

1. Christ, Ahriman and Lucifer in Relationship to the Human Being¹

Rudolf Steiner, Dornach, May 7, 1923

Good morning to you! Have you thought of anything you would like us to discuss today?

Questioner: Could you, Dr Steiner, please say something about the relationship of Christ, Ahriman and Lucifer to the human being?

First we'll have to look at things from a slightly different angle, otherwise you will feel that what I have to say is unfounded superstition. Let's remind ourselves firstly of things we have already discussed.

Nowadays, you see, people think that the nature of the human being is single and uniform. But it is not. We are caught up in a continual process of life flourishing, then dying away. We do not just start to live at birth and die at death but, as I have often said, we are continually dying then reviving again.

If we look at the human head, for instance, we can see that its inner composition is entirely nerve-substance. Nerve 'threads' run throughout the rest of the body but the inside of the head itself is all nerve. In a drawing it will look something like this (see over). Inside, the head and the forehead are all nerve, a thick mass of nerves; some of this nerve-mass runs down through the spinal column, and from there it radiates out through the whole body. These threads running everywhere through the body are concentrated in the head in a uniform mass of nerves.

The inside of the human stomach, for example, has very many nerves. The solar plexus situated there contains a great deal of nerve substance. But this is true also of the arms, hands, legs and feet, into which many nerve-threads pass.

If we then turn our attention from the nerves to the blood



vessels, we find that those in the head are rather delicate and fine, while in the heart-region they are particularly well developed; and in the limbs they become strong and thick. So we can see that there are two distinct and separate systems, developed differently in different parts of the body: the nervous system and the blood-vessel system.

The fact is, you see, that we are continually being reborn through our blood, every day, every hour. Blood renews us constantly. If we only had a blood-system we would always grow, grow larger, grow more vital. If on the other hand we only had a nervous system, we would continually be exhausting ourselves and dying away. These two opposite tendencies are continually at work in us simultaneously: the nervous system which ages us constantly, which leads us continually towards death; and the blood-vessel system, connected with processes of nourishment, which constantly rejuvenates us.

We can pursue this theme further: in old age, as you know, many people become sclerotic or, we may say, 'calcified' or hardened. People who suffer from a hardening of the arteries find it more difficult to move properly. When this arterial sclerosis becomes very pronounced, people may often be debilitated by a stroke.

But what does this process of hardening, of sclerosis, tell us? It is really as though a person's blood vessels were trying to become nerve. The nerves have to die away continually all through our lives; they have to partake of a process which would be quite wrong for our blood vessels. Blood vessels should remain vital and vigorous, while nerve-functions require a continual dying-away process. A person whose nerves are too soft, not 'hardened' enough, can become insane. In other words the nerves and blood-vessels must be quite different from each other to function properly.

So we cannot avoid recognizing the fact that there are two principles simultaneously at work in us, which oppose each other. Our nervous system makes us grow continually older through the day. During the night fresh life is restored through the blood. It is like the swinging of a pendulum: growing old, growing young again, growing old, growing young again. Except that each day that passes allows a little more 'age' to accrue in spite of the good work of the night, until enough age has accrued and we finally die altogether.

These two opposing principles in the human being, and the balance between them, have far-reaching consequences for him. If the forces of youth and vitality are too overweening, people can develop pleurisy or pneumonia. Things which are good and right in their proper sphere become tendencies to illness if they get out of proportion. Illness always appears when aspects which have their right and proper place get out of hand and impinge too far on the state of balance. Fever appears when the rejuvenating processes become too strong: our whole body starts to be *too* vigorous and vital.

Imbalance between these polarities also effects our emo-

tional and mental life. Just as the body can either become too feverish or too sclerotic, so too can our souls. People have a certain tendency they don't much like to hear spoken of, since it is so widespread nowadays, to become fixed and pedantic. A school-teacher, for instance, may easily become dried-up and pedantic, though he really needs to be flexible and enthusiastic. This is a similar phenomenon in soul-life to the physical hardening of the arteries. But we can also become too soft in our souls, in which case we become cloud-cuckoo-land dreamers. We may then turn to mysticism or theosophy, so as to avoid the need to think properly, so as to allow our imagination to transport us into other worlds without having to hone our thinking. That is the same tendency that bodily fever expresses. Becoming a mystic or a theosophist is the same as getting a high temperature.

We need both tendencies. We cannot understand or enter into anything without the power of imagination; and we cannot bring any order into our lives without a little bit of pedantry, without keeping some kind of record and account of things. What it comes down to is the balance, the right proportion.

Our spirit itself is also caught up in these two tendencies. Just consider what happens when we wake up from sleep, actually a very sudden change. We lie there, quite unaware of our surroundings—someone may even tickle us without waking us. Then we suddenly wake up, and see and hear everything. This is really an enormous change in our condition, and we need the power, the force which allows us to wake. But it can become too strong if, for instance, we cannot fall asleep, if we are plagued by insomnia.

There are also people who never really wake up properly. They spend their lives in a sort of twilight state of dream, and would always prefer to be asleep. Of course we need the capacity to fall asleep—but not to such a degree that we can never wake up properly.

Let's sum up then: we can distinguish certain polar ten-

dencies in the human being on three different levels. On the one hand is the nervous system, which continually tends towards hardening and calcification. All of you—with the exception of one little fellow sitting there—are old enough for your nervous system to have grown a little calcified. If your nerves were still as soft as they were when you were six months old, you would all be insane. Mad people have an over-soft, young child's nervous system. We need this tendency towards hardening and calcification. On the other hand we also need in its proper sphere the tendency to rejuvenation and softening.

Body	hardening calcification	softening rejuvenation
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In our emotional life, in the realm of soul, we can say that hardening corresponds to pedantry, philistinism, materialism, dry reason. Which we need in the right dosage! If we didn't have something of these qualities we'd be flibbertigibbets—all over the place. If we had no trace of pedantry we wouldn't put our clothes away in the right drawer; we'd be more likely to put them in the oven or hang them up in the chimney! We need imagination, but not to the extent of lifting off into cloud-cuckoo land; and we need a little pedantry, but not so that we become fixed and fossilized.

I once knew someone who hated imagination and the imaginary to the extent that he never went to the theatre, let alone the opera, for he said that it was all untrue. He had no spark of imagination. So you can see that without it, one can turn into a very dry sort of specimen, someone who scuttles through life, rather than a real, full-blooded person.

Soul:	pedantry philistinism materialism dry reason	fantasy dreaming mysticism theosophy
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In terms of our spirit, we can recognize the tendency towards

hardening in the process of awakening. When we wake up, we grasp firm hold of the body, start to use our limbs. The opposite tendency, towards softening, expresses itself when we fall asleep, when we sink into dreams. Then we let go of the body.

Spirit waking up falling asleep

You can see, then, that we are constantly in danger of swinging too far in one or other of these directions. A magnet, as you know, attracts iron; but there are two aspects of this process, a positive and negative magnetism. One attracts, the other repulses. In the realm of physical phenomena we aren't in the least embarrassed to call a spade a spade, to name what we observe. I have now described the same polar tendencies in three different realms: physical, soul and spirit. You can understand and recognize what I'm saying and observe it yourselves. But to do so, it is necessary to call things by their names. When observing positive magnetism, we must be clear that it is not the iron itself that brings about this effect, but something working invisibly within the iron.

Whoever refuses to contemplate such an idea can't see much further than the end of his own nose. He is likely to say that magnetic attraction in the iron is codswallop. 'What's all this nonsense about magnetism?' he may exclaim. 'That's just iron, nothing more nor less—I shoe my horse with it, there's nothing more to say.' This is, of course, a rather pedestrian and idiotic view of things, for the iron horse-shoe can have further aspects beyond its apparent function.

In the same way, the process of hardening and calcification contains an invisible, supersensible, essential aspect that it is possible to observe if one develops the capacity to do so. This aspect is called 'ahrimanic'. The ahrimanic forces are the ones which continually strive to make us into a sort of dried-up corpse. If only ahrimanic powers were at work, we would calcify, shrivel up and fossilize. We would be continually wide awake and unable to fall asleep.

The opposite forces of rejuvenation and softening, of imagination and fantasy, are the 'luciferic' forces. We need them so that we don't become corpses. But if only luciferic forces existed we would stay children all our lives. We need both tendencies—without the luciferic we would be old and ancient at the age of three; without the ahrimanic we would be eternal children.

	<i>ahrimanic</i>	<i>luciferic</i>
body:	hardening calcification	softening rejuvenation
soul:	pedantry philistinism materialism dry reason	fantasy dreaming mysticism theosophy
spirit:	waking up	falling asleep

These two kinds of opposing tendency must be balanced out and harmonized. How can this come about? Neither tendency should get the upper hand.

We are now in the year 1923; and since the turning point of time, when our AD time reckoning began, up to this present moment, humanity has been exposed to the danger of unbalanced ahrimanic forces. Education, these days, except where the science of the spirit is at work, has a decidedly ahrimanic tendency. When our children come to school they have to learn things that actually seem very alien, even comical to them, things they can have no real interest in at all. They know, for instance, what their fathers are like and what their hair, eyes, nose etc. look like. And then they come to school and have to learn that these alien signs: F-A-T-H-E-R are supposed to represent the father they know. The same is true of everything which children are supposed to learn at school. It is all quite alien to them.

This is a good reason for establishing schools in which

children can learn things they relate to, which they have an interest in. If education were to continue in its present tracks, people would soon start to grow prematurely old, to lose all flexibility, because this form of education is ahimanic. In these last nineteen hundred years our whole evolutionary tendency has been in this ahimanic direction. Previously it was different.

If you look back, from 8,000 years BC until the turning point of time, people were exposed to the opposite danger, of being unable to grow old. In those ancient days, schools as we know them now did not exist. The only schools were for those who had attained a respectable age and who were to become scholars. There were no schools for children in those times, for they just learned what they needed to from life itself. No one tried to teach children things which were alien to their nature. So there was an opposite danger: of people becoming too luciferic, too cloud-cuckoo-ish and dreamy. These were times, it is true, of great wisdom, but there was a need for this luciferic tendency to be harnessed, reined in; otherwise people would just have wanted to tell each other airy nothings or ghost stories all day long.

In other words: from 8,000 BC until the turning point of time was a luciferic age. From then on, until our present time, has been an ahimanic epoch.

Let's just look for a moment at the earlier, luciferic age. The scholars of those days were rather concerned about the particular human tendencies apparent then. These scholars lived in tower-like structures. The Tower of Babel mentioned in the Bible was just one of these 'ivory towers'. The scholars lived and learned there. They were aware of their luciferic powers of imagination and fantasy, yet also of the fact that their observation of external phenomena could balance these powers. They observed the motion of the stars, for instance, and recognized that these accorded with certain laws that were not subject to their desires or imagination. They were aware that if, for instance, they imagined a tiny piece of wood

being lit and blazing up in an enormous incandescence, this would not be born out by the actual results, that in fact a small piece of wood would only produce a small fire. The aim of these ancient schools was actually to harness and rein in people's over-burgeoning powers of fantasy and imagination. Their worry and concern was that everyone else was denied this subjection of their fantasy to objective law, since only relatively few could become scholars. So they dispensed their wisdom and teachings—yet much of what they taught was just to damp down the people's capacity for luciferic fantasy, and did not always relate to truth. There was a good deal of dross mixed with the gold, and in fact it is the dross which mainly survived from these old teachings.

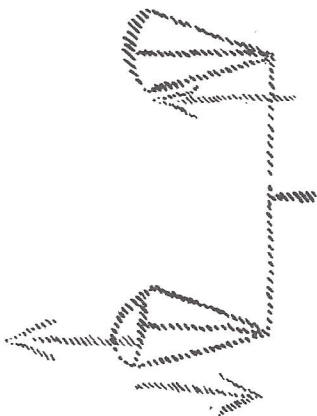
And if we then turn to the age in which we are now, the ahimanic age, we can see that our modern science has increasingly turned towards the ahimanic and atomistic. This science has become something which makes us rather dry and arid, for it takes only the physical, material, calcified world into account.

Between these two poles stands a third, mediating quality, which we can call the truly Christian. My dear friends, true Christianity is something too little known in the world. The worldly Christianity we are familiar with is something quite different, that we must actually oppose.

The Being I spoke to you of last time,² who was born at the turning point of time and lived for thirty three years, was not as people describe Him. He wanted to dispense to all humanity teachings which would allow people to balance opposing ahimanic and luciferic tendencies. The true meaning of Christianity lies in striving for this balance. What people nowadays often think of as being Christian is really not what is intended.

What, for example, does Christianity imply in the physical realm, in the sphere of illness and health? It implies gaining a real knowledge of the human being, so that if a person succumbs to pleurisy we can see that he is too subject to luciferic

influences. Once I know this, I can start to try to balance the scales:



In the case of pleurisy, the ahimanic is too weak, so I must add an 'ahimanic ingredient' to the situation, to provide balance. One thing I can do is the following: I take a piece of pear-wood, a plant which has strong, vigorous growth in spring. The wood nearest the bark is best, for it contains the strongest growth forces. I now kill off these forces by burning the wood to charcoal, thus 'ahimanicizing' the rejuvenated powers of the pear-tree. Then I grind this charcoal into powder and administer it to the person suffering from pleurisy through an excess of luciferic forces. So I have added an ahimanic ingredient to an over-luciferic condition, and created more of a balance. I have mineralized, and so also ahimanicized the pear wood by charcoaling it.

Or let us assume that a person acquires a tired, wan countenance, so that it seems likely he may soon suffer a stroke. The scales in this case are tipped too far towards the ahimanic, and we must redress the balance by administering to him something of a luciferic quality. How would I do this?

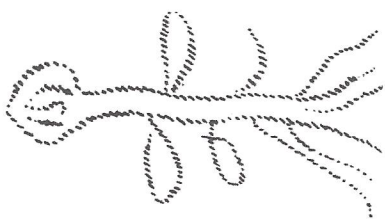
Let us observe a plant: the root is hard and contains minerals and salts—not at all luciferic. The stem and leaves are not luciferic either, but if I proceed upwards, I find a sweet-smelling blossom. This is sending out substance from itself, into the cosmos—otherwise I would not be able to smell

it. So from this blossom I extract its juice, which has a luciferic quality. This I administer in the right way, so that the balance is redressed: I heal the patient by counteracting a preponderance of the ahimanic tendency.

How, in contrast, does modern medicine proceed? It experiments. A chemist discovers, say, acetyphenidine—we don't need to know exactly what that is, it's a complicated substance. Then it is taken to the hospital, where it is perhaps tried out on 30 or so patients. Then their reactions, temperature etc. are noted, and if there is some result the substance is used as a medicine.

But people have little idea what's really going on inside the human body. There's no understanding of the inner processes at work. The only right way forward is for people to realize that pleurisy, for example, indicates too pronounced a luciferic tendency which must be balanced by the ahimanic; or that a stroke points to a preponderance of the ahimanic, which must be redressed by the luciferic. This sort of approach is what humanity needs, for it is at present not Christian enough in this respect. Christianity is the balance, is seeking to establish a balance and harmony. This applies also to medicine and healing, on a very physical, practical level.

This is what I also wished to express in this wooden figure of Christ,³ intended for the Goetheanum building. Above you



see Lucifer, the Luciferic, representing everything that has to do with fever, imagination, falling asleep etc.; below you find all the tendencies to hardening, the ahrimanic. And between these two stands Christ.

Looking upon this figure will help us know how to proceed in all sorts of different realms: from medicine to science to sociology. Nowadays we should start to become aware of how Luciferic and ahrimanic tendencies are at work in human nature.

But do people have, or want to have, any inkling of these things? Not so long ago there was a priest, renowned in Basel and still further afield, called Frohnmeyer, who held lectures all over the place. He did not actually take the trouble to come and see this sculpture himself, but read someone else's account (who had also, perhaps, not bothered to take a look at it). This did not stop him pronouncing on this figure of Christ, and saying that Steiner, over in Dornach, was making a dreadful travesty: a Christ figure whose upper parts had Luciferic features; and below, animal traits.

You can see for yourselves that this is wrong: the Christ figure has a very human head. But the priest confused the matter. He did not even know that the sculpture is still unfinished below—not so much animal forms as an unhewn lump of wood! But he was, after all, a priest, someone who strives for truth, and so the whole world now believes that what he reported must be true. It is very hard to make any headway in such circumstances, when people have no wish to see or hear the truth. People would rather take their truth from the mouths of priests, yet in this case this has led to a lie of appalling proportions. But this is not quite the end of the story—it's extraordinary the way some people think. At the time that Frohnmeyer wrote these things, we had Dr Boos with us here at the Goetheanum. You probably know that Dr Boos likes to take up the cudgels on occasion; you may think that cudgels are a bit hard—rather ahrimanic—and that perhaps one should just resort to a softer method—a few soft,

Luciferic strokes with a feather-duster perhaps. Anyway, for better or worse, Dr Boos let him have it with the cudgels, told him the truth in no uncertain terms. And who receives a letter from Frohnmeyer? I do! I get a long letter from Frohnmeyer complaining about Dr Boos' behaviour and asking *me* to restrain his excesses.

Extraordinary the way people think! They attack someone, indulge in calumny against him, then afterwards ask that same person's protection against someone who tries to rectify the deceit.

It is a sign of the superficiality and meanness of our times, I'm afraid, that the general public don't rely on their own judgement enough in many matters, but just accept what those in positions of authority place before them.

What is needed is to open up a whole new stream and direction of thought. People need to realize that talking about Christianity until the cows come home is not going to get us very far. Instead we must make it real in a practical, down-to-earth way. We must know that medicine, for instance, can become Christian. If someone has eaten sugar continuously throughout his life, from childhood on, and as a result develops liver cancer, which is an ahrimanisation of the liver, we must know how to treat it by administering something containing Luciferic qualities. Just as a person can distinguish between warm and cold, we must learn to distinguish between Luciferic and ahrimanic tendencies. When our limbs grow stiff, we are becoming ahrimanic. We can counteract this by applying warm wraps and cloths, with something warming and of a Luciferic nature. This is just an example of a whole approach, a whole way of understanding the human being so that medicine becomes Christian.

Pedagogy and education must become Christian in the same way. We must educate children without making them prematurely old from infancy. To do this we need to let them begin with things which are close to them, which they relate naturally to, which they are interested in, etc.

It is clear then, I hope, that the expressions I have used—*ahrimanic*, *luciferic*, *Christian*—are not unfounded superstition. They are actually truly scientific.

Let us look now, for a moment, at an aspect of our historical and cultural development. From the earliest days of Christianity, through to the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Christians were actually forbidden to read the Bible, the New Testament. Only the priests were allowed to read it, not the congregations of believers. Why? Because the priests and scholars knew that it was necessary to read the Bible in the proper way. It was composed in a time in which people did not think in the way they do today, but much more in pictures and images. If people read it in the wrong way, without the proper preparation, they would soon discover that the four Gospels contradict one another. Why do they? Of course they do! Even in the fourth and fifth centuries, anyone who had all his wits would have been able to understand why this was.

Just imagine that I take a photograph of Herr Burle from the front and show you the picture. You will of course recognize him. But if someone comes along and takes a profile shot, and shows that to you, you might all refuse to believe it was Herr Burle, for the angle of the picture would show you an aspect you were not familiar with. Yet it would of course still be him. And if I photographed him from behind, you might all say: 'That can't be Herr Burle, he has a nose, not just hair!'

In the same way, one can 'photograph' a spiritual process from various different angles, which each appear quite different from one other. The four Evangelists are simply describing things from four different angles. But as times changed people stopped thinking there was any need to prepare themselves for reading the Gospels, or for doing anything else. They believed that school-training was a preparation enough for everything else, that by the age of 14 or 15 they should have no more need to prepare but ought to be able to understand everything. This sort of belief is what leads people

to look upon our Goetheanum here, and say: 'Old, bald-headed people are going in there to learn. It's a school for the elderly—it must be a madhouse!' They say such things because they cannot imagine that older people might still want and need to learn. But we must be clear that we cannot read the Gospels properly without proper preparation, without beginning to understand that they embody a kind of picture language. If one wanted to read a piece of Chinese, one would have to learn the Chinese characters; in the same way, the Gospels will be gobbledygook to us if we don't learn to read them in the right way. Similarly, to understand things aright, we must learn to recognize that Christianity has everything to do with creating the right balance between *luciferic* and *ahrimanic*, so that neither tendency gains the upper hand at the expense of the other.

It is for this reason that anthroposophy is not ashamed to speak of Christianity in these terms. It emphasizes that Christianity is not served by uttering the word Christ all the time. People often accuse anthroposophy of mentioning Christ too little. But I reply that anthroposophy refrains from speaking of Christ because it remembers the Ten Commandments, specifically the one which says: 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' A Christian priest, nowadays, is likely to speak the name of Christ a great number of times throughout his sermon. But one should only speak this name when one really has some understanding for what it means! This is what distinguishes anthroposophy from a superstition or pretend piety. Anthroposophy aims to be nothing if not scientific. And it is in these terms that it views the Event in Palestine, which took place at the turning point of time, at the knife-edge between the ancient times which were *luciferic*, and the new times which are *ahrimanic*, as an occurrence of universal historical significance.

Only when we start to understand what really took place at that time on the earth will we be able to come into our true inheritance, come to ourselves. Nowadays people are quite

'outside' themselves, in the external views of science. We will speak further of these things next Wednesday at nine o'clock.⁴ This, for now, is my answer to the question. I hope that it has shed some light on the whole subject.