

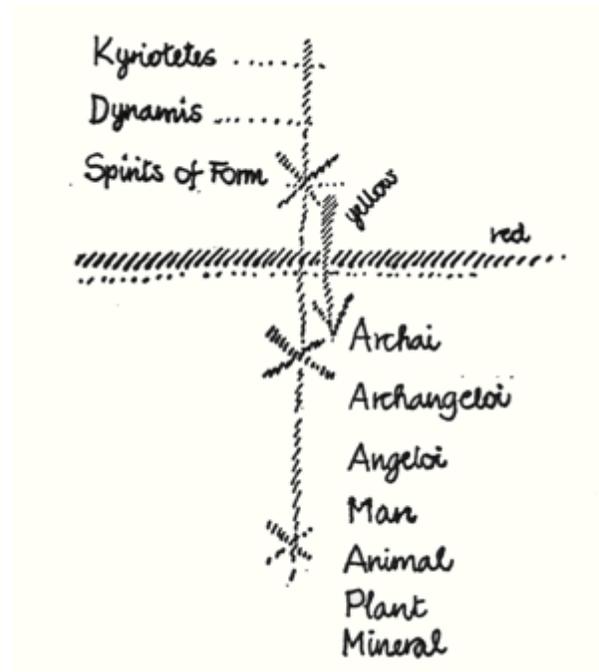
# The Driving Force of Spiritual Powers in World History

## Lecture 4 — 17th March 1923

By referring to the 4th century A.D. as a point in world history that we have for some time now recognized as very significant, I tried in the lecture yesterday to show that we can fully understand the evolution of humanity only when we keep in mind not only what takes place openly on the stage of history but also what is going on behind the scenes. I told you yesterday that the 4th century of our era is to be regarded approximately as the middle point of the period during which the Spirits of Form, the Exousiai, were handing over the cosmic thoughts to the Archai, the Primal Powers of Principalities. The process lasted for several hundreds of years. And with this transference is connected the fact — because man has become dependent in his thoughts upon quite different spiritual Beings — that his relation to his thoughts is not at all the same as it was in earlier times.

You must picture to yourselves how this super-sensible event affects the course taken in those centuries by outer historical happenings and also by happenings in the spiritual history of mankind. Whereas previously the Spirits of Form — those Beings whom the Bible calls the Elohim — ruled over the cosmic thoughts so that men were obliged unconsciously to turn to them when wishing to formulate thoughts about things, the life of thought now came under the rulership of the Archai, the Primal Powers, who belong to a rank nearer to man. Yesterday I indicated this proximity pictorially by saying: here (in the diagram) is the boundary (red) representing the world of the senses. Everything we see and become aware of in the world of the senses — colours, sounds, sensations of warmth — is symbolized by means of this line. What lies behind the sense perceptions is the sphere of the Spirits of Form (the Elohim), of the higher Spirits, the so-called Dynamis, of the Kyriotetes, and so on. These, then, are the three kingdoms behind the world of the senses.

When modern physics becomes natural philosophy it indulges in the fanciful idea that behind the world of the senses are the whirling atoms. But that is just a fantastic, materialistic notion. The truth is that in that sphere weaving colours and tones are in play; this is because the Spirits of the higher Hierarchies hold sway there, in the colours, the tones and so forth.



Before the 4th Christian century the Spirits of Form held sway, not only in the impressions of the sense-world, but, above all, also in the thoughts. The thoughts now pass over to the Archai. These Beings are, however, nearer to man than the Spirits of Form, for their realm lies between man and the world of the senses; only, because they are by nature super-sensible, he is not aware of them. Then come the Archangeloi, then the Angeloi, then man himself, and then animals, plants and minerals.

So during the period I have indicated, this great, all-embracing, mighty deed lies behind the scenes of world-history: the thoughts which are in the things and which man draws out of the things, are no longer solely the possession of the Exousiai, the Elohim, but of the Archai.

Now it is a fact in the evolution of the universe that together with the advance of spiritual Beings, certain individual spiritual Beings of the Cosmos always remain behind. [note 1] Thus in the general advance of spiritual Beings during this epoch, that is to say, the first centuries of Christendom, certain Spirits of Form remained stationary at their former level.

What does this mean? It means that certain Spirits of Form could not bring themselves to surrender the world of thoughts to the Archai; they retained it for themselves. And so, among the spiritual Beings who hold sway over human happenings, there are the normally evolved Archai in possession of the world of thoughts as well as backward Spirits of Form, backward Elohim Beings, who still retain some sway over the world of thoughts. Hence in the stream of spirituality holding sway above humanity, the Archai and the Spirits of Form, the Elohistic Beings, work together. The position is therefore as follows a man who through his karma is rightly qualified, receives the impulses at work in his thinking through the Archai. The result is that thinking, although it remains objective, becomes his personal asset. He elaborates the thoughts more and more as his own personal possession. Other individuals do not reach this point; they take over the thoughts either as the legacy bequeathed by their parents and ancestors, or accept them as conventional thoughts prevailing in their national or racial community, and so forth.

To this super-sensible fact which I have sketched for you is to be traced the whole interplay between individual personalities — who appear more and more frequently in that era of vanishing antiquity and the dawning Middle Ages — and those currents of thought which sway whole groups of men. This trend becomes apparent in actual geographical areas. Certain spiritually minded personalities in the Near East, belonging to Arabian culture, were the first to be influenced by the Archai, the Primal Powers. The gist of these thought-impulses spread especially across Africa, over to Spain, to the whole of Western Europe. This great stream of thought moves across Africa, through Spain, also influencing Southern Italy, and up into Western Europe. It is a highly stimulating current of thought, stemming from the impulses described. This current of thought lays hold of the Arabian-Spanish culture which then, at a much later period, still exercises a strong influence upon thinkers such as Spinoza, for example. It is an influence which still persists in nature-knowledge and can be observed in the thought-impulses of Galileo, Copernicus, and others. Whereas the impulses of the Archai are contained in these currents of thought, and in what becomes history as a result of them, we also see, forcing its way into world-happenings everywhere, trends which lie more under the influence of the backward Spirits of Form, who now, on their side, send impulses into men. And again we see a different stream of thought and happenings moving from Asia towards Europe. This current of thought found its extreme expression only later on, when the Turkish hordes surged over from Asia.

Thus European life from the 4th century A.D. onwards is the scene of a continuous spiritual struggle. The Archai contend with the backward Exousiai, the Spirits of Form who had remained behind, for the possession that had once been rightfully allotted to them in the course of world-history. Everything that happened in the Middle Ages in a West-to-East direction and also in an East-to-West direction, all the surging migrations of the peoples, all the mutual antagonisms and hostilities from the Hunnish wars to the Turkish wars, from the tribal migrations to the Crusades, where everything always takes either a West-to-East or an East-to-West direction — all this is the physical, the historical reflection of a spiritual struggle taking place behind the scenes of world-history. Historical

happenings on Earth can be understood in their reality only when we see them as reflections of what is being enacted in the super-sensible, spiritual world between the Beings of the Higher Hierarchies.

Thinking of one aspect of this fact, we can speak, to begin with, of two currents or streams. One which I shall mark yellow in the diagram [note 2], brings about the manifold movements again from West to East; the other stream presses forward and again back, so that these two streams constantly interpenetrate. A reflection of what was taking place in the spiritual world is to be seen in the struggles arising from migrations of the peoples, in the struggles whereby ancient culture was partially destroyed but in which that culture was permeated now by human individuality.

We can devote ourselves to the following study, by asking: What would have resulted from civilization if the different peoples had not begun their migrations, surging over into Europe from Asia and frequently settling in Europe, and if in these wanderings the factor of individual personality had not asserted itself — many a time with violence?

We see how within these migrations, whole tribes were permeated by a common spirit. But if we follow history we find that everywhere within these separate, yet homogeneous tribes inspired by one common spirit — Ostrogoths, Western Goths, Lombards, Heruli, Franks, Marcomanni, and so on — single personalities were stirred by the impulses of individuality. Everywhere we see happenings which on the one side represent the continuing stream of the impulses of the old, no longer really lawful Spirits of Form, and on the other, the now lawfully established Spirits of Personality, the Archai.

If history were related accurately, with more attention given to the influence of spiritual forces in what is for the most part described merely as tribal warfare, then it would be clear how these two forms of thought-impulses in humanity actually dominated life in the days of the folk migrations.

As I said, we can reflect as follows: What would European civilization have become if those partly barbaric peoples had not surged over from East to West and with the youthful vigour of personality in individuals had not poured down into the outworn Graeco-Roman world of culture?

On the other side we may ask: What kind of European civilization would these partly barbaric tribes have been able to inaugurate if what was contained in Graeco-Roman civilization, having been taken over by the Archai, the Spirits of Personality, had not been inculcated into it?

That is in truth tremendously interesting. If we consider the Greeks, indeed even the Romans, we see quite clearly that their thoughts — their scientific, aesthetic, political and social thoughts — are unmistakably derived from the influences coming from the Exousiai, the Spirits of Form. We need only look — not with the crude vision of modern historical treatises but with somewhat finer perception — at persons such as Pericles, Alcibiades, or even Sulla, indeed even Hannibal, although the hallmarks of personality are strong in him, and then also at Caesar — we need only think of these individuals and we shall certainly find that thoughts hold sway in them still as cosmic forces, as something instinctive.

This is because their thoughts come from the Spirits of Form. Then a personality appears who stands with his soul in the conflict between the newly empowered Spirits of Personality and the Spirits of Form who were no longer in authority. The personality whose soul is entangled in the conflict, is Augustine, the Catholic Church Father. I have described the struggles of his soul to you from many different sides. When, however, we regard these struggles as the earthly reflection of a cosmic, super-sensible happening, we see in this individual, who in his youth inclined to Manichaeism, who then became in the strictest sense an orthodox Roman Catholic believer — we see in this spectacle of a soul torn hither and thither, the earthly image, the earthly reflection of a cosmic happening behind the

evolution of humanity. Augustine turned to the Manichaeans while his soul was still influenced by the impulses of the Spirits of Form. These impulses brought to his soul treasures from earlier ages but these treasures were no longer suitable for souls belonging to his time. Through the good and splendid fruits of culture which had come to him from the backward Spirits of Form, however, he was prevented from receiving with the full potentiality of his own personality the new form of thoughts that could be imparted by the Archai, the Spirits of Personality, the Beings who had now assumed the rulership of the thoughts. And he could accept this new state of things only by surrendering unconditionally to the dogma of the Church.

A personality such as Augustine can always be characterized from two sides. From the viewpoint of earthly existence we can look simply at the personality and see how the soul-forces battle one with another. But we can also contemplate the case from the other side of earthly existence and take account of how such a personality is guided and led by the divine-spiritual Powers by the higher Hierarchies. Then, if we adopt the earthly viewpoint we learn to know a human personality as he lives on the Earth. If, however, we adopt the other viewpoint, the super-sensible viewpoint, we can recognize in what way such a personality is a messenger of the spiritual world. In point of fact, man is always that. Here on Earth man is an earthly being and can be regarded as such. It is no bar to the freedom of this, his earthly existence, that he is, at the same time, pervaded by the forces of the super-earthly world – not guided and led, but impelled by them and so at the same time is a messenger of the super-sensible Powers.

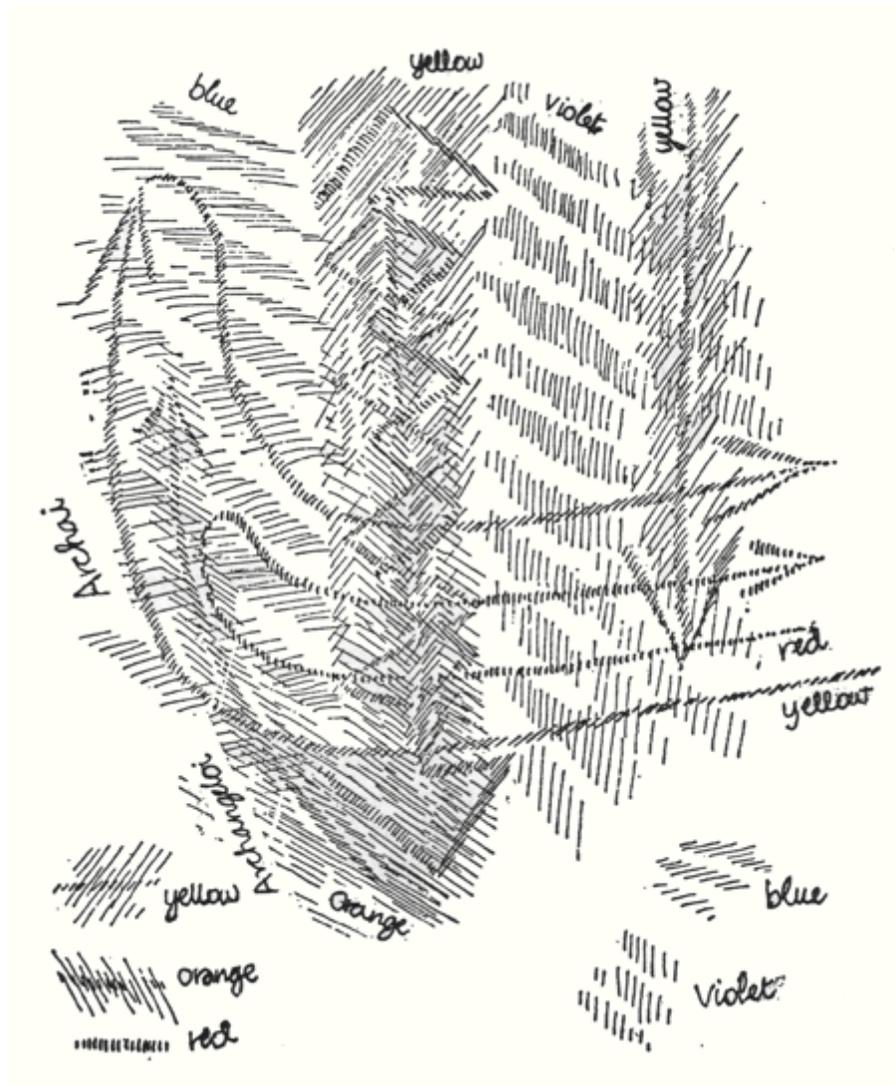
And again, in a different form, we see this interaction between the backward Spirits of Form who look for their 'picked troops' so to speak, chiefly over yonder in Asia and invariably dispatch them to Europe, and the newly empowered Spirits of Personality, the Archai, who have already advanced more towards the West and ever and again strive to repel the influences emanating from the backward Spirits of Form.

In later times this confused West-to-East and East-to-West fluctuation of the earthly reflection of higher spiritual impulses confronts us in the Crusades. Study how the Crusades develop, to begin with out of a certain impulse connected entirely with the Archai, the Spirits of Personality, and study what really powerful purposes led to the Crusades. Then study how the Crusaders succumb more and more to mass-opinions and how the suggestive power of these mass-opinions increases. The farther the Crusaders advance from West to East, the more firmly is the individual captured by mass-opinions. And then, when the Crusaders come into the sphere of Asiatic life, mass impulses spread a cover over what had been implanted by single individualities into other single individualities.

We see how men lose their personality We see how the soul-qualities of the Crusaders degenerate in the East. Under the sway of the mass-suggestions to which they have succumbed, they cannot develop the good, moral impulses they brought with them. They become morally decadent. And this moral decadence of good and earnest men who have travelled from West to East, allows the impulses which press from East to West and are rooted in Mussulman and Turk, to gain the ascendancy.

Thus in the Crusades we see the second fluctuation in world history of a conflict from East to West and from West to East – a conflict that is the reflection of the other, the spiritual struggle between backward Spirits of Form and normally progressive Archai, Spirits of Personality.

The whole situation would eventually have been like this. – If we are looking at Europe, in the West the impulses of the Spirits of Personality (blue in diagram) would have spread increasingly, although one-sidedly, and in the East the impulses of the backward Spirits of Form (violet). You may take what I am sketching for you today together with other viewpoints which I have already spoken of here on the subject of these streams of civilization. In the super-sensible realm conditions are in constant interplay and we can only gradually understand them by studying impulses of the greatest variety.



But the situation did not remain like this. Certainly, if we go back to the very early Middle Ages, up to the time of the Crusades, we may say: In that epoch things were as I have sketched them here. But then another event came more and more into play – I mean in the super-sensible world – namely, that not only have Spirits of Form remained behind, not only have the Archai advanced, but, as always happens in the hierarchies of the super-sensible world, while certain spiritual Beings make normal progress, there are also certain Beings who overstep the goal.

Thus we see that in the West, and indeed from the South upwards (red arrow, left, in diagram) backward Archangeloi intervene in the whole movement. So that here (above) we have Archai at their rightful level, but here (below) Archangeloi who have remained behind at earlier stages, who are actually backward Beings of earlier stages, who have remained Archangeloi when they could already have been Archai. That is the nature of these spiritual Beings.

And so we see that in Western Europe, normal Archai and abnormal Archangeloi – if I may use this pedantic expression – work together to an increasing extent. Geographically speaking, the Archangeloi take a South-to-North direction, whereas the Archai and the backward Exousiai (Spirits of Form) take the West-to-East and East-to-West direction. In this way we find historical and geographical circumstances formed on Earth as reflections of the conflicts and collaborations between higher spiritual Beings.

All that happens in Western Europe – one may indeed say to this very day – can be understood as a reflection of the collaboration between normal Archai and abnormal Archangeloi and abnormal Archai-Beings who have a

strong influence on men because they are near them; especially do they instil into men an emotional relationship to their language, that emotional relationship which as you may gather from the first lecture has very great significance for them. The whole nature of man is very strongly affected by the incursion of these Archangeloi Beings who play such an important rôle in man's relationship to language. What holds men together through language, makes them appear fanatically united through language, becomes intelligible as an earthly reflection when the super-sensible facts behind it are known.

Now conditions on the one side or the other become less pronounced or more pronounced in the different epochs. In the West we find a preponderance of the normal Archai, in the South a preponderance of the impulses of the abnormal Archangeloi. It is quite possible to characterize the historical life of men and peoples from the viewpoint of the super-sensible happenings.

Further, it must be said that what would have happened in the East was essentially modified through the fact that the backward Spirits of Form who are naturally very powerful, were strongly influenced by the normally developed Archangeloi working from North to South. Something deriving especially from the Turks, Mongols and other such peoples, dominated as they were by the backward Spirits of Form, by Elohist Beings, thrust itself, as it were, into that wild turmoil and commotion; something coming down from the North mingled with it, something derived — if I may use the expression — from good Archangeloi who are very near to man, who instil into every individual human soul something that quashes the group spirit which actually stems from backward Spirits of Form.

Again it is the case that in different epochs of world-history, the turmoil of a terrible, impersonal, unindividualized group spirit holds sway; in other epochs individualities gain the upper hand. If someone would present the remarkable history of Russia in this way as a reflection of the collaboration of spiritual Beings of the higher Hierarchies, tremendous light would be shed on what occurs in particular epochs of this history.

We have, then, in the West (see diagram) a stream flowing from South to North which mingles with the stream from West to East; and here too, a stream from North to South also intermingles with the stream from West to East. But these streams spread out again and later on we have a South-to-North stream that is continually being forced into zig-zag oscillations by the West-to-East impulses (diagram). And, working together with and into these streams there is the North-to-South current which again is forced into zig-zag oscillations by the West-to-East impulses (orange). This drawing-together of the two streams that have already taken definite shape occurs at a later period of European evolution, at the time when the struggles connected with the Reformation begin.

There we see how a North-to-South stream — but always intermingled with one from West-to-East bearing within it the strong forces of the normal Archai — presses into what had remained behind from the earlier impulses flowing over from Asia from the backward Spirits of Form. And, because it is connected with the Spirits of Form, something arises in an elementary way but nevertheless belongs to the normal impulses of human evolution.

Study everything that on the one side streams from North-to-South from the typical thinking of evangelical Protestantism but then becomes involved in the most violent, belligerent controversies, and study too what comes up from the South as countercurrents which again lead to warlike controversies. Study, for example, the stream of evangelical Protestantism having its main direction from North-to-South, and the Catholic-Jesuit stream with its main direction from South-to-North, and then you will be able to observe the complicated interplay of what takes place on Earth as a picture of the higher spiritual conflicts in the super-sensible world.

And the outcome of this is something which as Anthroposophists you must be able to assess. From modern accounts of the Thirty Years' War — which Schiller amended only slightly, particularly those of the early events — it is known that the religious conflict in Prague led to the episode when the excited people forced their way into the Town Hall, threw the two politicians Martinitz and Slawata and then the confidential secretary Fabricius out of the

window. (As you know, nothing happened to them because they fell on a refuse-heap consisting entirely of scraps of waste paper. It was not what in the ordinary way would be called a refuse-heap but was just a heap of scraps of paper, for at that time it was not customary to use a waste-paper basket ; scraps of paper were just thrown out of the window.) Eventually, then, an excited crowd threw those politicians after the scraps. ... If one begins at that point and follows up the happenings — well, it is like a fruitless wandering over the map of Europe: here, one side is victorious, there, the other; here, some principedom is invaded, there, a General marches in that direction, and so on and so forth. It is like rambling over the map of Europe, no matter whether the route is sketched or merely described. In school one is always in despair about such extremely important happenings as the Thirty Years' War because on the basis of the usual historical accounts one can only narrate in such a way that the pupils will soon forget it again, for it is all a sheer jumble. There is nothing to give direction to individual trains of thought. If, however, we look for the truth of the situation, we see behind the external reflection those North-to-South, South-to-North streams which are also constantly crossed by West-to-East currents.

We see in what comes from Wallenstein, in what then comes down from the North, from Gustavus Adolphus and so forth, in all this we see that what happens externally in history is, so to speak — again I do not say led and guided — impelled by the super-sensible forces behind the events. In spite of this, however, men are free beings, although natural impulses also play a part in their deeds. We cannot say that a man becomes unfree because when he looks out of the window and sees that it is raining, he takes his umbrella with him and opens it outside; he is adapting himself to the nature-forces. With the activities of his soul and Spirit man stands within the realm of spiritual impulses, within the nexus of the spiritual forces; yet he remains a free being.

But what takes place on the plane of world-history can be grasped only when it is grasped in the light of the super-sensible realities behind it. We can then perceive the concrete impulse given to world-historical events by spiritual Powers, whereas by speaking only of an abstract Divinity no true vision is possible.

Those who speak only of an abstract Divinity must actually — since they are bound to think of this Divinity as operative everywhere — seek it, let us say, in a Turkish battle of the Middle Ages, both on the side of the Turks and also on the side of those against whom the Turks were fighting! Thus the abstract Divinity is there at war with itself, engaged in a self conflict.

When spiritual Beings whose mutual relationships arise, as I have shown, from the fact that certain tasks pass over from one group to another but also that certain groups lag behind, others reach normal stages, others again storm forward — when we realize that in the spiritual world there is a multiplicity of Beings struggling against each other yet able to be mutually helpful, only then does it become possible, without being guilty of inconsistencies, to apply human concepts to happenings taking place behind the scenes of world-history in the super-sensible world.

Concrete insight then becomes possible. We perceive how, in the West, unauthorized Archangeloi intervene in authorized activity of the Archai and how, in consequence, deterioration of the good elements takes place continually in the struggles involved. We see how, in the East, Archangeloi working for the good as helping, protecting Spirits, neutralize what would otherwise have developed through the backward Spirits of Form in a way unworthy of full humanity. And when these two streams come together we see how in Middle Europe the incessant squabbling between Reformation and Counter-Reformation assumes the dimension reached by these forces in the Thirty Years' War and in the subsequent conflicts.

Our study will be twofold: we study the individual human being but not alter the manner of orthodox science, seeing only that this muscle is situated here, that muscle somewhere else, this bone here, that nerve there ... no, we study the whole man in his physical make-up as a reflection of the super-sensible reality; and we know that the plane of thought belonging to the physical man as he stands on Earth was worked upon, in conjunction with the Spirits of

the higher Hierarchies between death and a new life, by the individual himself who incarnates on Earth. Thus we study the individual man as a mirror-image of a super-sensible archetypal human figure.

And secondly we study what happens in history as the reflection of an event enacted behind the scenes of history in the super-sensible world, where great hosts of super-sensible Beings enter into 'social relationships' – if I may use earthly terms – with each other, just as men do on Earth. Only the actions of these super-earthly social Beings are such that their impulses play in upon the Earth and come to expression in the actions of men.

It is particularly important for men of the present day to perceive in detail how man is a reflection of the super-sensible, and how historical events are also reflections of the super-sensible. This is the only path by which man can find his way back again to the divine-spiritual world. Purely abstract ideal of a Divinity are still able to influence those who have not begun to perceive and think in the sense of modern spiritual life. But the number of the latter constantly diminishes and the number of those who are willing to perceive and think will increase all the time. These people must be led back once again to the religious life. This can succeed only if the concretely real operations of the spiritual world are placed before the eyes of their souls, if they are not presented with an abstract, generalized thought of a Divinity about which nothing is truly conveyed but is referred to merely by an all-embracing word, with the details not understood.

And so, my dear friends, one of the tasks which anthroposophical knowledge has, and ought to have at the present time, has once again been indicated from yet another point of view.