

Rudolf Steiner, *Metamorphoses of the Soul Paths of Experience: The Nature of Prayer* (Berlin – February 17, 1910)

Thus there are two streams, one from the past and one from the future, which come together in the soul and produce a kind of whirlpool, comparable to the confluence of two rivers. Closer observation shows that the impressions left on us by past experiences, and the manner in which we have dealt with them, have made the soul what it is. We bear within ourselves the legacy of our doing, feeling, and thinking in the past. If we look back over these past experiences, especially those in which we played an active part, we shall very often be impelled to an assessment of ourselves....

We need only to remember the feelings of fear and anxiety that gnaw at our soul-life in face of the unknown future. Is there anything that can give the soul a sense of security in this situation? Yes, there is. It is what we may call a feeling of humbleness towards anything that may come toward the soul out of the darkness of the future. But this feeling will be effective only if it has the character of prayer. Let us avoid misunderstanding. We are not extolling something that might be called humbleness in one sense or another; we are describing a definite form of it – humbleness to whatever the future may bring.

Anyone who looks anxiously and fearfully towards the future hinders his development, hampers the free unfolding of his soul-forces. Indeed, nothing obstructs soul development more than fear and anxiety in the face of the unknown future. But the results of submitting to the future can be judged only by experience. What does this humbleness mean?

Ideally, it would mean saying to oneself: Whatever the next hour or day may bring, I cannot change it by fear or anxiety, for it is not yet known. I will therefore wait for it with complete inward restfulness, perfect tranquility of mind. Anyone who can meet the future in this calm, relaxed way, without impairing his active strength and energy, will be able to develop the powers of soul freely and intensively. It is as if hindrance after hindrance fall away, as the soul comes to be more and more pervaded by this feeling of humbleness towards approaching events....

For what else is prayer than the lighting-up within us of a power that seeks to transcend what our ego is at the moment? And if the ego is seized by this striving, it already has the power to develop itself. When the past has taught us that we have more within us than we have ever put to use, then prayer is a cry to the divine that it may fill us with its presence. When we have come to this knowledge through our own feelings and perceptions, we can number prayer among the forces that will aid the development of our ego.

We can do the same with prayer directed towards the future. If we live in fear and anxiety about the approaching future, we lack the attitude of humbleness that prayer can bring. We fail to realize that our destiny is ordered by the wisdom of the world. But if we meet the future with humbleness and devotion, we draw near to it in fruitful hope. So it is that humbleness, which may at first seem to diminish us, becomes in reality a powerful force, enriching the soul and carrying our development to higher levels.