)

Second Triad (concerned with the Earth)

4th hierarchy: **kyriotetes** — dominions — spirits of wisdom — the wisdom-filled element of creation (e.g. plants)

5th hierarchy: **dynamis** — powers — spirits of movement — the metamorphosis of forms (e.g. root, leaf, blossom)

6th hierarchy: **exusiai** — authorities — spirits of form — the form element in everything

Descendents of the second triad: group souls of animals and plants

Third Triad (concerned with human beings)

7th hierarchy: **archai** — primal beginnings, forces — principalities — spirits of time — Descendants: earth beings

8th hierarchy: **archangeloi** — archangels — guidance of groups and peoples — Descendants: water beings

9th hierarchy: **angeloi** — angels — individual guidance of human beings — Descendants: Air beings

10th hierarchy: **man**

Descendants: elementals, beings connected with technology

We do angelic work but do not know it!