

Working with the Angels

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Dr. Helmut von Kugelgen spoke on the human being's relationship to the angels at a conference in Dornach, Switzerland at Easter, 1991. Dr. von Kugelgen spent 30 years as a teacher at the original Waldorf school in Stuttgart, and was the founder of the International Association of Waldorf Kindergartens. He also served as Director of the Waldorf Kindergarten Seminar in Stuttgart and edited a collection of booklets on the festivals and the inner life of Waldorf teachers, now available in English as the; "Little Series".

In the first three years of life, before the child is so engrossed in material life, it has a close relationship with the angels. At night, while asleep, the children meet their angels. They dream of them or have other experiences of them. As we

grow up, the qualities of our childhood mature and develop in us and can evolve as imagination, inspiration and intuition. We too can relate to the angels. It generally happens in our sleep, for it is such a remarkable experience that we might be filled with fear if these contacts were to happen in our waking life. Hence, in the Bible, when Gabriel visits Mary, he begins by saying, "Fear not."

In our waking state, we can work in such a way that our relationships to the spiritual world are strengthened, both to the angels and to the human souls who have died and are living in the world of the spirit. This relationship can manifest in our daily life in various ways. For example, in the German language, when one receives a sudden idea one says it has *eingefallen*—"fallen in." But what has fallen in and from where has it fallen? This can be the work of the angels, pouring their thoughts into mankind, or it can be the help of those human souls who are now in the spiritual world that wish to help us and work with us.

The spiritual world is always there around us, and we can work more consciously if we note the transition as we move from the earthly world to the spiritual world and vice versa. Thus at night we can say as we enter sleep, "Now I am entering the spiritual world," and in the morning as we awaken, we can say, "Now I am entering the earthly world."

We can also connect with the angelic world during the moments before we walk into our classroom. There can be a moment of absolute silence before entering into our work. Our hearts can quicken, and we can say a prayer. For a moment one can think of the angels, or of a friend who is now in the spiritual world. Then one goes with a renewed strength into one's work.

In working with the spiritual world it is important to work in a rhythm, and particularly the rhythms of seven are a great help. One can work with the rhythm of seven days or seven years or even

seven minutes. Seven months, however, would not be a true rhythm. We are not yet so far along that we can observe ourselves over a period of seven lifetimes and work with that rhythm. In rhythms of seven a new strength appears. We can work with meditations in seven-day rhythms, such as with the Foundation Stone meditation. Rudolf Steiner gave the Foundation Stone meditation as a whole, but then showed how one can work with it in seven day rhythms. In this way one connects with it more fully. If one is trying to work with a number of verses or meditations, such as the *Foundation Stone*, the *Calendar of the Soul* and the *Verses for the Dead*, one can put them into rhythms of seven. Thus, the verse for the Dead could be said each Saturday rather than each day.

When we work with these rhythms of seven, the angels take notice of us. If, for example, we have a sudden impulse to act, we can take time and wait seven minutes before acting. We may then feel that seven minutes is a very long time indeed. But in this quiet pause something happens. Waiting these seven minutes gives the



Angel by Fra Angelico

angels the chance to notice us, to let something “fall into” us. In this way we make time for the angels to enter into our lives, and they wait for us to do this. It is not that magnificent revelations from the angels appear to us in this time, but that the angels *see us*. They can only perceive us when we’re prepared for this to happen and give it time.

In 1919, Rudolf Steiner said that our century is particularly important during the age of the consciousness soul. It is a time when our consciousness can open up to the realms of nature and to the higher hierarchies. All of this can happen in quite a new way, now that the angels no longer take an interest in the form of man they did in the past. We must consciously work on ourselves so that the angels can take an interest in us again.

We need to realise that every child, every colleague, every parent is more than just a physical being. Every one contains a spiritual being as well, which brings something with it from previous earth lives. Recognising the spiritual nature of other human beings is a prerequisite for finding our connection to the spiritual hierarchies.

Rudolf Steiner went on to say we should not overload ourselves with the rational thoughts of the intellectual soul era, which is now past. We need to open up to the thoughts of the consciousness soul, recognising the living spirit in each of us and recognising our connection with the hierarchies of the spiritual world. When these thoughts are taken up by us with inner strength, they can help us in our work with the parents and help us lead children rightly into their new lives on earth. In this context we must realise that it is not our task to educate according to state regulations, nor are we a “program,” or simply a method. In the highest sense we work in accordance with the angels, the archangels and the archai. It is these beings of the third hierarchy who employ us, who give us our work. They work with us as individuals, and they work with us as a faculty. Their presence is acknowledged in the *Teachers’ Imagination*¹, which is used by the College of Teachers in a Waldorf school.

As Waldorf educators we work with these beings of the third hierarchy: the angels, the archangels and the archai, but all humanity has a new opportunity to work with them. Since the fifteenth century, we have been in the age of the consciousness soul. This age will last over two thousand years, but Rudolf Steiner indicated that the twentieth century was an especially important time for humanity to lift up its awareness to the spiritual and begin again to work consciously with the beings of the heavenly world. One way to do this is to include the angels in our planning for the next day. In the evening we can not only review what has happened during that day, we can preview what is to come next. We can also have a conversation with our angel. Rudolf Steiner said the angel would then grow interested in what is coming. It does not matter if in the morning we forget what was said during the night, for the angel will not have forgotten. When we need the insight given, it returns to us at the right moment. The angel leaves us free, but works to help us, for example, to really understand one another when we are in conversation. Later, our thoughts may be filled with loving forces that awoke in this conversation. This too is the work of the angel.

A good preparation for this inner work is to practice control of thinking. Rudolf Steiner describes this exercise in several of his books. Self control in the realm of thinking helps us to receive insights from the angels. We may then suddenly experience that the angelic beings give us the courage to do something which we would not otherwise have had the strength to do. As teachers it is a help if we study the biographies of individuals. In knowing the life of another, one begins to see how the angels work into a human being's destiny, often in remarkable ways.

When we study the destinies of the nation or a people we can see the working of the archangels, for they guide the work of whole groups. They guide the development of language, where the spirit of a people is reflected. They also guide the development of language in each individual. Thus it is important to pay attention to speech, so that



Sistine Madonna by Raphael

it is true and beautiful. Our speech can be a fine work of art. Archetypal creativity lies in the word. Rudolf Steiner was always very careful about how he spoke, even in his everyday exchanges. It is especially important how we speak with young children, for they are finding their way into language. We speak to them in whole sentences, and in the good, fine way of fairy tale language. Speech itself can give courage, for it connects us with the archangels, the spirits of time.

We can work with the beings of the third hierarchy in many ways. As Waldorf teachers we work with the *Teachers' Imagination*¹, which refers to the Angels, the archangels, and the archai. As individuals we can make relationship with the third hierarchy. At night, for a few seconds before sleep, we can think: "The angels, archangels and archai *want* to help me in my daily work." In the morning we can think of these beings again and remind ourselves that they want to help us if only we are open to receiving their help. In this way we find the courage for our work. ♦

¹ Steiner, R (1996) [1919] *The Foundations of human experience*, Hudson (GA 293, appendix to lecture 1, August 21, 1919). Hudson NY: Anthroposophic Press.