

## Fundamentals of the Work

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*An occasional column on aspects of the work, written for students by the staff of the School for Esoteric Studies.*

### Visualization

Visualization plays an important role in the meditation work in all its stages. It is an important tool in the work of inner “bridge” building, learning to build in mental matter, helping to integrate the mental and emotional bodies in the beginning stages of the work, and later helping to integrate the higher aspects of the mind in the advanced stages. Thus it is necessary to learn how to visualize skillfully.

In order to create something, we first need to visualize or build a thoughtform of it in our mind. For an architect, that might mean being able to visualize in the ordinary way, actually seeing what something will look like. For a musician, it is hearing the combination of notes arranged in a particular way. But for an esotericist, it means being able to work with ideas, “seeing” or “sensing” the relationships and connections between them and how that might manifest on one plane or another.

Many students report having difficulty visualizing. Usually students fall into two groups: some students are not visually oriented and cannot visualize any image at all or so only fleetingly, and other students are so visually oriented that the visual images are prolific, detailed and so uncontrollable as to become a distraction.

For the first type of student it is important to realize that visualization, like any technique, is developed through practice – simply doing it over and over – while keeping in mind that progress will be subtle and cumulative over time. In some cases this difficulty in visualizing may be due to ray make-up, but progress can still be made through practice, and the persistence we develop through this practice is the same persistence we must use in all our esoteric work.

A good beginning practice would be to work with three basic symbols: a white circle with a white dot at the center (against a dark background), an equal-armed cross, and a white equilateral triangle pointing upward. For people who are kinesthetically or sense oriented, it might be helpful to imagine drawing these symbols in the air with a finger, or even imagine drawing them on the palm of one hand with the forefinger of the other, thus adding movement and a tactile element to the visualization process. For those who are aurally oriented, sound might be incorporated too. Additional suggestions and exercises can be found in Christmas Humphreys’ book *Concentration and Meditation*.

For those who visualize too prolifically and uncontrollably, it is useful to focus on the *meaning* behind the specific visualization given in the meditation, thus controlling and creating only those images that relate to that meaning. The difference between controlled visualization and spontaneous imagery is that the latter refers to those symbols or visions arising in the mind that are not *consciously* and deliberately created by us. Usually they are simply glimpses of “astral scenery” and should simply be noted and dismissed. Occasionally we may receive “teaching symbols” resulting from Soul impression and these may contain a clue that we can wisely follow.

In the initial stages of learning to visualize we are working as Soul-infused minds. We endeavor to remain positive and aware that we are the controlling and directing agents. We use mind stuff to build the image in etheric substance, and our heart’s love will render it spiritually attractive and endow it with vitality.

In the advanced work of integrating the higher aspects of the mind in order to build the Antahkarana, the student should have achieved a high degree of skill in visualizing. In this work, we use the higher mind to interpret substance from the cosmic etheric subplane, and this is done through a process that can be referred to

as symbolic apperception. This interpretation process links the pure reason of Triadal intuition with the creative imagination. The creative imagination is composed of matter from the highest astral subplane. Having relayed that which has been either imagined or registered the mind then impresses the brain with the results. This higher visualization or symbolic apperception may or may not involve pictorial visualization. Many rely largely upon a “felt

sense” while others perceive sound or even what might be interpreted as an aspect of smell.

The use of visualization to manifest what is intended or desired is a powerful process used by a high-grade personality. What has always been used *unconsciously* by the average person to bring about what is desired is used *consciously* by the disciple with more reliable results.

# The Meaning of the Soul

Roy Blendell

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Never has there been a time when so many have access to enormous material comfort and wealth, and yet never has there been a time when so many are left feeling empty and unsatisfied by the limitations of the materialistic world view. The common complaint of our times is that life is somehow “soulless” and empty, devoid of any significant meaning or feeling. Some of our greatest minds have spent their lives searching to discover what it is they felt was missing from their lives – that something which they hoped would fulfill their deepest yearnings and realize their highest aspirations. In this article I hope to identify the missing “jewel in the crown” of life.

Everything in existence is matter. This is the first aspect of reality. The second aspect is consciousness, meaning that matter and consciousness are two aspects of the same thing. The third aspect is motion; everything is in motion; everything that moves is matter, and all matter moves. Motion manifests in matter as energy and in consciousness as volition or will.

So we can see that everything in the universe is alive and vibrant with the inherent potential to manifest consciousness in some form or another. The ageless wisdom teaches us that the meaning of life is the evolution of consciousness in all Monads. We can state this another way by saying that evolution is the acquisition of better qualities and abilities, newer and more favorable ones than those previously possessed, with the increased prospect of greater understanding, freedom and power to move ever closer to the ultimate state of universal consciousness.

Monads are the building blocks of everything in existence; they are the indestructible primordial atoms. During their downward journey into matter (involution) they function mainly as primordial matter atoms only,

thereby making up the material fabric of the universal forms (toward the lower end of the evolutionary arc). During this stage their consciousness is undeveloped and remains only a potential. It is at the evolutionary stage (the journey back toward Spirit) that these atoms reach a point of development whereby they take possession of a life form of their own. Consciousness is aroused thereby becoming that life form’s dominant consciousness or its “self.” Therefore, we may call the Monad the “self atom.”

We must remember that Monads are divine in essence regardless of their evolutionary stage; that they have the potential to expand their consciousness and the will to embrace the entire cosmos. This is the potential that lies locked within all existence. It is the destiny of all Monads to become selves and to develop and expand their consciousness in accordance with the universal plan.

In order to awaken and develop the innate consciousness, Monad needs to manifest as a life form. Gradually the Monad works its way through the various kingdoms (mineral, vegetable and animal) until it reaches the human stage where it becomes conscious of itself. This is an important stage because now, for the first time, the Monad is able to take active responsibility for its own further progress and development along the evolutionary chain. The Monad can also influence other Monads with which it forms relations.

Initially this progress is slow and laborious, requiring many incarnations to gain the necessary experience to stimulate consciousness. The external stimulation must at first be intense in order to stir the slumbering inner potential, but gradually consciousness is aroused and becomes increasingly developed and refined, as does the corresponding external stimulation. The Monad gradually activates consciousness in higher forms of mat-

ter, thus liberating itself from lower, denser forms.

During the developmental phases through the human kingdom, the Monad will awaken awareness in the physical, emotional and mental vehicles. At this point it would be grossly arrogant and foolish to think that the journey was over and that the evolutionary work had found its consummation in humanity, as some have speculated. Much work still needs to be done.

When the Monad transcends the animal kingdom and enters the human, it becomes individualized and receives a causal envelope (this is the reason why a Monad cannot regress into the animal kingdom). The objective in the human kingdom is to vitalize the causal envelope thereby transferring the Monad from the human kingdom into the next kingdom, simultaneously marking its entry into the stage of consciousness expansion.

Evolutionary forces come from above via superhuman agencies and never from below, for the lower can never comprehend the higher, but the higher encompasses all that is lower and beneath it. For example, emotional thinking cannot understand or control intellectual thinking, but the intellect can fully understand and control (with practice) the emotional.

And so it is with the human being when considering his highest qualities and potential. All that makes us human lies within the causal envelope—the vehicle we received when we became individualized from the animal kingdom. Herein lies all our best qualities and abilities gathered throughout all of our previous incarnations.

It is from a being belonging to the Deva evolution (an essential Self), a Solar Angel, that

a human being receives a causal envelope. This causal envelope is initially empty, and it is the task of the human being to vitalize the causal envelope through numerous and varied life experiences.

But it is only those loving and ennobling experiences, those high spiritual aspirations and abilities that have essentially eternal qualities that activate and vitalize causal matter. Nothing less than this is of any lasting use.

The Solar Angel oversees certain vital aspects of the human charge's life during incarnation. Indeed, the Angel creates a second, lesser causal envelope – the threefold

personality, the greater envelope being known as the “Self” or “Soul.” It is the task of the lower personality envelope to feed the greater envelope with causal matter. At the end of the incarnation the lower envelopes disintegrate and the personality coalesces with the Soul, which is thereby enriched by the gain of that particular incarnation.

The union between the Angel and the human is very intimate indeed and has often been referred to as the divine union or marriage by those saints who have experienced the blissful awareness of the Angel's presence. This union lasts as long as the Monad remains in the human kingdom. When the Monad moves into the next essential kingdom, the Angel's task is complete, and it leaves the Monad to follow its own evolutionary path in its own kingdom.

During this period of self-sacrificial service to the human Monad, the Angel will seek to stimulate higher consciousness in its protégé. Every warm and genuine feeling, every noble and unselfish thought it will meet halfway and pour its energy and inspiration into him. In fact, to the human being the Angel would

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seem to be a god (consider Arjuna and Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*). His Soul is ever growing and vitalizes the causal envelope.

The Angel's influence will always be subtle and imperceptible, precipitating in the consciousness of the human being as though it were his very own thoughts and inspirations. It is the individual's choice as to whether he will accept and cooperate with the Angel's higher promptings or whether he will refuse and gratify his lower desires and material nature. Humanity is the great battleground where the battle for the Soul takes place, a battle between the pull of the developing Soul nature on the one hand and the drag of former modes of consciousness on the other. Gradually though, through the working of the laws of life and the assistance of the Solar Angel throughout many incarnations, the individual will move along the consciousness continuum toward his consummation in the human kingdom as a causal Self.

It is never the Angel's task or desire to draw attention to itself, and it is a great error on the part of those who seek to hear inner voices or perceive inner guides to imagine that this is the case. It is a person's urgent task to use his higher emotional consciousness and intelligence to contact and vitalize his Soul nature through mindfulness and wisdom, to cooperate fully with the higher laws of life and the opportunities that the Angel provides. A search for a "spirit guide" will generally lead the credulous astray for the astral realm is full of such willing and duplicitous accomplices.

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It is the aspirant's challenge to learn the language of the Soul and thereby interpret the symbols received in order to open channels for further Soul energy and inspiration. We

can see a multitude of symbolic expressions in every field of human activity that might indicate the soulful vitality coming through from the higher spiritual dimensions. In humanitarian endeavors we recognize the symbols of healing and the relief of suffering, particularly in war-torn lands where the battle against evil is so prevalent. We can see the *will to unity* in the work of the United Nations as it seeks to facilitate international cooperation in the areas of law, national security, economic development, social progress, the upholding of human rights, and ultimately the achieving of world peace.

The arts are bursting with vibrant soulful activity as the artist seeks to raise the consciousness of his audience through the beauty of his work. We can recognize a similar pattern in our personal lives as we seek to give expression to our own inner creative urges, all taking various forms with the unique imprint of our Soul-infused personalities. We can also experience our deeper Soul nature whenever we reach out to aid and assist our fellow human beings through acts of loving service and kindness. If we are fortunate, we may even fleetingly experience the blissful union with our Soul and the Angel in that most exquisite and divine union. Then at other times we may be left speechless from the sudden rush of energy and creativity received during peak experiences, moments of genius and spiritual insight that flood into our consciousness from our inner Genius.

All of this foreshadows humanity's future development, for we must begin to move into higher realms of consciousness expansion and development in order to realize our potential and graduate into the next kingdom. So much of what is missing in many people's lives is due to lack of contact with their Soul nature. So many still remain enchanted by the empty spell of material wealth and emotional thinking. The average person meanders mindlessly through life buffeted by the transient dictates of the personality. Is it any wonder that peace, meaning and fulfillment elude him at almost every turn?

There comes a time after many incarnations when a person "comes of age." During the

period of his early incarnations in the human kingdom he can be forgiven for not functioning anywhere near his ultimate potential, for indeed he is little more than an animal. But as time moves on and life experiences build up, it becomes incumbent upon him to take responsibility for himself and his ongoing development. He must learn to overcome the self-centered and barbaric modes of consciousness from the time of his youth and

become the mature man that he is meant to be. He must learn to put away childish ways of thinking centered on selfish desires and egoistic gratification and begin to think in a mature manner, seeking peace, harmony and respect for all life. For as surely as the moon reflects the greater light of the sun in the darkness of the night, so does a life lived mindfully reflect the greater consciousness of the inner Soul in the outer personality.

## On Peace and its Bridging Nature

### A Student

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The word “peace,” the Tibetan states, is the “keyword that expresses the bridging of cleavages in the psychic nature of the individual, particularly that between the mind and the emotional vehicle.”

To my understanding, this statement refers to the process of achieving an integrated personality. Such a process involves undergoing a number of crises, leading to the formation of a relatively unified vehicle that can be of use for the expression of the Soul. The next step would be the integration and fusion of the personality with the Soul, which involves the bridging of another cleavage through the power of goodwill (*Esoteric Psychology, Vol. 2, Chapter II, Problems of Integration*).

I will begin with a summary description of the constitution of the human mind. Next, I will look into the problem of cleavages between the emotional and mental bodies. To conclude, I will try to elaborate on the word “peace” and its inherent nature as a bridge between cleavages.

First a brief look at the problem of cleavages within the psyche in light of some psychological perspectives. We know that the personality consists of the physical, etheric,

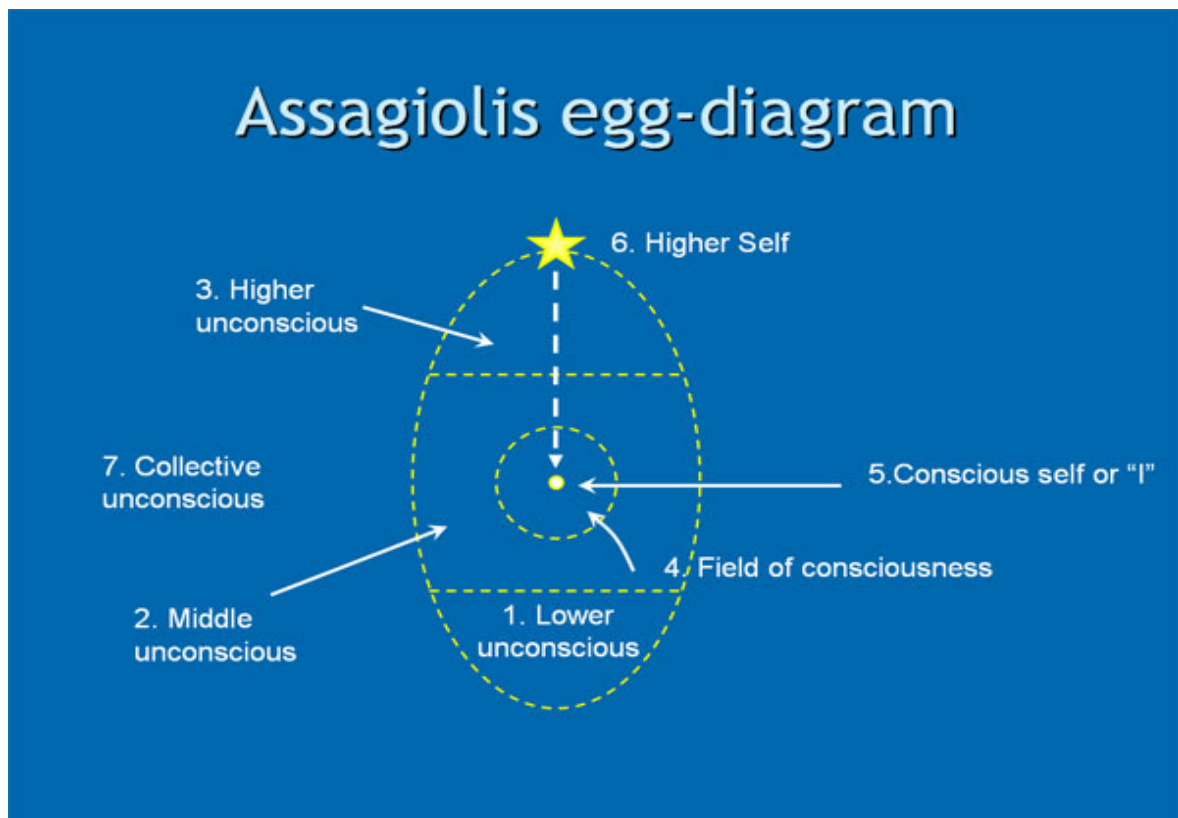
emotional and lower mental bodies. For long cycles of human incarnations, these four do not work as one or even cooperatively, but rather as four separate units fighting against each other to impose their own prerogatives. Two of the greatest psychologists of the last century, Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget, arrived at the conclusion that, in the case of the child and in the case of neurotics (which for Freud, interestingly enough, represented the bulk of humanity), integration between the outer world, the body, the field of emotions and the activity of the mind proceeded slowly and with difficulty from a state of complete disintegration and chaos to a level of progressive integration and increasing synthesis.

For Freud, this is noticeable in the existence of the *polymorphous drive*, a concept he coined to refer to a number of forces that were in the boundary between the soma and the psyche and that competed chaotically against each other. Freud arrived at the conclusion that most human beings are neurotics insofar as these forces create a field of conflict that is not governed by any one directive will. In esoteric studies, this would refer to the stage prior to the entrance onto the probationary path.

Freud, let us remember, was also a pioneer in the study of cleavages. He defined the human personality as characterized by the split of primordial and secondary repression. The human psyche in Freudian theory is made up of different structures (I or Ego, Super Ego and Id), which symbolize the lack of unity and integration in the average human being.

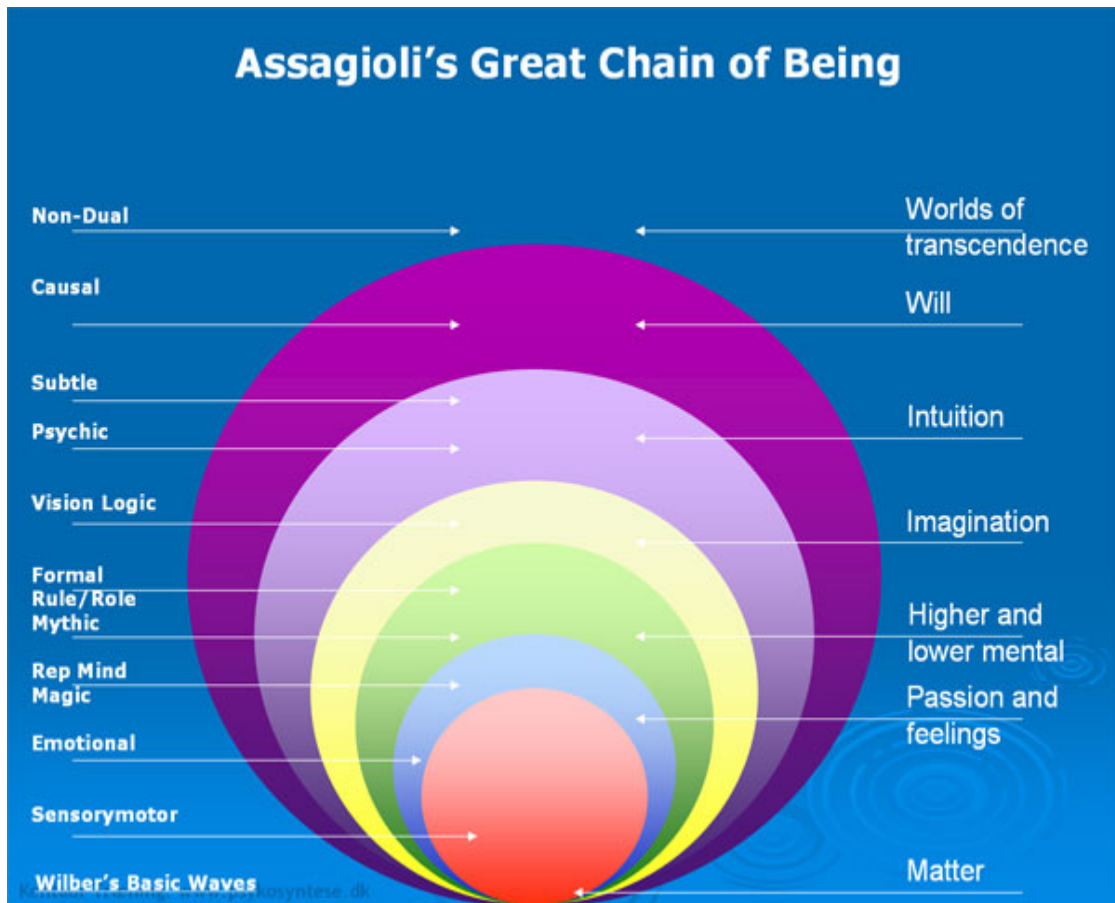
Piaget, on the other hand, conducted hundreds of experiments with children. Paradoxically, he wasn't mainly interested in child psychology, but rather in formulating an evolutionary theory of epistemology. That is, he was concerned with the development of the mind in humanity as a whole throughout history. By studying the child's mind, Piaget realized that the mind (a concept larger in scope that includes the sum total of the personality) evolves gradually, from a stage of complete narcissism to a stage of abstract intelligence.

Three other psychologists – Abraham Maslow, Roberto Assagioli and Ken Wilber have developed these lines of investigation, merging their research with some longstanding truths from the Ageless Wisdom. In the case of Maslow, self-realization can't be attained unless the integration of all basic motivational factors has been achieved, including biological and physiological needs, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and finally, self-actualization and transcendence. Assagioli (a disciple of DK's and a friend of AAB's), rephrased the Tibetan's work on esoteric psychology, making it more readable for lay Western minds. He wrote about the progressive integration and fusion between the unconscious field of consciousness, the Transpersonal Self and the collective unconscious. Below is a diagram by Kenneth Sørensen (from <http://www.psykosyntese.dk/>) with Assagioli's conception of the psyche.



Finally, Wilber's work shares with his predecessors the idea that there are different levels of integration within the human constitution of a human being. His research aims at finding correlations between the individual psychological evolution and the evolution of humanity from individual to Divine planes.

Wilber calls this project Integral Psychology, and incorporates the ideas of Eastern and Western psychology. Another chart by Kenneth Sørensen (from <http://www.psykosyntese.dk/>) follows, showing the correspondences between Assagioli's, Piaget's and Wilber's models:



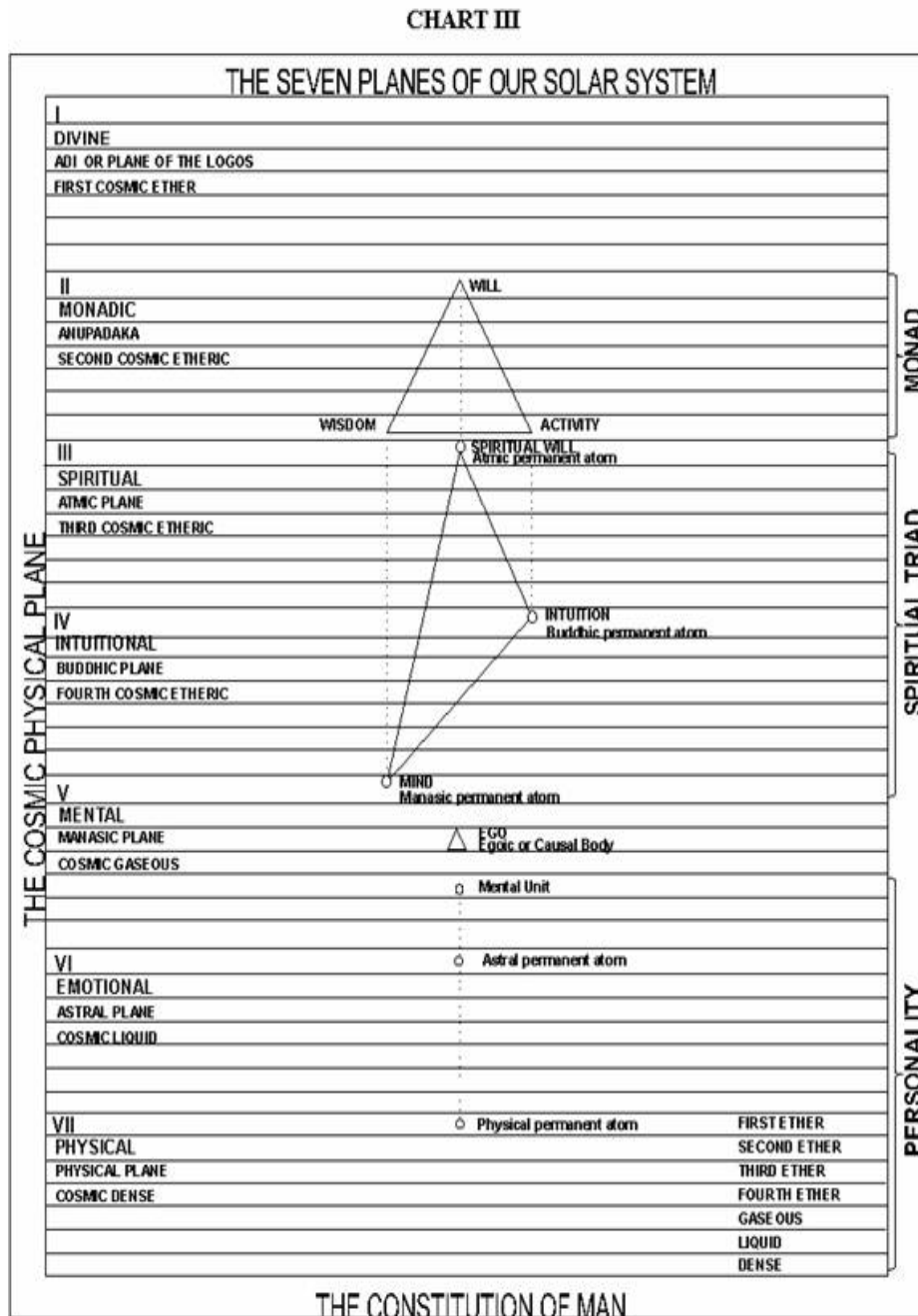
In the attempt to reach a synthesis between these theories, we may observe the following interesting points:

- The constitution of a human being is far more complex than we usually realize – in other words, we're unaware of our own complexity, and this makes integration difficult. We can't achieve integration if we ignore what we're made of.
- Differentiation proceeds gradually as does evolution: from simple forms to more complex forms, from centeredness or narcissism to decentralization and universality.
- Each level of integration with a larger unit is preceded by a cleavage or division that needs to be worked out through a developmental crisis that opens up a larger view and area of functioning. Hence, a cleavage can be seen as a stage accompanying the work of *transition* into a more expanded state of consciousness or *initiation*.
- Individual evolution reflects and repeats

- human evolution as a whole (and vice versa). The law of analogy can be observed here.

With these psychological perspectives in mind we're now slightly better equipped to look at the problem of cleavages from an esoteric perspective.

What comes to mind first is the cleavage that exists between the different vehicles and planes of existence that make up our seven-fold human constitution. We're familiar with the following diagram, taken from *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 117



This diagram represents both the existence of seven planes and 49 subplanes within the cosmic physical plane of our solar system, as well as the seven vehicles through which a

Monad evolves, finds expression and builds a definite field of service. In some lines of thought, including Theosophy, this constitution is represented by two triads or triangles (forming a Star of David) plus a seventh divine principle at the center of manifestation. The seven constituents or principles are: etheric or pranic (the physical is not a principle), kamas or emotional, kama-manas or lower mind; manas or higher mind, buddhi or intuitional, atma or Will, and Monadic, where the highest human center is located.

We could also think of this organization as a seven-story building. Moving to a higher floor involves passing through a door. However, it is worth pointing out that diagrams can only partially represent the constitution of man and the development of human consciousness. For instance, with diagrams there is the risk of thinking linearly, as if the planes and subplanes existed one above the other in an orderly fashion. Actually, they interpenetrate, coexist and influence each other.

Cleavages between the emotional and the mental vehicles are important to ponder. For the vast majority of humanity the emotional body is that battlefield called in the Bhagavad-Gita the *Kurukshetra*, the arena wherein the hardest trials of evolution take place. It is in this foggy battlefield that we gain experience about *desire* and attachment, slowly realizing that our emotions lead us to cling or adhere to possessions, fears and relationships that actually prevent us from moving on. The emotional plane, paradoxically, does not exist as a *present* reality, but rather is a condensation of *archaic* (animal) fears and desires inherited by humanity.

We are told that in the past a whole human root race, the Atlantean, succumbed to the burden of fear and desire. Ever since those days, humanity has evolved significantly thanks to the development of the lower mind, and hence we are now better equipped to un-

derstand, integrate, analyze and deal with our emotional problems and quandaries. The result of the trials and the experience gained in the *Kurukshetra* will result in the personality surrendering to the Soul and the transformation of the emotional plane into a field of service for humanity.

Thanks to the help of the Hierarchy and the continuous effort made by some advanced servers, the development of the qualities

associated with the mind principle – in particular discrimination and light – has brought tremendous hope for the evolution of humanity. The emotional body is the body of *war*, of turmoil and chaos, generated by the interplay of predominantly negative emotions and forces. Into this dark war the mind principle sheds light that pierces the fog of glamor, with the resulting emergence of *peace*. Negative emotions tend to disaggregate and separate; the higher mind tends to synthesize and integrate.

In the constitution and work of the United Nations we have a clear illustration of how this can be achieved. WWII was a time of horror for humanity, one in which the forces of light and darkness externalized as never before in the history of humankind. The war can be seen as symbolizing the emotional battlefield where a decision was made to step forward and not succumb to the forces of evil. The constitution of the UN symbolizes the establishment and increasing use of mind qualities to bridge the cleavages between nations and restore the Plan on Earth.

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Finally, let us now examine how *peace* can be achieved, how peace can bridge the cleavage between the emotional body and the mind. The example of the UN, with its organization as a higher international body bringing together individual nation states, is also a good example of another tenet of the Ageless Wisdom: the lower must submit to, and be integrated into, the Higher. In other words, the lower vehicles or triad can achieve integration and fusion with the Soul only by means of a Higher vehicle. In the case of the emotional body, we need to bring in both the power of the lower concrete power and, above all, the abstract capacities of the higher mind so that order and peace may prevail in the integrated personality. Just as, at least ideally, the UN should foster international collaboration, cross-border agreements and increased dialogue between states, so peace at an individual and group level can be fostered by the principle of goodwill and the law of right human relationships.

We began by considering the importance of bridging the cleavages within the split part at the UN as an example of how right human relations can be fostered between nations. A maxim in our esoteric studies tells us, “as above, so below.” All the different parts contribute to the whole. Evolution implies the increasing realization of group consciousness. In the words of the Tibetan:

The theme of the living consciousness of the Planetary Logos is forever and unchangeably the great Hierarchy of Being, that chain of life in which the smallest link is of importance, and the greatest link is related to the smallest through the electrical interplay of spiritual energy. There is naught—from one important angle of life—but Hierarchy, linking sun with sun, star with star, solar system with solar system, planet with planet, and all planetary lives with each other. (*The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 737)

## Book Reviews

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*Astrology as a Path to Higher Consciousness*, by **Kurt Abraham**. White City, Oregon: Lampus Press, 2009. Paperback, 264 pages.

This valuable new treatment of astrology as a spiritual tool is anchored in Alice A. Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology*, but that is only the starting point. A wide array of spiritual traditions are brought in to expand and illustrate. For example, the first chapter, which deals with Aries, includes an illustrative section on the I Ching, as well as references to the New Testament, and an extensive extract from it.

Nine pages of the chapter on Taurus are devoted to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*—giving an unexpected yet illuminating perspective on this sign. Of course, in the Taurus section, references to the Buddha are to be expected, and indeed we find the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path detailed.

In Gemini, Mr. Abraham begins with the story of Castor and Pollux. He then lists the many dualities that characterize the spiritual and material worlds, which leads directly to Manichaeism and the duality of Good and Evil. The discussion continues with Gemini's connection to Freemasonry, in which considerable detail about Masonic symbolism is revealed.

In Cancer, Mr. Abraham presents material on the moon goddesses, and in Leo he addresses the sun gods extensively, amplified by material from Egyptian mythology and a discussion of the subraces (or epochs) of the fifth root race.

As these selected examples illustrate, it could be said that Mr. Abraham brings together a large assemblage of occult and symbolic systems, and organizes them on an astrological framework. The result is a sense of common context among fields of knowledge that can seem disparate and unrelated, and for "astrology challenged" readers there is deeper understanding of the manifestation of universal energies and forces.

The organizational framework of the book is simple: twelve signs—twelve chapters (plus an introduction and bibliography). Each chapter also contains two interesting bonuses: a number of introductory quotes pertinent to the sign from wide-ranging sources such as Shakespeare, the Bible, the Upanishads, the Dhammapada, current writers, and the Agni Yoga books, to name a few; each chapter also concludes with list of well-known people whose sun is or was in the sign, with the birth date of each.

Mr. Abraham's stated purpose is to inform readers of the special opportunities presented by the essence of each sign, that they may unfold their higher spiritual possibilities by working consciously and intelligently with these energies. This book is an excellent and practical text, and will be helpful to students at all levels.

Dr. John Cobb  
Asheville, North Carolina