

Human and Cosmic Evolution: Week 6

The Earth

Rudolf Steiner offers a very beautiful picture of the earth. He tells that the great creative beings behold the earth from the great circle of the universe. The earth is far, far away from them, even as the stars are far from us. And as they look to the earth, they experience it as the sacred fruit of all of their work: they have created it out of their deepest sacrifices. They look “up” to the earth even as we look up to the stars. This, he says, is an exalted experience for them: *the earth is the religion of the gods.*

He tells also that between each of our human lifetimes we expand outwards from the earth. We pass through the solar system, as a spirit. We pass into the region of the stars, and experience them as the “garments” of spiritual beings. We ultimately come to the highest realm, where we are in the presence of the spiritual beings themselves. There, at their “invitation,” we turn back around and look at the earth from where we have come. We are filled with awe at the magnificence of the earth.

And then we are made aware of what the purpose of life is: that through our lives on earth, we may evolve towards ever greater and more spiritual consciousness. Our task, as human beings, is to go through our ego stage on the earth. This means we have had to become separate from the spirit (for a while), so that we can become free. We have been born into this world of matter: we live in the world of Death. But out of that, we will, hopefully, choose to seek a new relationship to the Creator, that overcomes death and chooses to be reconnected.

Our future is to become the hierarchy that creates Love in Freedom.

Review of Ancient Saturn, Ancient Sun, Ancient Moon

We have followed this journey:

- I. The Thrones sacrificed their will in the form of warmth, creating the seeds for the physical body. All the hierarchies interacted with the warmth: the Archai went through their ego stage in the physical body (warmth body), and humans, the youngest, had mineral consciousness.
- II. The Kyriotetes offered their gift of grace, which created life and light. Cosmic warmth condensed to become air. All hierarchies interacted with the warmth and air in their own way: Archai worked on the (new) etheric bodies, Archangels went through their ego stage in the physical body (enlivened air-warmth body), and humans had plant consciousness. (Some beings did not evolve at the same rate as others, and some matter did not become enlivened.)
- III. The Dynamis offered motion. Air condensed to water, and tone was sublimated. The source of light (the Sun) separated from the denser Moon, so that the more evolved beings could work on the lower world from outside of it. Archai worked on the (new) astral bodies, Archangels worked on the etheric bodies, and Angels went through the ego stage in the physical body (ensouled, living water-air-warmth body). Humans had animal consciousness. (Some beings did not evolve at the same rate as others, and some matter did not become ensouled.)

During these three great cycle, two “origins” of the human beings were formed: a lower man, consisting of physical body, ether body, and astral body, and a higher man, consisting of spirit man (Atma), life-spirit (Buddhi) and spirit-self (Manas). The earth development serves to bring the two separate origins of the human being together.

Each planetary stage grew to its own perfection. When it could grow no more, it created a seed for the future, like a flower that has finished its cycle. The seed rested during Pralaya.

The Creation of a World of Matter

The great Creators of the fourth phase, the Earth, are the Exusiai, the Spirits of Form. In every cycle, they have created separation. They have made the separate “balls of warmth” on Ancient Saturn, made separate “life bodies” on Ancient Sun, made separate “astral bodies” on Ancient Moon. Now they will make separate Ego-beings, which will mean humans will become formed into physical bodies, separate from spirit. We will evolve through an existence of separation, of death.

After the Pralaya, the Earth begins with 3 recapitulation phases, with a small “pralaya” between them. In the first phase, Saturn warmth is created: in the second the Sun phase, this warmth becomes permeated with life. In the recapitulation of the Moon phase, when the sun-body and the moon-body have separated, three kingdoms again arise: a mineral-plant, a plant-animal, and an animal-man. Then, during this recapitulation phase, a new action begins. The minerals harden, the plants lose their sensibility, and out of the uniform mass of the animal man two classes arise. One of them remains on the level of the animal. In the other, the astral body will separate into two parts: the lower part will continue to carry the emotions, while the upper part will become more independent so that it will be able to evolve and master the lower astral, the etheric, and the physical bodies.

Now the Archai work on that upper part with their unique power and give it the independence, but also egoism. Archangels will work in the lower human astral body, and in the animal realm. Angels work in the etheric body and in the plant realm. Exusiai work with what is becoming the mineral realm, giving it fixed and rigid forms. The true future spirit of the human being now begins to work on the physical body (which is not material at this point).

The three higher hierarchies, Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones ascend to higher realms, and now the Kyriotetes, Dynamis and Exusiai work on the spirit-self, life-spirit and spirit-man.

A next, smaller pralaya occurs, in which the seeds of everything now merge into a seed. When substance and spirit emerge again, the human is a kind of great soul being, in which all the humans, all the animals, all the plants and all the minerals are united in one being. This being has been called (in Hebrew) “Adam Kadmon,” a universal human soul in which all of nature is united with humanity. All beings will separate out of this unified being into matter, in a manner appropriate to their own level of consciousness: ultimately, however, *we are one with all of nature!*

- The first *independent beings* that can “appear” are those human beings with higher astral bodies that have been worked up by the Archai.

- Lower beings, the pre-animals and pre-plants, are living as thoughts, contained by the Archangels and Angels--in the realm of pure spirit, called "formlessness", known as *Arupa Devachan*.
- The minerals have a "double existence:" they are thoughts in the human ancestors and also thoughts in the Exusiai.
- The "higher man" (spirit-self, life-spirit, spirit man) is held in the consciousness of the Exusiai.

Everything now begins to become more dense, as creatures leave the "*Arupa Devachan*" and enter the realm of pure thought, *Rupa Devachan*." When the creatures are in that sphere, the animals become can independent beings, with a body of "thought."

At this stage, the *formless core* of the human being, is surrounded by a "coarser" body of pure thought, woven of the "substance" of *Rupa Devachan*.

Now a further densification takes place, and creatures leave the *Rupa Devachan* and sink further into the condition of dreamlike consciousness, called the *astral realm* (a realm of life and sensation that surrounds and envelops the earth).

- The human ancestor receives an astral body. We now have: 1) the inner formless core of being (*arupa*), 2) a thought body (*rupa*), and 3) an astral body.
- The animals now have 1) thought body (*rupa*) and 2) an astral body.
- The plants "emerge" from the consciousness of the Angels as independent astral entities.

In the next step of development, the earth condenses further to the condition known as the *physical*. For a long time, this is not yet *material*: it is an etheric condition that has the characteristics of the most refined ether.

- The human being receives this as our outmost body. We have 1) the inner formless core of being (*arupa*), 2) a thought body (*rupa*), 3) an astral body, and 4) a refined ether-physical body.
- Animals have 1) a thought body, 2) an astral body, and 3) a refined ether-physical body
- Plants have an 1) astral body and 2) a refined ether-physical body
- Minerals emerge as independent beings with an independent ether-physical form.

Thus, at this stage we have four kingdoms.

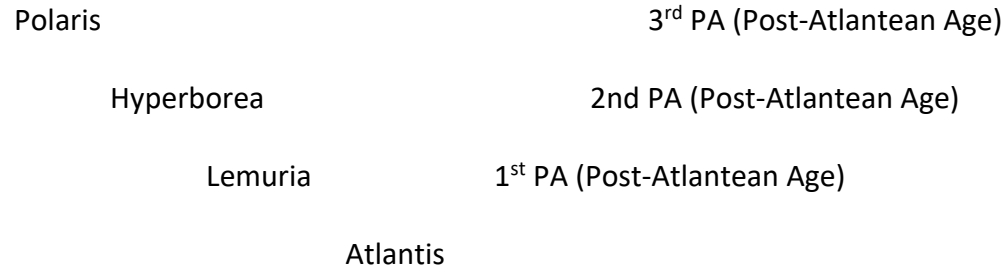
In addition, three other kingdoms have come into being, created by the Archai, Archangels and Angels. These are the three *elementary kingdoms* which will contribute to weaving substance into matter.

Thus, as this point, the earth is a conglomerate of etheric mineral mass and of etheric plant, animal and human beings. The elementary beings "fill in the spaces" (the interstices) between these beings.

The higher spiritual beings are active *within these realms*, working upon them spiritually from within, as a snail works upon its house.

A next pralaya takes place, and everything rests in the astral realm. Then, in a series of steps, the next chapter of creation can begin. * The Archai, the Archangels, and the Angels will all have their part to play first, before the humans can go through their ego stage.

There are seven stages on the earth, following the pattern of the U-curve we have already seen:



1. Polaris

This story begins billions of years ago.

The beings described above did not yet lead an external, (physical) body existence: they lived in the soul realm. They had an image consciousness, and feelings and desires. As astral beings, they were the ancestors of man, but did not yet have the self-conscious *spirit* within us.

The creation of matter began with the Exusiai bringing forth a great ocean of warmth. Some of this warmth was able to take up the life and light and sound, the results of the deeds of higher beings, and create a home for the human ego. Some was not be able to take up these ethers: only those parts of this first warmth that would evolve to be able to become living, sentient, and self-conscious could become human. Some parts of this warmth would lose its life and soul, and would evolve into forms that would become bodies for other kingdoms of nature.

The Archai were the first spirits to work with this warmth. They gave it the imprint of egoism. In this sea of warmth, individualized warmth forms appeared, which “attracted” humans from the astral realm. At this time, our contact with this warmth was very subtle: a human soul “touched” a bit of warmth and felt it as a kind of sensation.

The etheric-physical bodies were simple ellipses. They could grow in size, and when they needed to reproduce, they split into two smaller, identical masses. This was the archetype of *cell mitosis*.

As a memory of this first stage of Earth we see the imprint of *single-celled animals* in the fossil record. We recognize them as the substrata of all biological life.

2. Hyperborea

For the next stage of evolution, the Exusiai “remembered” the Ancient Sun stage. They caused the body of warmth to contract further. The warmth of Polaris condensed to air, an

* This marks the point of the beginning of the book of Genesis in the Bible.

living atmosphere. Archangels were able to work with this substance as they developed the astral body. The space resounded with cosmic music.

The human body was only as dense as the molecules of smell at that time. As semi-conscious astral beings, we touched into air bodies and left them again. Rudolf Steiner said our bodies were like fluttering flowers in the air, inwardly mobile. Each soul shaped its own body in accordance with the tones that resounded around it and the images of inner light that played into it. In the tones, we could perceive the presence of the Archangels.

The first beginning of respiration and digestion began as air “flowed into and out of” the flower-bodies.

Humans could enter and leave these flower-bodies easily. An “abandoned” flower-body wilted away: a new one could be created at will.

Then, at the central point in the Hyperborea period, the highest spiritual beings (the Exusiai and others) were ready to withdraw into a separate body, as we had previously seen on Ancient Moon. The higher beings needed to stay in the light for their own development, but the lower kingdoms, and especially human beings, needed to enter into denser matter. At this point we say that “the Sun gradually separated from the Earth,” so it could shine down upon the lower kingdoms. This picture makes us recognize that the Sun and the Earth are very intimately created: we find out healthy spiritual archetype in the Sun.

As a side note: after the Sun left the Earth, two planets were extruded and began to orbit between the Sun and the Earth: Venus and Mercury.

The result of the separation of the Sun is that now the source of spiritual light streams to the earth from above. Any life-form that had strongly connected with the air-warmth bodies but had not been able to make its own inner light body (consciousness body) now became completely dependent upon the outer light. We see this as the beginning of *nature*: this is the moment when *plants* are developed. They came into being out of the great Adam Kadmon, and when they connected with the early, living air they relied on the sun of the atmosphere. When the Sun separated, however, they could not sustain their own growth forces from within, and became completely dependent on the outer sunlight. They are pure beings, completely connected with the love of the outer sun. Plants are constant reminders of our original connection with Ancient Sun.

Other animals also had to adapt to the changed conditions when the sun left. We can read the traces of this in the fossil record. The very simple animals who have no exoskeleton remind us of the time when they could be nurtured simply by the light of the sun in the earth. (In contrast, animals with a central nervous system were already evolving with the ability to hold spiritual sunlight in themselves, in their consciousness. This can be traced by researching the evolving embryological development gestures of different species of animals.)

During this process, as the earth continued to become harder, it grew harder for the spirits to duplicate themselves through pure mitosis. The “fluttering flower” bodies now became denser, more viscous. A new way of reproduction was necessary. Thus, interior structures that were purely etheric were made inside each ellipse: these became interior

organs withdrawn from the effects of the outer world. This inner space carries the life principle (called *prana*). Thus, we had two organs: the physical envelope, or body, subject to the chemical and physical laws of the surroundings, and the inner organs that are subject to the principle of life. This enables the soul to become even more sensitive (because it does not always have to “battle” with the dense forces of the physical-chemical). Now the soul not only “vibrates” with the outer world, but also is able to *perceive* the tones, the light, the heat and cold around itself. Other senses also arise including the new capacity to *see outer light, with eyes*. And we see not only light, but also colors! Previously, the soul experienced *inner* color sensations when we beheld things. Now, we began to see outer objects surrounded by the colors that corresponded to the inner states of the objects.

Another result of the separation of the sun from the earth is that the earth now begins to cool off. Within the organism, a counter-action becomes necessary, and humans and some higher animals become “warm-blooded.” We become more independent, and thereby develop an independent *physical* inner life. The soul had a bodily foundation for sensing and perceiving. *Through this*, the life of the soul was drawn into the physical: the physical world could cause us to experience sympathy, antipathy, passions, etc. We began to experience desire.

More and more, the capacity to directly experience the soul nature of the environment disappeared. More and more, the soul became the image of the external world. The outside world is repeated in the soul as *image*.

3. Lemuria

The age of Lemuria brings radical changes with it. In this age, we came much closer to the physical world. By the end of Lemuria, humans stood upright upon the earth, although the bodies were not as dense as they are on the current earth. Humans will be divided into two genders, male and female. They will have some control over their inner feelings and the first beginnings of their thinking.

At the beginning of the Lemurian phase, the developing archetype “floated” as a pure spiritual thought form in the astral world. This archetypal human was originally horizontal, but, through the influence of the cosmic Christ, the Spirit of the Sun, the human form became upright in this period, giving to humanity a direction in which to evolve during by the end of Lemuria.

The soul life of the Lemurian was strongly linked to the perceptions of the outer world that flowed into them. They experienced that wind and water “spoke” to them, or within them, and reverberated in their souls, telling them what to do. We were very responsive to the needs of nature. In our souls there lived *images* of the outer world, but not *concepts* of them.

Living amongst the human beings of that time were also super-sensible beings, of the Angelic realm. As long as the earth substance was still only watery, and as long as the human ego was not yet individuated on the earth, Angels could live in the developing bodies. Some were Angels who were our cultural guardians and could inhabit human bodies as long as they were still etheric-physical. But there were also angels who had not reached their human stage on the earth and were trying to “catch up.” These “fallen angels,” also known as Luciferic

beings, created difficulties for humans at many stages in our development, but also helped us develop freedom.

The helper-angels had a more advanced soul life. They could also hear the wind and the water and other forces of nature, but they could also do more: they could experience the *beings* behind them. They could interpret to humans what nature wanted and needed and how they should regulate their lives. Spiritual reality was accessible to them, and they could teach and guide humanity.

The earth continued to become denser, so much so that it became ever harder to for humans to “move in and out of bodies.” By the end of Hyperborea, humans already needed to reproduce their likeness in a kind of maternal womb. But even before that happened, human beings were being born with more male or more female characteristics, and were sometimes even able to self-impregnate themselves, at least in certain seasons when the conditions of outer nature were favorable. Male characteristics in this case are the extra-terrestrial, generating forces, and female forces are the earthly, receptive forces: these gestures are visible in the sexual organs of the two body types.

By the middle of Lemuria, the body types looked more like present day bodies, with a head and extremely flexible limbs, designed for moving about and living in the world, but not for cognizing. All of the spiritual forces we had were necessary for working in the dense material world. In time, fewer and fewer humans had the spiritual strength to incarnate onto the earth. Population decreased: Rudolf Steiner said humans had to seek other places to “live,” on other planets. Each was guided to a planet to which they had affinity.

Two new solutions occurred at this time.

- First, the hardening forces within the Earth were concentrated and consolidated in one body, and these withdrew from the body of the Earth. These became the Moon, which now circles the earth as a cold, lifeless planet that reflects the sunlight to us.
- Second: two new body-types were made, one male and one female. In this way, humans only needed to use *part* and not *all* of their spiritual forces in reproduction. Humans in male bodies now had a freed female etheric body, which served them for their imagination activity. Humans in female bodies had a freed male etheric body, which served them in a complementary way.

With this, a human body type was created that could stand upright on the earth, with an upper part for thinking, a lower part for movement and digestion, and began to develop middle part to mediate between the two.

The helper-angels regulated sexual life. They consciously pre-formed this process, which humans received as instincts. The higher angels-in-human-bodies themselves had sexual intercourse, but performed it as a selfless act, an act of sacrifice for the continuation of human life. The fallen angels, however, connected this activity with self-pleasure, attaching it to desire and worse. They derived pleasure from internal impressions: however, they also were able to develop the thinking capacity of *brains*. They could become leaders in men when mere images changed into likenesses and conceptions of external objects. Through their activity, humans no longer had a mere dream-like relationship to the world: we began to actually look outward toward the sensuous, external world.

This, then became the scenario for the “fall” from innocence.

Through the act of sex, but also through the desire for ever more and stronger sensations, we developed a strong attachment to the physical sensations. We abandoned the dream-like consciousness of our predecessors, and eagerly “opened our eyes” to the world around us. We were eager to become earth-citizens, no longer in the paradise of the spirit.

In the last phase of Lemuria, Rudolf Steiner offers pictures of how we developed a new kind of culture. Leaders guided us in the process of learning to dance with Word of Nature, experiencing how it talks to us. (This is the earliest root of eurhythmy.) Humanity developed ceremonies and practices to differentiate masculine and feminine soul types. Some parts of humanity, the “generative” types, were trained in how to become extroverts, deeply incarnated onto the earth, to become warriors and hunters. They had to pass trials of jumping over fires, body harm like piercing and tatoos. The “receptive” types were taught how to cultivate and inner life that could accurately and richly take in the images and forces of nature, faithfully understand them, and even remember them. The human inner life was being developed.

Meanwhile, those humans who had needed to “abandon” the earth for awhile and live on other planets returned to the earth. They felt drawn to one another on the earth, and created communities with people who “worshipped the same planetary god.”

In and amongst all of these people were magicians, black and white. The white magicians guided people with wisdom, but the black magicians used their extreme spiritual-physical capacities for immoral powers. In a tremendous abuse of magical energy, they brought about tremendous earth catastrophes, unleashing forces of volcanoes and earthquakes that destroyed vast parts of the earth.

In this way, the age of Lemuria came to an end. A small pralaya happened before the next phase, Atlantis, could begin.

4. Atlantis

As the fourth great age of Earth evolution, Atlantis should have been the central point of development, but we will see that it was not until the fifth great Age (our age, the first Post- Atlantean age) that the very challenging conditions for allowing human freedom could be established.

The ages of the earth are often attributed to places on the earth, but we must always remember that we must also think in terms of time. When we speak of Atlantis, we will also be aware that similar stories were happening in other ways in other places on the developing earth, each offering developing humanity a different consciousness opportunity.

If we want to identify a primary location for Atlantis, it would be in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

We can imagine that the time span of Atlantis was from about 22,000 BCE to 7000 BCE. The atmosphere of the earth was still very fluid, and human skeletons were cartilaginous, so our movements were more like “floating” in the watery air than “walking” on our present earth. In the course of the *approximately* 14,500 years of Atlantis, the earth would become increasingly dense, until by the end it began to resemble present earth.

To enable this to happen, substances began to solidify. Each substance that came into being was a manifestation of a spiritual activity of a spiritual being or beings. When we think about this, we can begin to understand that this world of matter is the result of spiritual activity, and that behind everything we see exist spiritual beings. Their existence is now veiled from us, but we live in the result of their works. (This world is therefore sometimes called the “wrought work of the gods.”)

In the book “Cosmic Memory” (also called Out of the Akashic Records, and available online as an excerpt in Atlantis and Lemuria), Rudolf Steiner described in great detail the conditions that existed in Atlantis. I will only summarize them here: you may be intrigued enough to want to read them yourself! As the elements came into being, life forms began to evolve in the earth that would house ever more complex animal forms and, eventually, humans.

At the beginning of Atlantis, there appeared a multitude of forms that would be strange to us, but by the end of that epoch, all animal and human forms had begun to “settle” into forms that would be familiar to us. Then, however, we can imagine that in the fecund atmosphere there existed huge plants that were large enough to serve as food for the gigantic dinosaurs whose fossils can be found in so many places.

Some of the developing forms that would become homes for human beings were mostly limbs: these were beings that belong very much to the developing will. We read that it was possible for those humans to stretch out their arms many meters long, at will. Others were humans whose heads were over-developed. And of course, there were many transitional forms.

Our consciousness at that time, in that watery world, was still quite dreamy, and we were still very dependent on the wise guidance of the spiritual world. The spiritual foundation of the world was often visible to us through our own clairvoyance, and interpreted to us by the angelic beings in our environments who still served as cultural leaders.

Because we were still not strongly connected to the physical bodies we would live in, we identified strongly with our etheric bodies. Through these, we could live in a very dynamic relationship with nature. Rudolf Steiner tells how we could unite with the etheric bodies of plants, for instance, to affect how they grew, or use the energy of seeds for a kind of living technology (he even mentions that people built a kind of “flying machine.”) Our “homes” were not built out of dead material, but woven out of the living material of plants.

Human beings did not yet have clear object consciousness, nor even the beginning ability to think or speak. We did have a strong capacity for memory, especially for *place memory*, connected with an ability to *read the memories written into the etheric forces of a place*.

Spiritual researchers speak of seven phases that humans went through during Atlantis to develop a body that would be conducive to independent consciousness and thinking activity:

1. Rmoahals. The first people were still cosmic, not individuated. Their initial gift of memory enabled them to also recognize things that they had seen before. Thus also began the capacity for speech, the ability to name things.

2. Tvatli. In this phase began the consolidation of community life, each of which had different alliances to the planetary gods where people had “dwelt” during the Lemurian exile. People felt connected to one another (to their tribes) as they identified with the forces in their blood.
3. Toltecs. The powers derived by identifying with the blood increased: Nature memory was gradually replaced by tribal ancestor memory (the individual could remember things done by ancestors)
4. Turanians. Mystery temples begin to cultivate *knowledge*, not only memory. Knowledge began to replace memory: this should have been selfless, but where it became personal memory it could become a quest for power. **This quest for personal power, rooted in selfish personal desires, could only be restrained by logical thinking.**
5. Semites. As that capacity for logic evolved, the ability to have influence over nature was lost: people begin to think, calculate and contrast. The soul began to turn inwards, and humanity fell deeper into matter, encouraged by Ahriman.
6. Akkadians. The Ice Age began. People began to migrate out from Atlantis: the great teachers knew that Atlantis was about to collapse to a water catastrophe.
7. Mongols. As a last great cultural people, they remained faithful to the old work with memory. They had lost much of their clairvoyance and their mastery over life forces, but they never lost their *faith* in it. They thereby seemed to have a special secret force.

Atlantis was home to different three different groupings of humans and angels:

1. Evolving human beings.
2. Angel beings who, as guides, were “allowed” to live in human beings to and shape human consciousness until the end of Atlantis. They were the great teachers.
3. Fallen angel beings who lived in the developing human bodies, in often very inappropriate ways, imprinting bodies with cravings and desires. **These Luciferic beings, however, were directly responsible for creating the circumstances for human freedom, because they pulled us away from blind obedience to the gods so we could become independent.**

The Cosmic Christ, as Sun Spirit and archetype of the human race, performed two more deeds for humanity during Atlantis.

During the 1st phase of Atlantis, he gave to humanity the gift of speech, so that we could develop the ability to make words that were the true names of things. (This is the mystery we unfold in Eurythmy and in Speech Formation.)

During the 4th phase, he gave to humanity the capacity to think, to make mental images in the mind and connect them with the true nature of things, the concepts.

The End of Atlantis

Many cultures around the world speak of a Great Flood that occurred thousands of years ago. This is also described in the Rudolf Steiner, who wrote again how, in the time of Lemuria, immoral initiates unleashed disastrous forces of egotism. Similarly, as Atlantis drew to an end,

immoral initiates again caused an environmental crisis. Because at that time the earth was still so ethereal, and human etheric bodies were so strongly connected to the etheric world, the immorality of the magicians caused a catastrophe of flooding.

At that time, there lives a great Sun Initiate named **Manu** (This is the same person referred to in the Bible as Noah). Aware of the impending destruction, he gathered the greatest initiates from the seven planetary mystery temples on earth and led them, with others, on a great migration to the east. On that long journey, peoples left the group at various points. Some stayed in what is now Europe and had one kind of culture. Some went south into Africa; some went through the Middle East. (Others had already earlier gone west, to what is now the Americas).

Manu himself and the migrants who stayed with him eventually arrived in the area northwest of the Gobi desert. (There, they met other people, including the people of the Mongol group who carried the ancient Atlantean wisdom). Manu proceeded to set into motion the events necessary for the next, Post-Atlantean age.

The earth *as we know it now* began.

5. The Seven Post-Atlantean Epochs

At the end of Atlantis, the flood receded. The misty age disappeared: air and water separated, and the first rainbow appeared. The air became clear, and sunlight touched the ground. In the sky, the constellations became fixed into the patterns we now see. The shape of the animals became clear: the human form was now boney and upright. The brain could *begin, step by step*, to serve thinking.

Recounting this aspect of esoteric history, Rudolf Steiner focused on the next development of the Sun mysteries as it unfolded over thousands of years, proceeding sequentially through India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, our present time, and two more epochs to come.

His research traces the history of evolution from the great ages of the past in the east towards the west, in seven great Cultural Epochs:

7227 BCE Ancient India

5067 BCE Ancient Persia

3907 BCE Egyptian-Chaldean

727 BCE Greece-Rome

1413 Present Epoch

3573 Russian Epoch

5733 America Epoch

Our age is designated as the fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch, the so-called Consciousness Soul Age.

There is no denying that this is a difficult age. We have become extremely materialistic. We can easily deny the spiritual world, and we thereby are denying the very core of our being. We are estranged from nature, and the machine world is becoming ever stronger.

Where will we find our way?

How does “Freedom” serve us?

What kind of god can help us?

What choices will we make for the good?

We will examine many of these in our final class next week. But first: we must explore the journey we have taken in the last 9000 years, and see if we can make sense of it.

Rudolf Steiner describes a history of the world that moves from east to west. From his spiritual perspective, the great seeds of culture were laid in the east, and over the course of thousands of years spread to the west from out of the Gobi Desert (where the Sun initiate Manu had taken his students).

Simultaneously, other cultures were also developing in other places on the earth. The earth offers to humans many different opportunities in every point of time, and people can be drawn to incarnate in many places. However, there have always been centers where humanity was developing new capacities that would be especially significant for the future of humanity and the development of freedom, and these are the ones that Steiner focused on in his central story line.

1. Ancient India (7227 BCE)

The Sun initiate Manu had taken his students, representatives of the most ancient mystery wisdom, to the Far East, where they interacted with some of the ancient carriers of Atlantean wisdom. Conscious of the fact that the future, free human being would need to “come down to earth,” and unite with the physical world to develop freedom, Manu knew that the next step in evolution would need to be carried by people who no longer had the old clairvoyance. He chose certain of his disciples who were “young souls” and could not easily be overcome by Angels or the half-super human beings (Luciferic beings). He “implanted into them” the etheric forces of the great initiates of the planetary mysteries, and taught them how to speak out of the etheric knowledge they carried. As a group, these new teachers, the “7 Holy Rishis,” bore the wisdom of the seven planets.

These Rishis unfolded their work in the sub-continent India, teaching and traveling and sowing the seeds for cosmic knowledge and wisdom for all post-Atlantean epochs. The people they taught the folk lived lightly on the land as hunters and gatherers.

These ancient people considered everything in the sense world to be **maya**, or illusion. They did not connect deeply to the sense world, for as a people they still remembered the spiritual world. They spent much time in meditation.

The groups that human beings established there were each connected to a different mystery temple, as a result of the earlier connections in Atlantis. The spiritual allegiance implanted in the blood had given each group different inclinations and abilities, which became reflected in the different tasks mandated by the *caste system* in Indian society.

In these ancient times, people did not fear death. They knew that it was only a passage, back to their home.

The task of the Human being in the Indian epoch was to develop the newly re-integrated *etheric body* so that it would become accustomed to the physical body.

2. Ancient Persia (5907 BCE)

The next cultural epoch began a little further to the west, in the great Middle East. Human beings there connected much more closely with the earth. Through their spiritual teacher, they were taught to turn their attention to work on the earth, which was no longer “maya” to them. This age marks the transition from hunters and gatherers to agriculturalists.

The task of the Human being in the Persian epoch was to develop the *sentient body*, so they could more clearly see and interact with the world of the senses.

Whereas the great teachers in Ancient India were the 7 Holy Rishis, the teacher in the Persian epoch was known as Zarathustra (still centuries before the historically known Zarathustra). As a close student of Manu in the Sun mystery temple, he knew that humanity was falling deeper and deeper into the world of maya. Zarathustra offered humanity the wisdom that the Sun is a living being with whom we are all connected. The Sun being was called Ahura Mazdao. He is in constant battle with the Ahriman, the lord of darkness. He taught that we must bring light into the darkness—and that even the practice of agriculture is a practice of bringing sunlight into the earth.

Humans were aware that in their passage after death, they would meet the lords of light and darkness.

3. Egyptian-Chaldean Epoch (3907 BCE) (also Phoenician-Judaic-Mesopotamian cultures)

This age generally marks the beginning of recorded history. (Even when we refer to Ancient Indian and Ancient Persian historical records, we are mindful that what written records we have from those ages, including the Bhagavad Gita, were written millennia later). By this time, human beings were even more at ease on the earth, and increasingly separated from the spirit. The Sun spirit saw that the content of our waking life was mostly involved with earth matters. This is the age when human beings created writing, astrology, architecture, and navigation.

As a result of this feeling of the spirit slipping away from them, the Egyptians embalmed and bound the bodies of their initiated pharaohs when they died. The process of embalming holds the etheric body bound to the physical body. (The Egyptians even took and preserved the Pharaohs’ vital organs!) All these practices were an effort to keep the wisdom and the planetary forces of the initiates near them. **The Egyptians did not necessarily believe that every being would live beyond death, but they did believe that the pharaohs were capable of doing so.** The Egyptian priests also understood how to conduct “divination” ceremonies, by putting young students into a “temple sleep” for three days. During that time, the etheric and astral bodies of the students were lifted into the spiritual world, receiving wisdom and guidance. At the end of the three days, the priests would “download” from them what they had experienced in the spiritual world as messages and insights. (This ritual was often misused.)

The task of the human being in this age was to develop the inner life of the *sentient soul*.

The great initiate of that time was Hermes. The leading mythology of that time centered around the goddess of Wisdom, Isis, and her husband the Sun god, Osiris. The dark god, Seth, killed Osiris, and divided his body into 12 parts and hid them in different places on the earth. This was a manifestation of the experience that God could no longer be found as a single entity, but shone as facets of a crystal. Isis, the spirit of Wisdom, then entered into all the deepest, darkest places of the earth to find Osiris, the Sun light.

Judaic people

The first great initiate of the Judaic people was Abraham, a student of the Sun initiate Melchizedek (a disciple of Manu, mentioned in the Bible). Abraham had been taught to be *the first person able to think with the brain*. The brain thinking is a necessary intermediate step to develop freedom, because along with the ability for living thinking coexists the ability for dead thoughts to arise. Man has freedom of choice in whether he will engage in spiritual thinking or be lost in dead thoughts. The Semitic and Arab constitutions were the most suitable for the activity of thinking to emerge. Strict Judaic law had kept the blood lines “clean” to preserve the harmony between the physical, etheric and astral bodies of the Judaic people. In the study of the Judaic people, we see how their teachings went from the Prophets to the Kings and the Judges.

Rudolf Steiner also tells that Lucifer had a personal incarnation as a human being in China in the 3rd millennium BCE.

4. Greco-Roman Epoch (727 BCE)

This marks the beginning of the age of the *Intellectual Soul* (also called the *Heart-Mind Soul*). In this age, humans were firmly engaged in the earth. We can see in ancient Greek sculpture how they succeeded in making the things of the earth into truly beautiful pieces of art. They accomplished something similar with their consciousness, as they created for the first time complex and elegant philosophical systems. (Here we need only think of Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, and Aristotle.)

The Greeks still felt themselves to be connected to the gods *on earth*, and had deep mythologies that portrayed the gods as human personalities. They built for them beautiful temples to serve as their earthly homes.

However, the Greeks who loved the gods so much had begun to lose confidence that they would find the spirit after they died. They could no longer feel connected to their kind who had passed through the threshold of death. The realms of spirit were experienced increasingly dark after the body died. They were getting lost.

Not far away---and a few centuries later---the Romans developed a much more materialistic culture. It can be seen that their art is similar to Greek art, but not as masterfully artistic. They led the drive towards rationalism.

0 CE -1412 CE

Through all the ages until the 0 CE, initiates and followers of the sacred Sun Myateries anticipated with greatest longing for the Spirit of the Sun, the God-Spirit of the Messiah--who had left the earth in Hyperborea—to return to the Earth and live on it with humanity. This is the spiritual meaning of the life of Christ Jesus, of his death and resurrection, the turning

point in time. What has happened since that time carries the seeds of a new future for humanity.

Even as many people of the East developed great cultures and sciences, the Greco-Roman cultures began to fade. Their influence nonetheless flowed into northern Europe. There we see the gradual awakening of a people who had retained their clairvoyant culture for many millennia. We see serfs and feudal systems, and the beginning of the cultures of the minnesingers, knights and ladies, and the careful schooling of the virtues of courtesy and morality.

In the religious life, we see the rise of the monasteries: there, too, morality was carefully schooled. And we also see the rise of scholasticism, in which scholars who no longer could see into the spiritual world turned to tradition and church authority to try to see *how it could be possible to find the truth about God and about the World*. To the south, church people and adventurers traveled to the crusades in what they imagined to be a holy mission to save the world.

This period also sees the rise of Islam (Mohammedism) in the Middle East, which gave birth to many great scientific discoveries.

5. The Present Epoch: the Consciousness Soul Age

With the beginning of the present epoch, massive new shifts in humanity began to occur. This marked the beginning of the Age of Exploration, opening up the New World to exploration. This is our age, and I do not need to write many words about it. We are all aware of our opportunities and dilemmas.

This is the age when we will begin to develop a new kind of *living thinking*, in which we will again awaken our own selves to *consciously find the Spirit that has made the world through learning to use and train our own consciousness to perceive with our etheric bodies!* Ahriman, the rightful lord of materialism, is expected to have his own chance to incarnate into a human body in this century. He is working hard at this time to weaken the etheric element, through his work with electronic media, virtual reality, dead thoughts, lies, fear, etc.

Spirit is just one level away from our perceptible world: spirit is here, in the etheric world. The quest for the Spirit in the etheric is the Journey of the Grail. Through eurhythmy, meditative work, the practice of mindfulness and the six basic exercises, we are turning ourselves into vessels.