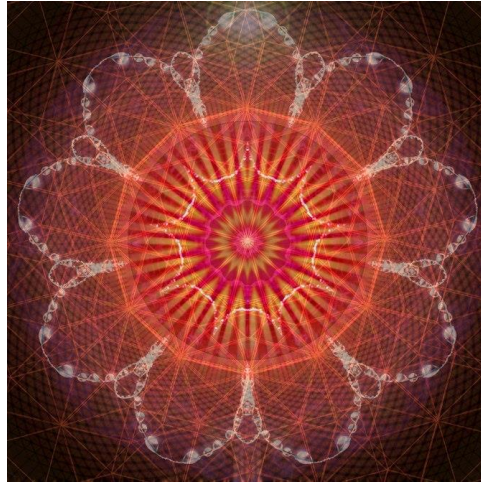


Spring 2013, Volume 9, Number 1



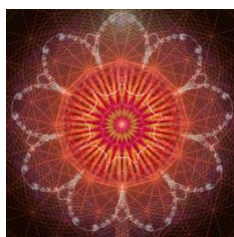
The Esoteric Quarterly

*An independent publication dedicated to the trans-disciplinary investigation
of the esoteric spiritual tradition.*

**Esoteric philosophy and its applications
to individual and group service and
the expansion of human consciousness.**



Washington, DC, USA.
www.esotericsquarterly.com
e-mail: editor@esotericquarterly.com



The Esoteric Quarterly

The Esoteric Quarterly is an online, peer-reviewed, international journal, published by The Esoteric Quarterly Inc., a non-profit corporation based in Washington, DC. It is registered as an online journal with the National Serials Data Program of the Library of Congress. International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) 1551-3874.

Further information about *The Esoteric Quarterly*, including guidelines for the submission of articles and review procedures, can be found at <http://www.esotericquarterly.com>. All correspondence should be addressed to editor@esotericstudies.com.

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The Esoteric Quarterly

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The mission of the *Esoteric Quarterly* is to provide a forum for the exploration of esoteric philosophy and its applications. Full-length articles and student papers are solicited pertaining to both eastern and western esoteric

traditions. We also encourage feedback from readers. Comments of general interest will be published as Letters to the Editor. All communications should be sent to: editor@esotericquarterly.com.

Acknowledging the Past, but Looking to the Future

The *Esoteric Quarterly* was established in 2004 under the auspices of the School for Esoteric Studies. Over the last eight years, the content, quality and complexity of the journal has grown and evolved. The Quarterly has emerged as a positive thought-form generating interest among a wide-range of spiritual and esoteric traditions across the globe. In order to expand our reach and inclusiveness even further, a decision was taken to make the Quarterly an independent journal. The Spring 2013 issue—volume 9, no 1—is the first published under its own banner and redesigned website. The site also has a new address: www.esotericquarterly.com. Previous issues are available on the new website, along with some new features that we hope will make visiting the site a quicker, easier and more interactive experience.

Although the Quarterly has made important changes, our mission to provide a forum for the scholarly investigation of esoteric spiritual traditions, remains the same. We will retain the same editorial as before. However, three new members have been added to the Review Board. In addition to John Nash, Alison Deadman, Gail Jolley, Judy Jacka, and Katherine O'Brien, we are pleased to welcome Jef Bartow, Kevin Hataley and Susan Hamilton.

We are also gratified to announce that the *Esoteric Quarterly* is now a non-profit organization and will be operated for international educational purposes. While the journal and its resources are free, they are dependent on substantial donated labor behind the scenes. Please consider making a gift to the Esoteric Quarterly. Your contributions help to support the journal and its continued development. Thank you in advance for your support and know that it will not go unappreciated.

We are excited about having become an independent journal and hope that we will continue to be an important esoteric resource

in the years to come. If you are interested in becoming involved with the *Esoteric Quarterly*, in any of its aspects, please let me know at: editor@esotericquarterly.com.

The current issue begins with an article by John Nash, which provides an engaging overview of Alice A. Bailey's teachings on the etheric body, its formation and function and its potential for development. Nash divides the article into several sections dealing with the fundamental principles of the etheric vehicle, such as: its function as a receiver and transmitter of energies, the etheric body's relationship to the tangible body, its role in disease, healing and death, and the etheric body's role in spiritual development. The article succeeds in compiling Bailey's rich but disconnected teachings on the etheric body into a coherent and logical framework. Nash's reflections and commentary give us a deeper appreciation of the importance of the etheric body and provide direction for those who are interested in future research.

Our next contribution, by James Moffatt, is the second in a series of articles offering an informed and meaningful critique of the inadequacies of modern science's materialistic-reductionist approach to the study of the Universe and consciousness. The article opens with a discussion based upon the views of several notable scientists who have provided thoughtful challenges to the materialist paradigm. The limitations of reductionism and scientism are also examined from an esoteric perspective, with an emphasis on the work of Maurice Nicoll and Lama Govinda. Also included is a lucid and accessible analysis of Ken Wilber's theory on the "Great Chain or Nest of Being" which serves to highlight the lack of scale within modern scientific and psychological considerations of consciousness.

The next article, from Zachary Lansdowne, advances a symbolic interpretation of the "Book of Job." With its comparisons to the

esoteric literature on enlightenment and the “third initiation,” Lansdowne’s article adds to the rich diversity of approaches and interpretations of one of the most celebrated pieces of biblical literature. Drawing primarily upon the teachings of Alice A. Bailey and supported by works from other methodologies and traditions, the sufferings of Job are shown to be more than a symbolic “test of faith” by God via the instrument of Satan. Rather, Job’s hardships and trials are revealed as the impetus for a deeper spiritual awakening and the direct experience of the Self or God.

The final offering in this issue explores the “Spiritual Significance of Silence.” The article presents two like-minded and inspiring views directed to the development and application of the “lost art of silence.” The first essay, by Roberto Assagioli, is an English language translation of an unpublished manuscript by the Italian psychiatrist. The article is based, in part, on Assagioli’s own experience with esoteric philosophy and the works of the Tibetan and Alice A. Bailey. The second essay is by the Spanish born, teacher, lecturer and author, Vicente Beltran Anglada, whose prolific discipleship work complemented and advanced the work of the Tibetan’s disciple Francisco Brualla in Spain and Latin America. These evocative essays contribute to our understanding of silence as a spiritual discipline and the means by which one contacts the voice of the Soul.

In addition to the featured articles, this issue contains an interview with the Rev. Susan Hamilton, who served as the pastor of Parkside Community Church in Sacramento and dean of Sancta Sophia Seminary. Also included are two book reviews. The first review is for *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*, by George M. Young. The second is for *Quiet Horizon: Releasing Ideology and Embracing Self-Knowledge*, by Greg Jemsek.

We also draw your attention to our “Poem” and “Picture of the Quarter.” The poem in this issue—*Gold*—is from the writer, poet and playwright, Diana Durham. For more information on Diana’s poems and her work concerning “the quest for wholeness,” you are

encouraged to visit: www.dianadurham.net/. The enchantingly beautiful “Picture” in this issue—*Drawn to You and the Side of the Mountain*—is from the visionary digital artist, Bill Brouard. Mr. Brouard has also contributed the evocative mandala that the EQ is now using on its new website. To see more of his visionary works visit his Visual Alchemy Facebook page, or you may contact him directly at: bill_brouard@yahoo.co.uk/.

Publication Policies

Articles are selected for publication in the *Esoteric Quarterly* because we believe they represent a sincere search for truth, support the service mission to which we aspire, and/or contribute to the expansion of human consciousness.

Publication of an article does not necessarily imply that the Editorial Board or the School for Esoteric Studies agrees with the views expressed. Nor do we have the means to verify all facts stated in published articles.

We encourage critical thinking and analysis from a wide range of perspectives and traditions. We discourage dogmatism or any view that characterizes any tradition as having greater truth than a competing system.

Neither will we allow our journal to be used as a platform for attacks on individuals, groups, institutions, or nations. This policy applies to articles and features as well as to letters to the editor. In turn, we understand that the author of an article may not necessarily agree with the views, attitudes, or values expressed by a referenced source. Indeed, serious scholarship sometimes requires reference to work that an author finds abhorrent. We will not reject an article for publication simply on the grounds that it contains a reference to an objectionable source.

An issue of concern in all online journals is potential volatility of content. Conceivably, articles could be modified after the publication date because authors changed their minds about what had been written. Accordingly, we wish to make our policy clear: We reserve the right to correct minor typographical errors, but we will not make any substantive alteration to an article after it “goes to press.”

Poems of the Quarter

“Gold,” by Diane Durham

oh these temple walls
are flaked, feathered,
caked in gold, gold
light as skin
they are skin
as the body moves
in dance along the halls
and fire-lit archways
all through the crystalline
resilience of space.

the gold, the gold
is radiance
that which pours, glistens
and turns into
everything
so that this tight weave
of form and pre-form
can reflect back its light
like facets, glittery facets
of an ornate mirror face:

by day, a world the gold sun
colors with our eyes,
by night, the star-hung
architecture
of space -

that which is between -

the facets are fields:
pulsars, particles,
our cupped hands -
fields of charge
and intercession,
and the core of these
is what is clothed
and flows and is glass-
like and dark and nothing,
nothing at all, but itself.

Picture of the Quarter



Drawn to You and the Side of the Mountain

By Bill Brouard

bill_brouard@yahoo.co.uk

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Quotes of the Quarter

Etheric fields might be thought of as thoughtforms which contain the information, matrix and ordering rules for specific components of reality to which they are related. In the context of the physical, etheric fields are better known as morphic fields as described by Rupert Sheldrake. They provide a mechanism by which the concepts of Infinite Intelligence and Natural Law can be implemented in objective terms.

Tom Butler, *Etheric Fields*, ATransC
Cosmology Series, 2012
(http://atransc.org/theory/etheric_fields.htm)

And now we might add something concerning a certain most subtle spirit which pervades and lies hid in all gross bodies; by the force and action of which spirit the particles of bodies mutually attract one another at near distances, and cohere if contiguous; and electric bodies operate to greater distances, as well repelling as attracting the neighboring corpuscles; and light is emitted, reflected, refracted, inflected, and heats bodies; and all sensation is excited, and the members of animal bodies move at the command of the will, namely by the vibrations of this spirit, mutually propagated along the solid firmaments of the nerves, from the outward organs of sense to the brain, and from the brain into the muscles. But these are things that cannot be explained in few words, nor are we furnished with that sufficiency of experiments which is required to an accurate determination and demonstration of the laws by which this electric and elastic spirit operates.

Sir Isaac Newton, *The Principia: The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, 1687 (California Digital Library), 586

Consciousness is usually identified with mind, but mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all

the possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all the gradations of colour or human hearing all the gradations of sound — for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range, with which the normal human [consciousness] has no contact and they seem to it unconscious. ... Consciousness is a fundamental thing, the fundamental thing in existence. It is the energy, the motion, the movement of consciousness that creates the universe and all that is in it, not only the macrocosm but the microcosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself. For instance, when consciousness in its movement or rather a certain stress of movement forgets itself in the action it becomes an apparently unconscious energy; when it forgets itself in the form, it becomes the electron, the atom, the material object. In reality it is still consciousness that works in the energy and determines the form and the evolution of form. When it wants to liberate itself, slowly, evolutionarily, out of Matter, but still in the form, it emerges as life, as animal, as man, and it can go on evolving itself still farther out of its involution and become something more than mere man.

Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1939-40, 2006), 233-237.

Consciousness is perhaps the greatest mystery ever to be presented to mankind. My question is: What is the nature of consciousness? How can the materialistic world view of mankind explain the phenomenon of consciousness. By its nature, which is of a totally immaterial and invisible, with its inner activity of thinking, also a totally invisible activity, which the whole of the scientific world view rests upon..."Thinking". What is thinking if not a non-physical super-sensible invisible, immaterial reality. For the

scientific world view to understand itself, it must examine the nature of thinking. And in doing so, the "religious" world view will be able to find something to hang onto. Science and religion can meet on this question. Because it is here where they both fall short. Science cannot explain consciousness out of the materialistic world view. Religion cannot explain evolutionary principles in nature without adapting the scientific world view. The two are locked in an unending battle. Can it be that thinking is, in fact, the "spiritual activity of man."

Daniel Hehir, TED Conversations on the Nature of Consciousness, March 2011

If we acknowledge as our starting point the radical idea that the early Job is *not* portrayed as a saint, but rather as a severely flawed individual, the tale of suffering that constitutes the book proves to be quite different from the accepted interpretation. It is not a story of sheer endurance and blind faith but one of existential awakening, leading to the attainment of prophecy in the book's final scenes. The story, in other words, is about one man's painstaking ascendance from a normative religious life to a deeply spiritual one. As this process takes place, the narrative also expounds on the biblical secrets of the cosmic order, the nature of man, and, above all, heavenly redemption through the light of wisdom.

Interpreted this way, the Book of Job deals with a very different question than the one we have likely been taught: not "why do bad things happen to good people?" but how a man's honest response to worldly suffering serves as the basis for his awakening and enlightenment. Indeed, the forty oft-dismissed "interim" chapters of the Book of Job tell the story, step by excruciating step, of one man's eventual direct experience of God. His suffering plays a critical role in his ethical, intellectual, and spiritual transformation, enabling him to move from egoism to morality, from ignorance to wisdom, and, finally, from alienation from God to a personal relationship with him.

Ethan Dor Shav, "Job's Path to Enlightenment," *Azure*, No. 47 (Jerusalem, Israel, 2011)

Silence used to be, to varying degrees, a means of isolation. Now it is the absence of silence that works to render today's world empty and isolating. Its reserves have been invaded and depleted. The Machine marches globally forward and silence is the dwindling place where noise has not yet penetrated.

Civilization is a conspiracy of noise, designed to cover up the uncomfortable silences. The silence-honoring Wittgenstein understood the loss of our relationship with it. The unsilent present is a time of evaporating attention spans, erosion of critical thinking, and a lessened capacity for deeply felt experiences. Silence, like darkness, is hard to come by; but mind and spirit need its sustenance. ...nothing has changed human character so much as the loss of silence. Thoreau called silence 'our inviolable asylum,' an indispensable refuge that must be defended. Silence is necessary against the mounting sound. It's feared by manipulative mass culture, from which it remains apart, a means of resistance precisely because it does not belong to this world.

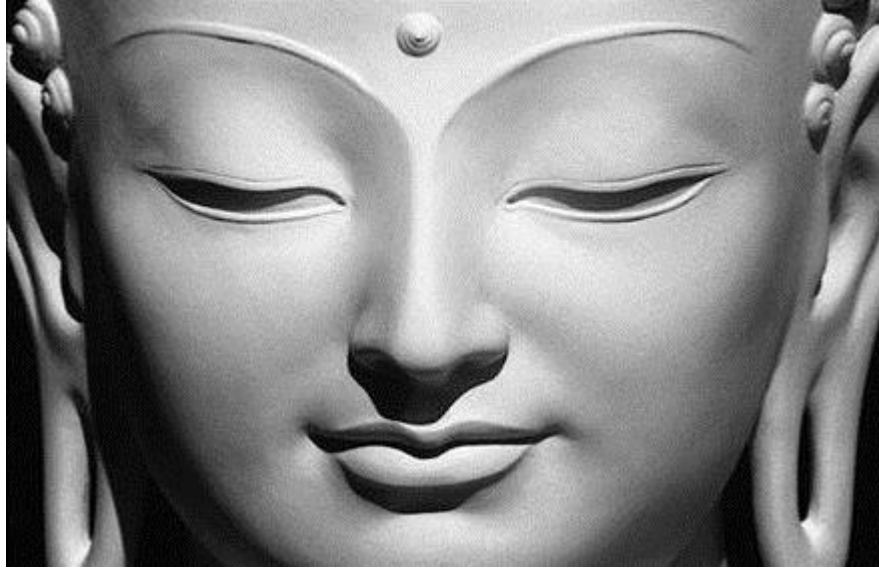
John Zerzan, *Silence*
(<http://www.johnzerzan.net/articles/-silence.html>)

Seek the wisdom that will untie your knot. Seek the path that demands your whole being.

Leave that which is not, but appears to be. Seek that which IS, but is not apparent.

Why are you so afraid of silence? Silence is the root of everything. If you spiral into its void, a hundred voices will thunder messages you long to hear.

Jalaludin Rumi, in *Hidden Music*, Translated by Azima Melita Kolin and Maryam Mali (Barnes & Noble, 2009) 68.



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From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
May Christ return to Earth.

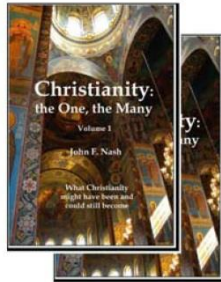
From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men --
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
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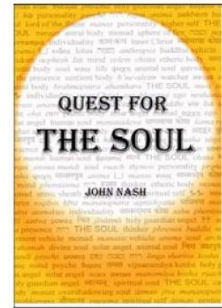
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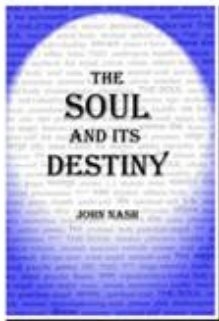
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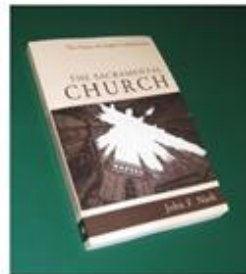
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The Etheric Body

John F. Nash

Summary

This article discusses Alice Bailey's teachings on the etheric body, which permeates the dense physical human form and surrounds it as part of the aura observed by clairvoyants. Specifically, the article discusses the relationship between the etheric and physical bodies; the etheric body's role in diseases, healing and death; changes in the etheric body during spiritual development; and the etheric bodies of initiates. Our etheric bodies are built by devas of various orders and are energized through devic activity by terrestrial and solar prana.

A major objective of the article is to provide a coherent statement of the relevant teachings and a platform for further study. Another objective is to draw attention to the importance of the etheric body for us, during our incarnation cycle, and for entities who no longer need to incarnate. The article also notes the pervasive existence of etheric bodies across the whole spectrum of lifeforms in the universe and the planets, stars and galaxies on which they reside.

Introduction

Anyone who has seen a corpse, even one prepared for viewing at an open-casket funeral, knows that it looks very different from how the person is remembered. Despite morticians' best efforts, the corpse is unmistakably dead. The very obvious basis of life, what we call the etheric body, is gone. Death can be defined by the etheric body's severance from the dense physical form.

The *etheric body*, also referred to as the *etheric vehicle*, *etheric double*, *vital body*, or *energy body*, is the closest of the subtle vehicles to the dense physical form and provides the link between it and the astral and higher vehicles. In addition to investing life in what would otherwise be an inanimate collection of bones, tis-

sue, and body fluids, the etheric body mediates health, disease and healing. It undergoes important changes as a person evolves spiritually, and it continues to play a role in the lives of initiates who have completed their incarnation cycle.

Notions of the etheric body go back to antiquity, probably reflecting clairvoyant abilities pervasive at that time. Ancient Egyptian religion spoke of the *ka*. Biblical Judaism discussed the *nephesh*, which captured the sense of both life and breath. In classical Greece, the physical body was said to be animated by the *psyche*, which the sixth-century BCE philosopher Anaximenes equated to breath.¹ In India, we find the *pranamaya kosha* of Vedantic teachings and the *sthulopadhi* of Taraka Raja Yoga.² Isaac Newton famously wrote of a "subtle spirit," pervading animal bodies, whose "vibration" propagates along nerves to the brain and muscles to produce movement.³

Annie Besant wrote of the etheric body in *The Ancient Wisdom* (1897), and Rudolf Steiner in *Theosophy* (1904). Max Heindel discussed the "vital body" in *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Mystic Christianity* (1910). Charles Leadbeater published his clairvoyant studies of the etheric body in *Man Visible and Invisible* (1925) and *The Chakras* (1927). Alice A. Bailey, who served as amanuensis for the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul, provided a

About the Author

John F. Nash, Ph.D., is a long-time esoteric student, author, and teacher. Two of his books, *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*, were reviewed in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. *Christianity: The One, the Many*, was reviewed in the Fall 2008 issue. His latest book: *The Sacramental Church* was published in 2011. For further information see the advertisements in this issue and the website <http://www.uriel.com>.

wealth of information on the etheric body in her twenty-four books, beginning with *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922). The knowledge, perspective and insights offered by the Tibetan sets Bailey's work apart from other treatments of the subject.

Despite the volume of available information in Bailey's books and elsewhere, the information is fragmented, complicating detailed study. Few attempts have been made to provide a clear, coherent account of the subject. Indeed, the etheric body does not seem to be a popular topic in the esoteric literature, often glossed over in descriptions of the human constitution. Perhaps the higher vehicles are more interesting (dare one say glamorous?) yet they are scarcely more important to us, in our present phase of evolution and beyond.

This article seeks to compile and analyze Bailey's teachings on the subject, to provide a reasonably comprehensive account of the etheric body, its properties, strengths and weaknesses, and its potential for development. Occasional references are made to the works of other writers where supporting or dissenting context is appropriate. The article is divided into five sections concerned with:

- The fundamental principles of the human etheric body, including the key role of prana and its devic mediators.
- The relationship between the etheric and dense physical bodies, involving the chakras and the several physiological systems.
- The etheric body's role in disease, healing and death.
- Changes in the etheric body that occur during spiritual development, including awakening of the chakras and raising of the kundalini
- High initiates' need for etheric bodies, whether or not they work on the physical plane.

Hopefully, the present study—still brief, relative to the breadth of the subject—will stimulate greater interest and further research.

The Etheric Body and Prana

The dense physical body—which for convenience will be referred to simply as the “physical body”—is composed of matter of the three lower subplanes of the physical plane: solid, liquid and gaseous. The *etheric body* is composed of matter of the four higher subplanes. Our present focus is on the human etheric body, but animals, plants, and even rocks all have etheric bodies. We understand that the Earth, the Sun, and all other entities in the universe also have etheric bodies.

The human etheric body permeates and extends a short distance beyond the physical body and resembles its physical counterpart in shape. Some writers claim that it extends about one-half of an inch (a little over a centimeter) beyond the physical body. Charles Leadbeater reported that it extends “very slightly” beyond the physical body.⁴ Alice Bailey stated that it “may extend for a few or many inches.”⁵ She commented that the etheric body “can be studied with relative ease” in the area that extends beyond the physical body.⁶ Clairvoyants see this area as the innermost part of a person's aura. Leadbeater described it as “a mass of faintly luminous violet-grey mist.”⁷ The *astral* body, also known as the sentient or emotional body, may extend much farther from the physical body.

Bailey declared that the etheric body has one main objective:

This is to vitalize and energize the physical body and thus integrate it into the energy body of the Earth and of the solar system. It is a web of energy streams, of lines of force and of light. It constitutes part of the vast network of energies which underlies all forms whether great or small (microcosmic or macrocosmic). Along these lines of energy the cosmic forces flow, as the blood flows through the veins and arteries. This constant, individual—human, planetary and solar—circulation of life-forces through the etheric bodies of all forms is the basis of all manifested life, and the expression of the essential non-separateness of all life.⁸

She emphasized that the etheric body “of every human being, is an integral part of the etheric body of the planet itself and consequently, of the solar system.”⁹ In other words, the etheric body is not individualized to the extent that the human monad or the soul is; its energy flows from one living entity to another. This startling realization gives precise meaning to affirmations like “We are all connected” or “We are all One.” The sharing of etheric matter throughout the cosmos provides the medium for telepathy and also gives meaning to concepts like divine omniscience.¹⁰ Bailey described the “golden etheric web” through which “there is a constant circulation of energies and forces,” adding that “this constitutes the scientific basis of the astrological theories.”¹¹ Space itself, which ordinarily we consider empty, is said to be etheric in nature.¹²

The cosmic etheric web has a geometric pattern. The pattern is not uniform throughout the universe but varies from one planet or sun to another according to its point of evolution.¹³ Earth’s etheric body currently has a square structure, whereas the “etheric webs of the sacred planets are largely triangles, whilst that of the Sun is that of interlaced circles.”¹⁴ A goal of the Triangles movement, in which groups of three people at different points on the globe commit to daily recitation of the Great Invocation, is to help convert the square structure of our planetary etheric body into a triangular structure.

The human etheric body also has a structure, though it is not a simple geometric one. In Bailey’s words it is “a network, permeated with fire, or as a web, animated with golden light.”¹⁵ The etheric body serves as a receiving agency for energies coming from “the planetary aura,” “the astral world,” “the universal mind or manasic force,” and “the ego itself.”¹⁶ It also serves as a medium through which those energies circulate to produce life and health. The health aspects of reception and circulation will be discussed in due course.

The energy of the etheric body is *prana*. “Prana is the sum total of the energy in the body . . . It therefore concerns the inflow of energy into the etheric body and its outflow through the medium of the physical body.”¹⁷ Bailey

spoke of solar and planetary prana. Solar prana is the “life-essence” of the Solar Logos, “animating, vivifying and correlating” the seven systemic planes “and all that is to be found within and upon them.”¹⁸

We recall that the seven systemic planes—the ones that provide the backdrop for the whole of human existence and evolution—collectively comprise the cosmic physical plane. Our physical, astral and mental planes comprise the “solid,” “liquid” and “gaseous” subplanes of the cosmic physical plane. Our *buddhic*, *atmic*, *monadic* and *logoic* planes comprise its four cosmic etheric subplanes.¹⁹ These correspondences are of more than just theoretical interest. The four systemic etheric subplanes, from which our etheric bodies are built, have qualities that draw upon those of the four highest systemic planes. This enrichment of qualities can be expected to become more apparent as we progress spiritually.

Planetary prana has its origins in the Sun but has been imprinted with the energy of the planet. It is

solar prana which has passed throughout the planet, has circulated through the planetary etheric body, has been transmitted to the dense physical planet, and has been cast off thence in the form of a radiation of the same essential character as solar prana, plus the individual and distinctive quality of the particular planet concerned.²⁰

Solar and terrestrial prana are transmitted to the etheric body by devic activity. Solar prana, “that vital and magnetic fluid which radiates from the sun . . . is transmitted to man’s etheric body through the agency of certain deva entities of a very high order, and of a golden hue.”²¹ Bailey gave no indication that these devas are, or are related to, the *manasaputras*, or solar angels, who serve, on a one-on-one basis, as our mentors and orchestrate our incarnational journey until we attain the fourth initiation.²²

A much larger class of devas of a lower order, called “the devas of the shadows, or the violet devas, transmit both solar and planetary prana.”²³ Their primary mission, in fact, is to work on the etheric subplanes. Devs of vari-

ous orders energize “the myriads of minute lives” that build the etheric body and “are the instigators of the creative processes on the three lowest subplanes of the physical plane.”²⁴

Scientific observation, albeit using different terminology, is now extending to the etheric physical subplanes. Electromagnetic and gravitational fields would seem to be *etheric* in nature, as the term is used here, even though physicists reject the concept of a luminiferous ether with physical properties, like elasticity, once thought to provide the medium for the propagation of electromagnetic waves. Quantum physicists no longer regard subatomic wave-particles, including protons, neutrons and electrons, as pieces of matter, like tiny marbles, but as assemblies of energy. Bailey’s assertion about the etheric nature of space may be supported by scientific research on the so-called vacuum state, or zero-point energy.²⁵ Additional support may come from recent theories of the Higgs field.²⁶

Scientists also recognize that all living things emanate a chemical field, consisting largely of moisture, and a small but measurable electromagnetic field. Kirlian photography is claimed to capture the corona discharge, suggestive of the etheric aura, around living organisms.²⁷

Meanwhile, evolutionary progress is increasing our inherent capability to view the etheric subplanes and their denizens. “People coming into incarnation on [the] seventh ray,” we are assured, “will have the eyes that see, and the purple devas and the lesser devas of the etheric body will be visioned by them.”²⁸ Elsewhere, Bailey commented: “The development of a power within the physical eye of a human being . . . will reveal the etheric body.”²⁹ This power will be distinct from, or complementary to, that of the “reawakened third eye.” The “third eye” refers to the *ajna*, or brow, chakra, to be discussed in its turn.

The Etheric Body, Life and Health

Between incarnations, the human entity’s accumulated experiences and karma are stored in the physical, astral and mental permanent atoms, which reside on the first

(“atomic”) subplanes of their respective planes. The physical permanent atom resides on the first etheric subplane, counting, as always, from above.

The process of incarnation, long planned by the solar angel, descends to the physical plane when the male sperm fertilizes the female ovum. At the moment of conception, Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson wrote, “the physical permanent atom is attached by an angel to the twin cell then formed.” The permanent atom “bestows upon the twin cell organism its ordered, biological impetus” and causes it to grow according to instructions emanating from the monad and causal body, modified by karmic and other influences.³⁰ A “field or sphere,” Hodson continued, “is established in which subsequent building will take place.” This field, the etheric body, begins to form, within which “there is to be seen, in terms of flowing energy or lines of force, each on its own wavelength, a sketch plan of the whole body.”³¹

Precisely what Hodson meant by the “twin cell” is unclear. At the time of conception the male and female *gamete* cells fuse to form a single-celled *zygote*. Subsequent cell division produces the *embryo*. In the situation of identical (monozygotic) twins, the separation of the embryos usually occurs after several cell divisions. Assuming that each human being has a unique permanent atom, it would seem that the permanent atoms must be attached to the twins some time after the phase to which Hodson referred.³²

Throughout gestation—and continuing throughout childhood and adulthood—the etheric body serves, in Alice Bailey’s words, as a “mold of the physical body” and “the archetype upon which the dense physical form is built.”³³ The etheric body and the other lower vehicles also develop, providing an increasingly capable vehicle for soul activity:

Prior to the seventh year, the vitality of the physical elemental is largely the determining factor. The soul is then focused in the etheric body . . . [I]t has simply a gently pulsating control and a gentle impulsive activity—sufficient to preserve consciousness, to vitalize the various physical pro-

cesses, and to initiate the demonstration of character and of disposition. These become increasingly marked until the twenty-first year, when they stabilize into what we call the personality.³⁴

Prana provides the energy required to build the dense physical form, and devas of the several classes collectively known as the “Builders” do the construction work. Pranic emanations, Bailey explained, “when focalized and received, react upon the dense matter which is built upon the etheric scaffolding and framework.”³⁵ The shape of the etheric body “is brought about by the fine interlacing strands of [etheric] matter being built by the action of the lesser Builders into the form or mold upon which later the dense physical body can be molded.”³⁶ “Under the Law of Attraction,” she continued, “the denser matter of the physical plane is made to cohere to this vitalized form, and is gradually built up around it, and within it, until the interpenetration is so complete that the two forms make but one unit.”³⁷

According to Bailey, the violet devas transmit solar and planetary prana to all parts of the etheric body. The golden devas—much fewer in number but with enormously greater power—allow solar prana to pass “through their bodies” and apply it only to “the uppermost part of the etheric body, the head and shoulders.” From there the prana is “passed down to the etheric correspondence of the physical organ, the spleen, and from thence forcibly transmitted into the spleen itself.”³⁸ Bailey did not explain why the process is “forcible.”

Prana’s effect on the physical body is threefold: it “preserves the animal health of the body,” it “constructs and builds in the body, through its energy and force currents, what is needed to replace the daily wear and tear,” and it is “the medium whereby man comes into physical touch with his brother man.”³⁹ “Physical magnetism,” Bailey added, “is largely, even if not wholly, dependent upon prana.”

The etheric body “is composed of interlocking and circulating lines of force,” or pathways, called *nadis*. “These nadis,” in Bailey’s words, “are the carriers of energy. They are in fact the

energy itself and carry the quality of energy from some area of consciousness in which the ‘dweller in the body’ may happen to be focused.”⁴⁰ The largest nadis, or bundles of nadis, are the *sushumna*, *ida* and *pingala*, which run up the spine, and which are “the externalization of the antahkarana, composed of the antahkarana proper, the sutratma or life thread, and the creative thread.”⁴¹ Of those three, the *sutratma* is the most important to the present discussion. The “antahkarana proper,” usually referred to simply as the *antahkarana*, will be discussed later. The creative thread is of no concern to our present theme.⁴²

The *sutratma*, popularly known as the *silver cord*, “is spun by the Ego from within the causal body much as a spider spins a thread. It can be shortened or extended at will.”⁴³ It enters the physical body through the top of the head, and is anchored in the heart to sustain the life of the physical body during the incarnation. Bailey comments that the whole etheric body “is but an extension of one aspect” of the *sutratma*.⁴⁴ The *sutratma* is lengthened when the astral body and higher vehicles separate from the physical form during sleep or in an out-of-body experience and contracts when the individual returns to waking consciousness.

Smaller nadis correspond to the meridians of Chinese medicine, while the smallest ones permeate the entire etheric body, including the part that extends beyond the physical form. The nadis, we understand, “underlie every nerve in the human body,” and “the centers which they form at certain points of intersection or juncture are the background or motivating agency of every ganglion or plexus found in the human body.”⁴⁵

Nodes, or points of intersection, in the network of nadis constitute the minor and major chakras, or in Bailey’s terminology “centers.” They are foci for the exchange of energy between the etheric and higher planes, and are entry points for the receipt of prana. The chakras “are found in close proximity to, or in relation to” major glands or organs. Indeed, the “various glands are in reality the externalization or materialization of the centers, major and minor.”⁴⁶

Bailey stated that the seven major chakras are formed in the fetus' etheric body shortly before birth. The "descending light . . . concentrate[s] itself in seven areas of its ring-pass-not, thus creating seven major centers which will control its expression and its existence upon the outer plane. . . . This is a moment of great brilliance."⁴⁷ The chakras remain in the etheric body throughout the life of the physical form, but their continued brilliance, as seen by individuals with clairvoyant vision, is not assured. The lower chakras are active in most people, but the higher ones "open" only as the individual develops spiritually. Relatively few people have all seven major chakras awakened and open.

Each chakra, or center, we learn, is related to a particular type of incoming energy, and the chakra will be awakened when the etheric body is receptive to that energy: "When the energy reaching the etheric body . . . is related [to a particular center] and the center is sensitive to its impact, then that center becomes vibrant and receptive and develops as a controlling factor in the life of the man on the physical plane."⁴⁸ The immediate impact is on the physical body:

According to the nature of the force animating the etheric body, according to the activity of that force in the etheric body, according to the aliveness or the sluggishness of the most important parts of the etheric body (the centers up the spine) so will be the corresponding activity of the physical body.⁴⁹

Four of the major chakras lie along the spine, within the torso: the *muladhara*, or root, chakra; the *swadhisthana*, or sacral chakra; the *manipura*; or solar-plexus chakra; and the *anahata*, or heart chakra. Bailey associated them, respectively, with the adrenal glands, the reproductive organs, the pancreas, and the thymus. The three higher major chakras are the *vishuddha*, or throat, chakra; the *ajna*, or brow, chakra; and the *sahasrara*, or crown, chakra, lying immediately above the head. They are associated, respectively, with the thyroid, pituitary, and pineal glands.⁵⁰

Minor chakras are located in various parts of the body, including the palms of the hands. The hands are important "for healing, blessing and . . . invocation."⁵¹ Moreover, they are "potent factors in all magical work of healing and utilization of the sense of touch is an esoteric science."⁵²

The etheric body is related to the endocrine system. The endocrine system is a system of glands that secrete hormones into the bloodstream to regulate bodily functions. The endocrine and the nervous systems both carry information, but the former is slower in its response. Whereas a nerve impulse is fast-acting, and its response short-lived, the secretion of a hormone can produce effects lasting from a few hours to more than one week. The etheric body controls the general condition of the heart, "which is the center of life as the brain is the center of consciousness,"⁵³ it thereby controls the circulation of the blood. The heart rate is affected by the nervous system, which "is controlled principally . . . from the astral body."⁵⁴ Yet the etheric body is still involved since it "links the emotional nature to the dense physical."⁵⁵

Clearly, the etheric body is a complex entity, with multiple functions:

The etheric body is the inner "substantial" form upon which the physical body is built or constructed. It is the inner scaffolding which underlies every part of the whole outer man; it is the framework which sustains the whole; it is that upon which the outer form is patterned; and it is the network of nadis (infinitely intricate) which constitutes the counterpart or the duplicate aspect of the entire nervous system which forms such an important part of the human mechanism. It is thus definitely, with the blood stream, the instrument of the life force.⁵⁶

The etheric body "conditions, controls and determines the life expression of the incarnated individual." It is "the conveyor of the forces of the personality, through the medium of the centers [chakras], and thereby galvanizes the physical body into activity."⁵⁷

The health of the etheric body is enhanced by “drawing upon the resources of vitality, stored up in the soil, in food, fresh air and outer environmental conditions.”⁵⁸ Prana is associated with the breath, and the importance of breathing fresh air cannot be overemphasized. According to “the wholeness of the breathing apparatus,” and ability “to oxygenate and render pure the blood,” Bailey noted, “so will be the health or wholeness of the dense physical body.”⁵⁹ The dangers of smoking should be obvious.

Bailey also commented that “the etheric body is vitalized and controlled by thought and can (through thought) be brought into full functioning activity. This is done by right thinking.”⁶⁰ Love, mirroring the Second Aspect of Deity, “shows itself through the heart, the circulatory system and the nervous system. This is in many ways most important for you to understand, for it controls paramountly the etheric body and its assimilation of prana or vitality.”⁶¹

Communication between mind and etheric body is only one-way. Humanity has reached a stage of development in which the etheric body functions below the threshold of consciousness: “Human beings remain unaware of the passage of forces through this vehicle and the nearest they get to the recognition of it is when they speak in terms of vitality or lack of vitality. The physical body makes its presence felt when something goes wrong or through the gratification of one or other of the appetites.”⁶²

Disease, Healing and Death

Disease strikes the physical body, but its origins lie principally in the etheric body, which controls the endocrine system and circu-

lation of the blood, or in the astral body, which controls the nervous system. Since the etheric body transmits energy from the astral to the physical body, it is involved in either case.

Weakness of the etheric body manifests as exhaustion, susceptibility to viruses and bacteria, more serious diseases, even attack by “obsessing entities.”⁶³ Eventually, it results in death. Weakness may be hereditary or karmic in nature. Weakness can be caused by an inability to receive prana, or conversely by an excess of prana, which results in congestion. The former is typical of poor living conditions, lack of fresh air, inadequate nutrition, and unhealthy lifestyles. Excessive prana is found more often in tropical countries. “The etheric body receives prana or solar rays too rapidly, passes it through and out of the system with too much force, and this leaves the victim a prey to inertia and devitalization.”⁶⁴ Sun tanning may expose the body to more risks than just skin cancer.

Similar, polar-opposite conditions arise when the etheric body is either too loosely, or too closely knit, to the physical body. The former condition is associated with poor integration of the vehicles comprising the personality and can lead to obsession or possession—frequently, but erroneously, diagnosed as insanity.⁶⁵ In the latter, “every part of the physical body is in a constant condition of stimulation, of galvanic effort, with a resultant activity in the nervous system which—if not correctly regulated—can lead to a great deal of distress.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, we are also told: “The closer [the] etheric body is interwoven . . . with the dense physical vehicle, the clearer will be the instinctual reaction,” and the greater “will be the sensitivity and the more aptitude will there be for telepathic contact and recognition of the higher impressions.”⁶⁷

The cosmic etheric web has a geometric pattern. The pattern is not uniform throughout the universe but varies from one planet or sun to another according to its point of evolution. Earth's etheric body currently has a square structure, whereas the “etheric webs of the sacred planets are largely triangles, whilst that of the Sun is that of interlaced circles.”

Healing Therapies

Healing therapies seek to relieve pain and disability and to restore a level of health sufficient for the person to live a happy, productive life—and perhaps to complete work assigned for the present incarnation.

Conventional (“allopathic”) medicine has done much to extend life, alleviate pain, and improve body function. Modern medicine has made enormous advances, and increases in longevity are to its great credit. Yet it is limited by treatment of symptoms rather than causes, and by its emphasis on narrow, specialized therapies, with less concern for a holistic view of the patient beyond the specific disease state. It attaches little importance to patients’ cooperation—other than to take medications, participate in physical therapy, or take other external measures—or even their desire to get well.

Complementary medicine is more holistic in its approach, and seeks to address causes as well as symptoms. As noted, many of these causes originate in the etheric body or are transmitted through it. In some complementary therapies, like acupuncture, the patient is passive. In others, patient participation plays a major role.

Weakness in the etheric body can often be alleviated by enabling or encouraging the patient to change a harmful lifestyle, adopt a more healthful diet, and get more fresh air. Recognition by medical professionals of the synthesis of vitamin D by exposure to sunlight—within reasonable limits and mindful of the dangers of sunbathing—is an important step toward acknowledgement of the role of prana. Bailey pointed out that the etheric body can also be strengthened “by means of . . . violet light, with its corresponding sound, administered in quiet sanitariums.”⁶⁸

In the future, light therapy will be performed with the “direct aid” of the violet devas.⁶⁹ With regard to sound therapy, Torkum Saraydarian, believed to be one of the Tibetan’s inner group of disciples, declared that good music “coordinates the organs and glands and improves circulation,” gives energy, “purifies the body of decaying elements,” heals, and puts the body

“in contact with the constructive energies in the Universe.”⁷⁰ It also has favorable effects at the emotional and mental levels.

Some therapies involve direct interaction between the patient and a healing practitioner. Bailey used the term “healer,” but “practitioner” is now preferred to avoid any implication that the individual can, or should, take personality-level credit for the work performed. The practitioner’s goal is to serve as “an unimpeded channel” for energy coming from elsewhere. A “clear passage must be formed along which health-giving life may flow from the ‘needed center’ in the healer’s etheric body to the allied center in the body of the patient and from thence into the blood stream, via the related gland.”⁷¹ Several approaches are available to the practitioner, according to the level in the self where the problem exists:

Some diseases must be dealt with from the mental plane, and will call in the mind of the healer; others require a concentration of emotional energy by the healing agent; and again, in other cases, the healer should seek to be only a transmitter of pranic energy to the etheric body of the patient, via his [or her] own etheric body.⁷²

The transmission of pranic energy takes place through “etheric currents and the centers in the etheric body.” Therapies making use of this technique include “the laying on of hands and the establishing of relations which affect the physical body.”⁷³ Efficacy rests on the fact that the healer’s and the patient’s etheric bodies are part of the planetary etheric body, and there is “an unbreakable . . . relationship between the healer’s etheric body and that of the patient, which can be used . . . once contact has been induced, for a definite circulation of energies.”⁷⁴ Strong, healthy individuals have exceptional potential to serve as practitioners; their abundance of prana provides a ready source for transfer to patients.⁷⁵

Bailey made several comments in her works on the use of the hands in healing and other occult work,⁷⁶ which should be useful for practitioners of Reiki, Healing Touch, and similar modalities. They should also be relevant for clergy performing sacramental healing and liturgi-

cal ritual. A comment to a particular disciple, but with more general application, was the following:

I would ask you, also, to make a careful study of the use of the hands in healing. I have given various hints in my different books and there is much anent this subject in the doctrine of the Church as to the “laying on of hands” and also in the oriental teachings anent the mudras, or the use of hands in ritualistic service. Find out all that you can about the hands. Later, I will indicate the future use of this science of the hands and give further instruction on the purpose of the centers in the hands in relation to the healing art.⁷⁷

The way a healing practitioner should interact with the patient may depend on ray type:

Healers on the second, third and fifth rays use more generally the mode of laying on of hands or magnetic healing. This term applies to the direct act of laying on of hands upon the patient's physical body, and not to the action of the hands in the second method, when the hands are immersed in the etheric body of the patient and are definitely working in etheric matter. Healers on the first, fourth and seventh rays use the mode of “hand immersion.”⁷⁸

Interestingly, Bailey added: “The sixth ray healer is rare and is successful only when highly developed; he will then use both methods interchangeably.” Presumably sixth-ray people, who are not yet sufficiently developed, are called to serve in other ways.

The Death Process

Healing, of course, is only temporary in its effects. The time will come when the physical vehicle has deteriorated to the point where soul purpose is better served by withdrawal from the physical world. Alternatively, death may come earlier due to external factors such as accidents, violence—including suicide—and war.

At death, the etheric body is withdrawn from the dense physical form. A passage in *Ecclesiastes* describes the event in poetic terms: “[M]an goeth to his long home, and the

mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken . . . Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”⁷⁹

Bailey described the death process in considerable detail:

[T]he “Word of Return” is uttered, and the consciousness aspect, the quality nature, the light and energy of the incarnating man, are withdrawn into the etheric body. The life principle withdraws, likewise, from the heart. There follows a brilliant flaring-up of pure electric light, and the “body of light” finally breaks all contact with the dense physical vehicle, focuses for a short period in the vital body, and then disappears.⁸⁰

“A psychic tremor is established,” Bailey continued, “which has the effect of loosening or breaking the connection between the nadis and the nervous system; the etheric body is thereby detached from its dense sheath, though still interpenetrating every part of it.” Then there may be a pause:

This is allowed in order to carry forward the loosening process as smoothly and as painlessly as possible. This loosening of the nadis starts in the eyes. This process of detachment often shows itself in the relaxation and lack of fear which dying persons so often show; they evidence a condition of peace, and a willingness to go, plus an inability to make a mental effort.⁸¹

After the pause, which may be “of a shorter or longer period of time,”

the organized etheric body, loosened from all nervous relationship through the action of the nadis, begins to gather itself together for the final departure. It withdraws from the extremities towards the required “door of exit” and focuses itself in the area around that door for the final “pull” of the directing soul.⁸²

The “door of exit,” through which the etheric body is withdrawn, is the solar plexus for “infants and [for] men and women who are polarized entirely in the physical and astral bodies.” For “mental types, of the more highly evolved

human units” it is “at the top of the head in the region of the fontanelle.”⁸³ “In the case of an advanced person,” we also learn the process of withdrawal “is consciously undertaken, and the man retains his vital interests and his awareness of relationship to others even whilst losing his grip on physical existence.”⁸⁴

When the etheric body has fully emerged from the physical form

the vital body then assumes the vague outline of the form that it energized, and this under the influence of the thoughtform of himself which the man has built up over the years. This thoughtform exists in the case of every human being, and must be destroyed before the second stage of elimination is finally complete.⁸⁵

The etheric body may remain, in the form of a wraith, close to the physical form for a while because it “is not yet freed from its influence. There is still a slight rapport between the two.” “That is why,” Bailey explained, “clairvoyants often claim to see the etheric body hovering around the death bed or the coffin.”⁸⁶ Meanwhile the physical body begins to “fall into corruption,” and its component matter “scattered to the elements.”⁸⁷ She commented that the “entire process of the focusing of the spiritual elements in the etheric body, with the subsequent abstraction and consequent dissipation of the etheric body, would be greatly hastened by the substitution of cremation for burial.”⁸⁸

Release from the dense physical form still leaves the individual with three of the four vehicles of the lower quaternary: the etheric, astral, and lower mental bodies. The energies of the astral and lower mental bodies interpenetrate the etheric body, “and at the center there is a point of light which indicates the presence of the soul.”⁸⁹

So long as the ego remains in the etheric body, the possibility remains that the individual can be “brought back again into physical plane existence . . . though the discarding of the dense physical body has to all intents and purposes been completed.”⁹⁰ Near-death experiences are receiving increasing attention since

the early work of Elizabeth Kubler Ross and Raymond Moody.⁹¹

The time spent in the etheric body varies from individual to individual. “In the case of the undeveloped person, the etheric body can linger for a long time in the neighborhood of its outer disintegrating shell because the pull of the soul is not potent, and the material aspect is. Where the person is advanced, and therefore detached in his thinking from the physical plane, the dissolution of the vital body can be exceedingly rapid.”⁹²

During the dissolution of the etheric body, the “solar fire,” which previously flowed through the sutratma, is “gathered back to the atomic subplane where it will still vitalize the permanent atom and hold it connected within the causal body.”⁹³ The energies of the etheric body are “reorganized and withdrawn, leaving only the pranic substance which is identified with the etheric vehicle of the planet itself.”⁹⁴

The Etheric Body and Spiritual Development

The etheric bodies of aspirants and disciples develop more rapidly with age than do those of others and take on distinct qualities. Moreover, Alice Bailey explained, “the grip of the soul upon the etheric centers will be more powerful from the very start of the physical existence.” By the fourteenth year, she continued, “the quality and the nature of the incarnated soul and its approximate age or experience are determined, the physical, astral and mental elementals are under control, and the soul, the indwelling spiritual man, already determines the life tendencies and choices.”⁹⁵

Strengthening and refinement of the etheric body allows the individual to become more discriminating in what energies and impressions, including telepathic impressions, reach the dense physical vehicle: “the etheric body of a disciple or even of an advanced person can be so handled and dealt with that it can reject much that might otherwise impinge upon it, pass through it or use it as a channel.”⁹⁶

We have seen that the etheric body transmits astral and mental energy to the physical body.

This is part of the mechanism by which the personality exercises control over its vehicles. Bailey explained, however, that when a person “is upon the Path of Discipleship and, therefore, upon the reversed wheel [of the Zodiac], leading to initiation, the etheric body becomes the transmitter of soul energy and not of personality force.” In this way “the powerful effect of the second Ray of Love-Wisdom—working through the subjective six rays, according to ray type—begins steadily to dominate the vital body, producing consequently the shift of force and of intensity to the centers above the diaphragm.”⁹⁷

Bailey reminded us that integration of the personality is both a prerequisite and an effect of a life of service. The “inflowing force of the soul” not only serves “to bring all the three lower aspects of the man into one serving whole” but is “the major factor leading to demonstrated service.”⁹⁸ “With the heart and mind . . . functioning together,” she continued,

the force, flowing through the server will galvanize his etheric body into activity. Then, automatically, the physical body will respond. There is, consequently, a great need for the server to pause upon the astral plane, and there, in a holy and controlled silence, wait, before permitting the force to pour through into the centers in the etheric body. This point of silence is one of the mysteries of spiritual unfoldment.”⁹⁹

The world’s great mystics would agree with her on the importance of “controlled silence.”

We know that an important element of occult training is building the antahkarana between the personality and spiritual triad, or more specifically between the mental unit (on the fourth mental subplane) and the mental permanent

atom (on the first). So why, Bailey asked, does occult work not address a gap between the physical and etheric bodies? Answering her own question, she explained that “factually there is no true gap; there is simply the ignoring by humanity of an aspect of the physical body which is of far more importance than is the dense physical vehicle.”¹⁰⁰ “The occultist,” she insisted, “never concerns himself with the dense physical vehicle. He considers the etheric body to be the true form and the dense as simply the material used to fill in the form.”¹⁰¹ Another author commented that closure of the physical-etheric gap was a major achievement of the Lemurian race and thus is long behind us.¹⁰²

As an individual evolves spiritually, the coarse matter of the lower quaternary

is gradually replaced by matter of a higher vibration. On the physical plane, the effect is primarily on the etheric body and, in Bailey’s words, it “stimulates the divine flow.”¹⁰³ The process can be accelerated “by forms of breathing (respiration and inspiration), and by certain rhythmic currents set up on the mental plane and driving from thence to the lower ethers. The etheric body will thus be strengthened, purified, cleansed, and rearranged.”¹⁰⁴ Bailey warned, however, against overemphasis on the physical act of breathing.¹⁰⁵ In particular, she criticized breathing exercises which involve “holding the nose,” which she characterized as “dangerous.”¹⁰⁶

Breathing exercises, properly understood and performed, were central to the ancient yogic discipline of *pranayama*, and Bailey noted that the “The inflow and outflow of prana in the physical body is symbolized for us in the necessary inspiration and exhalation of the breath.”¹⁰⁷ *Pranayama* “refers to the control, regulation and suppression of the vital airs, the

Strengthening and refinement of the etheric body allows the individual to become more discriminating in what energies and impressions, including telepathic impressions, reach the dense physical vehicle: “the etheric body of a disciple or even of an advanced person can be so handled and dealt with that it can reject much that might otherwise impinge upon it, pass through it or use it as a channel.”

breath and the forces or shaktis of the body. It leads in reality to the organization of the vital body or the etheric body so that the life current or forces, emanating from the ego or spiritual man on his own plane, can be correctly transmitted to the physical man in objective manifestation.”¹⁰⁸

Complementing pranayama is the discipline of *pratyahara*, or withdrawal of sensory awareness from the extremities of the body and even from the whole body. In Bailey’s words: “Here we get back of the physical and the etheric bodies, to the emotional body, the seat of the desires, of sensory perception and of feeling. She added: “The etheric body is organized and controlled and the astral body is re-oriented, for the desire nature is subdued and the real man withdraws himself gradually from all sense contacts.”¹⁰⁹ Some Christian esotericists, wishing to spare Jesus the agony of the cross, claim that he practiced *pratyahara*.

Much has been written about the awakening of the higher chakras. Bailey spoke of the “unfoldment and awakening of the centers in the etheric body, the centralization of the fires of the body and their just progression up the spine, in order to make union with the fire of the soul.”¹¹⁰

Bailey distinguished the brow chakra, located between the eyebrows, from the pineal gland to which it is customarily related. The brow chakra, “commonly called the third eye,”

manifests as a result of the vibratory interaction between the forces of the soul, working through the pineal gland, and the forces of the personality, working through the pituitary body. These negative and positive forces interact, and when potent enough produce the light in the head. Just as the physical eye came into being in response to the light of the sun so the spiritual eye equally comes into being in response to the light of the spiritual sun.¹¹¹

“As [the disciple’s] awareness of this light increases,” she added, “so does the apparatus of vision develop, and the mechanism whereby he can see things in the spiritual light comes into being in the etheric body.”¹¹² Whereas the mystic’s consciousness is centered “in the top

of the head,” and that of the “advanced worldly man . . . in the pituitary region,” the occultist works in that point in the middle of the head where the “light in the head” makes its appearance.¹¹³ The energy of the soul is swept into action by the power of will. And “through the etheric body and the force, directed through one or other of the centers . . . the soul carries on the work in magic.”¹¹⁴

Much has also been written about raising the *kundalini*, the “serpent fire” that lies coiled at the base of the spine. Bailey warned, in the strongest terms, of the danger of trying, by force of will, to raise the kundalini before adequate spiritual preparation has been done to ensure a clear channel up the spine. An individual who does this “stands in danger of obsession, insanity, physical death, or of dire disease in some part of his body, and he also runs the risk of an over-development of the sex impulse.”¹¹⁵

If the spine is still clogged, Bailey continued, the flame is turned “backwards and downwards,” permitting “the entrance, through the burning etheric, of undesirable and extraneous forces, currents, and even entities. These wreck and tear and ruin what is left of the etheric vehicle, of the brain tissue and even of the dense physical body itself.”¹¹⁶ She issued a similar warning in another work:

There is extreme danger attendant upon the premature awakening of the fire, and the consequent destruction of certain protective structures in the etheric body and the breaking down of the barriers between this world and the astral world, before the pupil is properly “balanced between the pairs of opposites.” There is a menace in the premature growth of the lower psychic powers before the higher nature is awakened, and the effect upon the brain can be seen as insanity in some form or other, mild or the reverse.¹¹⁷

Exercises to raise the kundalini should be undertaken only under proper supervision: “The methods for arousing the kundalini fire and blending it with the downpouring egoic force must . . . be left for direct teaching by a master in this science to his pupil.”¹¹⁸

The etheric body bears a special relationship to the Fifth Ray of Concrete Science.¹¹⁹ But we are also told that, in the present world cycle, the Third Ray of Active Intelligence is “slowly conditioning the etheric body,” under the influence of the “third sign, Gemini,”¹²⁰ Esoteric astrologer Phillip Lindsay commented:

Gemini is a sign of communication . . . [It] rules the etheric body, the greater etheric matrix that extends to all corners of the universe; it has an innate sense of connectedness with all life; it is the chameleon who through its adaptability and penchant for communication can be all things to all people. . . . Appropriately, Gemini rules the thymus, the endocrine gland associated with the heart chakra.¹²¹

It was mentioned earlier that the etheric bodies of sacred planets have a triangular structure. Bailey also commented on the potential for advanced esoteric students to grasp “the essential beauty of coordinated and organized movement and its power to qualify and condition the entire universal pattern” through study of the triangles formed by triplets of chakras in the human etheric body.¹²²

The Etheric Bodies of Initiates

We are told that avatars have “a peculiar facility or capacity . . . to work with energies, transmitted via the etheric body of a planet or of the solar system.” In particular, Christ “transmitted the cosmic energy of love directly to the physical plane of our planet, and also in a peculiar manner to the fourth kingdom in nature, the human.”¹²³

Alice Bailey informed us that Sanat Kumara—the Ancient of Days, Lord of the World, and greatest of the avatars—took “physical form” during the Lemurian era “and has remained with us ever since.” “Owing to the extreme purity of His nature,” she explained, “He was unable to take a dense physical body such as ours, and has to function in His etheric body.”¹²⁴ That etheric body may not have been built, like ours, from *systemic* etheric matter. More likely it was constructed of *cosmic* etheric matter—that is, matter of our buddhic,

atmic, monadic and logoic planes. It will be recalled that the seven systemic planes form the cosmic physical plane.

In a later book Bailey declared that the masters’ “etheric bodies” are composed of cosmic etheric matter:

All the Masters, for instance, do not work through a physical vehicle. They nevertheless, have an etheric body composed of the substance of the cosmic etheric levels—buddhic, atmic, monadic and logoic levels. . . . Until They choose, at the sixth Initiation of Decision, one of the seven Paths of Ultimate Destiny, the Masters function in Their cosmic etheric bodies.¹²⁵

The inclusion of logoic etheric matter is surprising, given that their consciousness—or more correctly *identification*—is focused at the monadic level.¹²⁶ Be that as it may, those masters who do “work through a physical vehicle” presumably have etheric bodies like ours, perhaps interpenetrated by cosmic etheric material.

Whether or not the masters choose to take dense physical forms the way we do, they are capable of manifesting a *mayavirupa*, “a vehicle of expression which is built of atomic physical and astral substance and of concrete mental substance.” Bailey added that the masters can “create [one] at will” and cause it “to vanish at will.”¹²⁷ The *mayavirupa* has a measure of solidity but is not subject to the same constraints as are our physical bodies; for example, it can seem to pass through walls. When the risen Christ appeared to his disciples in a locked room, he is believed to have been “wearing” a *mayavirupa*.

The ability to create a *mayavirupa* involves processes which are learned even before the third initiation: processes based on combined use of the *sutratma* and *antahkarana* to produce a powerful thoughtform.¹²⁸ Bailey added the following tantalizing hint: “The power of the Triad begins to pour through, thus energizing all human activities upon the physical plane, and vitalizing in ever increasing degree the man’s thought forms. The key to the formation of the *Mayavirupa* is found in the right comprehension of the process.”¹²⁹

For most of us information about the etheric bodies of masters and higher initiates is primarily of theoretical interest. Our more immediate concern is to know when, on the initiatory path, differences in the etheric body occur, and in what ways they become evident. Bailey provided a potentially useful hint: "Though the etheric body of man is an expression of the seven ray qualities in varying degrees of force, the etheric body of a Master is an expression of monadic energy, and comes into full activity after the third initiation."¹³⁰ She also explained that the etheric body is "the agent consciously directed, of the rapidly integrating spiritual unity. It can convey into the brain the needed energies and that occult information which together make a man a Master of the Wisdom and eventually a Christ—all-inclusive in HIS developed attractive and magnetic power."¹³¹

We have already seen that the quality of the etheric body can be enhanced by right thinking. If the process is successful, "certain transformations and re-organizations take place which eventually cause a complete change in the activities of the physical plane man. The constant cultivation of this effects an entire transformation in the threefold lower man."¹³²

Such a transformation can be seen in the lives of the great geniuses of history, some of whom were known to sleep no more than four hours a night. We see it even more clearly in the lives of certain Indian holy men and Christian stigmatics who no longer sleep at all—and, most startlingly, no longer need to eat or drink. This latter ability may point to a future mode of physical existence in which human beings will interact very differently with the lesser lives on the planet. Meanwhile, it seems likely that the lesions on stigmatics' bodies are caused by strong thoughtforms, propelled by strong emotion and acting through the etheric body.¹³³

At some point on the initiatory path the kundalini rises freely up the spine, and the chakras become fully awakened. "As time elapses between the first and fourth Initiation," Bailey explained, "the threefold channel in the spine, and the entire etheric body is gradually cleansed and purified by the action of the fire till all 'dross' . . . is burnt away, and naught

remains to impede the progress of this flame."¹³⁴ She continued:

As the fire of kundalini and prana proceed with their work, and the channel becomes more and more cleared, the centers more active, and the body purer, the flame of spirit, or the fire from the Ego, comes more actively downwards till a flame of real brilliance issues from the top of the head. This flame surges upwards through the bodies towards its source, the causal body.¹³⁵

The brilliant "flame" issuing from the head no doubt underlies the artistic convention of depicting saints with haloes.

The awakening of the chakras, or centers, which takes place on the path of discipleship and continues on the initiatory path, unveil new ray influences: "Through the seven centers in the etheric body, the seven ray energies make their appearance and produce their effects, but at the very heart of each chakra or lotus, there is a vortex of force to be found which is composed of pure manasic energy, and, therefore, is purely energy of the first three rays."¹³⁶

"This energy," Bailey continued, "is quiescent until an advanced stage of discipleship is reached. It only sweeps into its divine rhythm and activity when the three tiers of petals, found in the egoic lotus (the higher correspondence), are beginning to unfold, and the center of the egoic lotus is becoming vibrant."¹³⁷ Finally, we learn: "Though the etheric body of man is an expression of the seven ray qualities in varying degrees of force, the etheric body of a Master is an expression of monadic energy, and comes into full activity after the third initiation."¹³⁸

We should note that, at the fourth initiation, the egoic lotus, the causal body, is destroyed and "the soul life—as hitherto understood—fades out" and the "sum total of memory, quality and acquirements is then absorbed into the Monad."¹³⁹ Bailey added:

The astral body also vanishes in the same great process of renunciation, and the physical body (as an automatic agent of the vital body) is no longer needed, though it per-

sists and serves a purpose when so required by the Monad. From the form aspect, you then have the Monad, the sphere of the Spiritual Triad and the etheric body upon the physical plane.¹⁴⁰

Concluding Remarks

As the citations in this article testify, Alice Bailey's teachings offer a wealth of information on the etheric body. What this article has tried to do, within its length constraints, is to compile the teachings into a coherent and logical framework for the convenience of esoteric students, and especially for those who may wish to do further research. Commentary provides continuity and context and suggests what we can learn from the teachings.

Of most immediate concern to us is understanding the critical role of the etheric body in establishing and maintaining life on the physical plane: how the dense physical vehicle is built around the structure of the etheric body during gestation and childhood, how the etheric body vitalizes the endocrine and nervous systems and the circulation of the blood, and how it strives to maintain health and function during physical embodiment. Those tasks are obstructed by poor living conditions, inadequate diet, and disease; they are aided by healthful lifestyles and, when needed, by conventional and complementary healing therapies.

When the lifetime comes to an end the etheric body withdraws from the dense physical form. In due course it too is abandoned, as the lessons learned at the physical, astral, and lower mental levels are absorbed into their respective permanent atoms. We should note that there are four lower vehicles—constituting the lower quaternary—but only three permanent atoms. The physical permanent atom absorbs the record of the etheric body and also any record of dense physical life that is to be preserved.

Of less immediate concern, but of no less importance to an appreciation of individual and collective human potential, is understanding the way in which the etheric body establishes and eventually awakens the chakras, and how it—and in turn the physical body—adapt to the

needs of aspiration, discipleship and initiation. As the individual progresses on the Path of Return, the etheric body undergoes important changes, revealing modes of physical existence already utilized by the masters and pointing to what, one day, may become the norm for humanity at large.

The four etheric subplanes can be viewed as the lower correspondents of the buddhic, atmic, monadic, and logoic planes, which in their turn serve as the “etheric subplanes” of the cosmic physical plane. Recognition of this correspondence is evocative. It reminds us that, while our etheric bodies are built of material from the four systemic ethers, they have qualities pertaining to the higher planes, qualities that unfold on the initiatory path. Indeed, we are told that the masters function in etheric bodies composed of matter of the cosmic ethers. That recognition should give us new appreciation of the etheric body and its importance, not only for us at our present stage of development but also for entities at exalted levels of consciousness.

¹ *Psyche*, customarily translated as “soul,” did not acquire its modern meaning until well into the classical age.

² T. Subba Row, “Buddhism and Ancient Wisdom-Religion,” *Esoteric Writings* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1895), 58-59. In eastern philosophy *prana* is intimately connected with breath.

³ Isaac Newton, “General Scholium,” appended to the 2nd (1713) edition of *Principia*. Online: http://www.isaacnewton.ca/gen_scholium/General_Scholium_Motte_1729_4pg.pdf. (accessed Nov. 26, 2012).

⁴ Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Chakras* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1927), 3.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1950), 145. Citations from Bailey's works have been brought into conformity with American spelling and quotation-mark conventions. All other changes or interpolations are disclosed by square brackets: [].

⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁷ Leadbeater, *The Chakras*, 3.

⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1953), 2-3. Parenthesis in original.

- 9 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1942), 184-185.
- 10 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 7.
- 11 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1951), 11.
- 12 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 178.
- 13 It should be noted that a planet's or sun's degree of evolution is also the degree of evolution of its ensouling Logos.
- 14 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 479. See also the comments in *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 163.
- 15 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1925), 79.
- 16 Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1927), 220.
- 17 Ibid., 218.
- 18 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 154-155.
- 19 For a discussion of the systemic and cosmic planes, and the position of our vehicles on the former, see John F. Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2004), 40-46, 97-103.
- 20 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 92. The statement that all prana that we receive is of solar origin is not surprising, given that the Sun is the source of life for the whole solar system.
- 21 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 90.
- 22 For a discussion of solar angels and their work see Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny*, 177-206.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid., 924.
- 25 Quantum theory predicts a non-zero energy for a vacuum, associated with the rapid emergence and decay of pairs of subatomic particles.
- 26 Theories of the Higgs field are developing rapidly, following observation of the Higgs boson, believed to be the origin of mass. For a brief discussion of the issues see Andrew Z. Jones, "What is the Higgs Field?" Online: <http://physics.about.com/od/quantumphysics/f/HiggsField.htm>. (accessed February 20, 2013).
- 27 The electromagnetic field emitted by living organisms, tentatively called the "L-field," was first observed in the 1930s by Harold Saxton Burr, anatomy professor at Yale University. Kirlian photography is named for Russian scientist Semyon Kirlian and his wife Valentina who discovered the technique of photographing electrical coronal discharges in 1939. Mainstream science embraces the basic concept but remains skeptical of its broader interpretation.
- 28 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1936), 123.
- 29 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 412.
- 30 Geoffrey Hodson, *The Miracle of Birth* (1929; reprint; Wheaton IL: Quest books, 1981), 82, 84-88.
- 31 Hodson, *The Miracle of Birth*, 84-87.
- 32 The author is indebted to a reviewer for this insight.
- 33 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 81-82.
- 34 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 463.
- 35 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 82.
- 36 Ibid., 80.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 90.
- 39 Ibid., 857.
- 40 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 142, 145.
- 41 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 183.
- 42 The creative thread is said to connect the throat chakra with the causal body.
- 43 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 735.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 434.
- 46 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 85.
- 47 Ibid., 469.
- 48 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 143.
- 49 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 218-219. Parenthesis in original.
- 50 Ibid., 120. See also Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 412-413. Along with most other writers, Bailey assigns the root chakra to the adrenal glands and the sacral chakra to the gonads, but it should be noted that the adrenals lie above the gonads, on a level with the pancreas.
- 51 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and The Initiations* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1960), 227.
- 52 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 354.
- 53 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 85.
- 54 Ibid., 107.
- 55 Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1922), 245.
- 56 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 79.
- 57 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 190.
- 58 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 512.
- 59 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 219.
- 60 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1934), 77. Parenthesis in original.
- 61 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 106.
- 62 Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 293.
- 63 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 127.
- 64 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 107.
- 65 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 79, 316.
- 66 Ibid., 80.
- 67 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 114-115.

- ⁶⁸ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 127.
⁶⁹ Ibid.
⁷⁰ Torkum Saraydarian, *The Creative Sound* (Cave Creek, AZ: 1999), 65-66.
⁷¹ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 626-627.
⁷² Ibid., 26.
⁷³ Ibid., 645.
⁷⁴ Ibid.
⁷⁵ A Reiki healing group, to which the present author belonged, included former Marines and Special Forces personnel whose effectiveness as practitioners was evident.
⁷⁶ See for example Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1955), 118. Also Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 17; *A Treatise on White Magic*, 578.
⁷⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1944), 353-354
⁷⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 650.
⁷⁹ *Ecclesiastes* 12:5-7. The "golden bowl" is believed to be a reference to the etheric body.
⁸⁰ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 470.
⁸¹ Ibid., 474-475.
⁸² Ibid., 475.
⁸³ Ibid., 456. The *fontanelle*, or *fontanelle*, is the soft, membranous gaps between the incompletely formed cranial bones of a fetus or infant. One wonders why Bailey cited it as the etheric body's point of exit, since the fontanelle closes in childhood. Perhaps she felt it was a more specific marker than the crown chakra, which lies a short distance above, the head.
⁸⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 476.
⁸⁵ Ibid., 477.
⁸⁶ Ibid., 470.
⁸⁷ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 735.
⁸⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 470.
⁸⁹ Ibid., 477.
⁹⁰ Ibid., 460.
⁹¹ A wealth of information on near-death experiences is available from the International Association for Near-Death Studies: <http://near-death.com/>. (accessed December 12, 2012). A recent book that has received much attention is Eben Alexander's, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2012.)
⁹² Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 460.
⁹³ Ibid.
⁹⁴ Ibid., 477.
⁹⁵ Ibid., 463-464.
⁹⁶ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 115.
⁹⁷ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 352-353.
⁹⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 134
⁹⁹ Ibid., 138.
¹⁰⁰ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 140
¹⁰¹ Ibid., 348-349.
¹⁰² See for example Charles DeMotte, *The Inner Side of History* (Mariposa CA: Source Publications, 1998), 72.
¹⁰³ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 63.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 156. Parenthesis in original.
¹⁰⁵ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 218.
¹⁰⁶ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 77.
¹⁰⁷ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 218.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 182-183. In Hindu thought *Shakti* (from Sanskrit: "ability") is the primordial cosmic energy, or motive force, believed to move through the entire universe.
¹⁰⁹ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 182-183. One objective of *pratyahara* is to overcome sensitivity to pain. Indian fakirs famously pierce themselves with knives or lie on beds of nails to demonstrate their prowess. Some Christian esotericists, eager to spare Jesus the horrors of the crucifixion, suggest that he was able to withdraw sensory awareness from the physical body
¹¹⁰ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 62-63.
¹¹¹ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 212-213.
¹¹² Ibid.
¹¹³ Ibid., 247.
¹¹⁴ Ibid., 216.
¹¹⁵ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 126.
¹¹⁶ Ibid.
¹¹⁷ Ibid., 222.
¹¹⁸ Ibid., 221-222.
¹¹⁹ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, 162.
¹²⁰ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1951), 357.
¹²¹ Phillip Lindsay, "The Gemini Christ," 2006. Online: <http://www.esotericastrologer.org/Newsletters/36%20The%20Gemini%20Christ%20I%20am%20made%20all%20things%20to%20all%20men.htm>. (accessed December 13, 2012).
¹²² Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 418.
¹²³ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 616.
¹²⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human & Solar* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1922), 28.
¹²⁵ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 159.
¹²⁶ Bailey, *The Rays and The Initiations*, 282.
¹²⁷ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1957), 697. See also *A Treatise on White Magic*, 265.
¹²⁸ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 959. See also Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1954), 31.
¹²⁹ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 959-960.
¹³⁰ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 294.
¹³¹ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 61.

¹³² Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 192.

¹³³ John F. Nash, "Stigmata and the Initiatory Path," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Summer 2012), 49-72.

¹³⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 124

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

¹³⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology* II, 294

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* Parenthesis in original.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Bailey, *The Rays and The Initiations*, 506-507.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 507. Parenthesis in original.

Modern Science, Psychology, and The Enduring Mystery of Consciousness: An Esoteric/Mystical Critique, Part II

James Moffatt

Man stands between two worlds—an external visible world, that enters the senses and is shared by everyone: and an internal world that none of his senses meets, which is shared by no one—that is, the approach to it is uniquely individual, for although all the people in the world can observe you, only you can observe yourself. This internal world is the second *reality*, and is invisible.

... Let me ask you: in which world of reality do you live and have your being? In the world outside you, revealed by your senses, or in the world that no one sees, and only you can observe—this inner world? I think you will agree that it is in this inner world that you really live all the time, and feel and suffer.

Now both worlds are verifiable experimentally—the outer observable world and the inner self-observable world. You can prove things in the outer world, and you can prove things in the inner world, in the one case by observation and in the second case by self-observation.¹

Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries on Gurdjieff & Ouspensky*, Vol. 1.

Abstract

In the second article of this series, the materialist - mechanist - reductionist paradigm, which dominates modern science and psychology, will be examined in order to identify and elaborate upon some of its most problematic limitations. Drawing on select esoteric sources, an analysis of several critical limitations of the reductionist approach to the study of consciousness will be presented. In addition, Ken Wilber's analysis of the collapse of the Great Chain of Being—that which he terms “the disaster of modernity”—will then be examined to provide both a historical perspective on modern science's commitment to reductionism, as well as an assessment of the reductionist epistemological assumptions, biases, and limitations. These considerations are intended to identify the significance of the lack of scale within modern scientific and psychological considerations of consciousness: that is, the failure to acknowledge that humans are multi-dimensional beings existing in a multidimensional consciousness.

The Reduction Complex

As much as reductionism has become an essential element of the materialist epistemology which has come to dominate modern science, its methodological virtues—reducing complex phenomena to their simpler and thus more experimentally manageable elements—and its apparent explanatory power has blinded its proponents to its inherent limitations. In fact, reductionism has become such an integral aspect of modern science's methodological arsenal and, as such, an implicit theoretical

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assumption of conventional scientific thinking that scientists rarely trouble themselves with questions regarding the obvious limitations inherent in that approach. Indeed, they evince a disconcerting faith in the process of induction: whereby the collation and integration of countless studies of manageable and minimal bits and parts of things will lead to an integrated and comprehensive grasp of complex wholes. Nevertheless, the evidence from within science itself, which contradicts that assumption, is overwhelming.

Over the course of the past 50 years, there have been numerous critiques of science's reigning materialist-mechanistic-reductionistic paradigm, which have detailed the striking limitations of any scientific account or explanation based upon that approach. In the 1960s and early 1970s, such seminal works as Floyd Matson's *The Broken Image*, Arthur Koestler's *The Ghost In the Machine*, and Theodore Roszak's *Where The Wasteland Ends* set out thoughtful challenges to the materialist paradigm and its proponents' tacit equation of their theoretical, metaphysical, and methodological choices with legitimate science.² In the intervening years, there has been no shortage of works identifying and explicating the significant limitations of reductionism.³ Despite the cogency of these numerous critiques, the thrust of modern science continues to be pursued on the basis of a largely unquestioned commitment to reductionism as both a methodology and an explanatory framework. In a paper entitled "The Reduction Complex," Stephen L. Talbott characterizes "materialism, mechanism, and reductionism" as "slippery terms";⁴ observing that it is difficult to determine where "the material" is in materialism. Talbott pointedly asks: "What sort of material ... does the quantum physicist believe in?"⁵ The simple fact is that materialists seem blithely unaware and/or unconcerned about the ominous import of such questions, and maintain a peculiar confidence that the alleged problems of reductionism are, in the words of philosopher Daniel Dennett, "too vague to merit a response" Talbott quotes Dennett's dismissal of all charges of "reductionism":

If somebody says to you, "But that's so reductionistic!" you would do well to respond, "That's such a quaint, old-fashioned complaint! What on earth do you have in mind?"⁶

Talbott says that what *he* has in mind is the "intertwined notions" of materialism, mechanism, and reductionism. He quotes David Bohm's definition of science's "mechanistic philosophy" as being founded on the assumption that:

... the great diversity of things that appear in all of our experience, every day as well as scientific, can all be reduced completely and perfectly to nothing more than consequences of the operation of an absolute and final set of purely quantitative laws determining the behavior of a few kinds of basic entities or variables.⁷

Talbott expands on this definition to provide the following definition of the Reduction Complex—in which he includes both materialism and mechanism—to be an expression of the following convictions:

- (1) There are a few simple, fundamental constituent elements of the material universe (Bohm's "basic entities or variables").
- (2) These elements relate to each other externally, like the parts of a machine.
- (3) The fundamental elements and the laws governing them can be precisely characterized mathematically and logically.
- (4) The fundamental elements and laws account for and ultimately explain everything that happens. This explanation proceeds unidirectionally, "from the bottom up."
- (5) The constituent elements and laws of the world possess no intrinsic character of mind.⁸

Quite simply, an impartial weighing of the first four convictions, in terms of scientific evidence, reveals that—when taken as declarations of absolute truths—they are all demonstrably false. The fifth is a metaphysical

assumption which, in terms of the evidence gathered by esotericists and mystics, is clearly mistaken. Talbott argues that reductionism should be understood not as a body of concepts, but rather as “a way of exercising (and not exercising) our cognitive faculties.”⁹ In keeping with Abraham Maslow, who described reductionism as “a cognitive pathology,” and Theodore Roszak, who characterized it as a “psychic contraction,” Talbott defines it as a single-minded cognitive activity aimed at “isolating something so as to grasp it more easily and precisely and gain power over it.”¹⁰ While he acknowledges that we must certainly aim to get hold of our understanding of things, Talbott argues that the one-sided and overly intense pursuit of that aim “sever[s] it from its relationships to everything else.”¹¹ The unintended consequence of mindlessly doing so is that we falsify and decontextualize that which we are attempting to understand.

Within the confines of this article, it is not possible to do justice to the sophistication of Talbott’s analysis or the elegance of his critique of “the reduction complex.” However, his commentary on the popular materialist notion *cum* postulate *cum* faith “that causation flows unidirectionally upward from fundamental building blocks, giving us successive levels of explanation ...”¹² is particularly noteworthy. Describing this idea as being “wholly gratuitous,” Talbott explains that:

Nowhere in our experience—as opposed to the world of our models—do we find such one-direction causation. And what plausible reason do we have for assuming that the smaller the piece of the universe we are looking at, the more fundamental its explanatory value? This is to take the crudest possible reading of human experience in assembling things and to make a controlling scientific principle of it.

Yes, I know how powerfully we are compelled by our habit of taking tiny elements as the most fundamentally constitutive of the world. But the habit proves upon reflection to be vacuous: no significant line of thought supports it, and I’m not even sure whether anyone has ever made a serious at-

tempt at such a line of thought. Our compulsion is *nothing but* habit.¹³

Although the reductionist approach has been an extraordinarily powerful methodological approach in biology, its explanatory limitations are obvious. In *The Turning Point*, Fritjof Capra quotes the eminent biologist Paul Weiss on the insurmountable obstacles that confront a “bottom up” explanation of life:

We can assert definitely ... on the basis of strictly empirical investigation, that the sheer reversal of our prior analytic dissection of the universe by putting the pieces together again, whether in reality or just in our minds, can yield *no complete explanation of even the most elementary living system*.¹⁴ [emphasis added]

Theodore Roszak has identified the hierarchical nature of both human beings and the Universe as the primary reason why reductionism cannot result in comprehensive explanations—because a higher level of a system in Nature cannot be explained by a lower level. The levels of hierarchical systems are separated by a “barrier of complexity” and, therefore, each higher level is, to some extent, autonomous from the lower levels. Roszak states that:

All specialization in science is based on this astonishing process by which each structural level is not only elevated above, but in a significant sense is *liberated* from the governance of the next level down, and so can be understood in its own terms. Each level both depends upon and yet transcends the level below.¹⁵

Biologists would never question that the physical structures and processes they study are comprised of atoms, Roszak says, but they need not possess a mastery of theoretical physics to pursue their discipline. They are studying organisms at another level of organization and extrapolating from observations carried out a higher material level. He adds that anthropologists do not need to know anything about the chemistry of cells to study and comment upon the culture and customs of the people who are composed of those cells. On that basis, Roszak asks:

In what sense, then, is reductionism from higher to lower levels an “explanation” of anything? If it were, how could such autonomous fields of study be possible?¹⁶

As we shall see in the ensuing examination of Maurice Nicoll’s work, Talbott’s characterization of the materialists’ faith in “bottom up” causation as a cognitive habit is in keeping with the esoteric conception that the apprehension of the external world through the senses is properly understood as a function and expression of the lower aspects of the mind. In addition, the comments by Weiss and Roszak on the explanatory limitations of reductionism will be that much more salient when considered in terms of Lama Govinda’s commentary on *māyā* and the illusions of reductionism, and Ken Wilber’s analysis of the collapse of hierarchy into “the flatland” of modern thought.

Maurice Nicoll’s “Invisible Realities”

Maurice Nicoll (1884-1953), a British psychiatrist, studied with Carl Jung and, subsequently, became a pupil of both G.I. Gurdjieff and P.D. Ouspensky. Nicoll’s writings—which include extensive commentaries on the Fourth Way teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky¹⁷—establish him as one of the twentieth century’s most impressive and insightful esoteric scholars. His esoteric interpretations of the Gospels populate those commentaries and are the topics of his books, *The New Man* and *The Mark*.¹⁸ In his book, *Living Time*,¹⁹ Nicoll addresses the importance of grasping one’s “invisibility” as a first step in the study and development of being and consciousness. Typically, Nicoll says, we take the world of appearances—garnered by our senses—as comprising that which is real; however, as he notes, our senses hardly reveal the external world in its totality. We live in a Universe of energies/matters and our senses are attuned and respond to only a few of them. What we call “reality” is, then, a configuration of interpretations derived from those energies/matters as they are selected by our senses. Even knowing this, however, we still take it for granted that objects in the external world are what they appear to be—rather than that

which is arbitrary determined by the receptivity of our senses.

Our illusions regarding this world of appearances arise, according to Nicoll, because sense thinking comprises “the natural action of the mind.” Consequently, we refer automatically to the senses as the final proof of a thing’s existence. Nonetheless, the entirety of one’s inner invisible world exists in a dimension which is *beyond the reach of the senses*. Thoughts, feelings, and imagination—even though they do not occupy any position in three-dimensional space—are no less real than that which we apprehend through our senses. Indeed, it is precisely because we are attached by our senses to the external world that we are immersed in a world of appearances; we live under the spell of illusion or *māyā*. However, the illusory quality of this world of appearances does not mean that *the external world is not real*. Rather, the illusion lies in regarding this world, which the senses apprehend, as *a complete view*—rather than *a partial aspect*—of “reality.” Nicoll explains the significance of “studying the invisible” in overcoming the illusion of the world of appearances, and the role that sense-based thinking plays in resisting this change:

Is not the starting point of illusion ... the taking of appearances for all ultimate reality and the belief that sense perception is the sole standard of the real? The seen world is real but does not embrace reality. It is built out of invisible realities which surround it on every side. The visible world is contained in a much greater invisible world (invisible to us), and we do not lose one by studying the other but enlarge one *into* the other. But as our natural everyday logic is so closely connected with sense-thinking it fights against this enlarging of the world, and its actual *form* of understanding becomes a psychological barrier to further understanding.²⁰

Unfortunately, the entire thrust and direction of modern psychology and science has been to focus on that which is externally observable, and, therefore, quantifiable. Nevertheless, as long as the limits of materialism confront science with numerous phenomena that are nei-

ther knowable in terms of the senses nor measurable—including life, consciousness, love, thought, emotion, belief, creativity, imagination, beauty, spiritual affinities and aspirations—there is a serious problem. But the materialists' faith in reductionism is such that they see no such predicament; they assert that these invisible human realities are "nothing but" and "nothing more" than the expression of material processes and events. Hence, "life" is explicable as being an elegant outcome of an intricate series of fortunate biochemical accidents; "consciousness" and "mind" are nothing more than the end-products of the brain's electro-chemical activities; and "God" is but another name for the laws of Nature (as scientists understand them).

Nicoll's claims, about the illusory nature of sense-based knowledge, identify the essential limitation of any attempt to study consciousness solely in terms of external observation. Indeed, from an esoteric perspective, any scientific knowledge which restricts itself to the observable material realm is ultimately illusory—insofar as it is based on a conceptualization of reality, which it takes to be final and complete, but which esoteric teachings describe as being only a partial aspect of higher, more integrated and inclusive realms. The vast majority of modern psychologists and scientists ignore or are ignorant of the higher states of consciousness and the higher or more subtle dimensions of reality that are said to be knowable by those whose consciousness transcends the limits of normal waking consciousness. While this shortcoming does not invalidate scientific knowledge, it does mean that it is ultimately illusory to the extent that it is regarded as providing a *comprehensive* descrip-

tion of the Universe and the laws of Nature which govern it.

The essential flaw in modern science is its *assumption* that our normal state of waking consciousness is final. Nicoll argues that we have no right to make such an assumption. Cer-

Is not the starting point of illusion ... the taking of appearances for all ultimate reality and the belief that sense perception is the sole standard of the real? The seen world is real but does not embrace reality. It is built out of invisible realities which surround it on every side. The visible world is contained in a much greater invisible world (invisible to us), and we do not lose one by studying the other but enlarge one *into* the other.

tainly, we recognize the qualitative change in consciousness between dreams and the waking state, and admit that the degree of awareness and form of relation changes between them. However,

materialist scientists do not recognize that further changes in the waking state are possible, manifesting in new degrees of awareness or forms of relation. As Nicoll points out, we fail to understand how our observations, and

conceptualizations, interpretations of the world and ourselves are defined and limited by our level and degree of consciousness, and that changes in our consciousness and being would bring about an entirely new relation to them. For all esoteric teachings are premised on the understanding that *the level of one's knowledge is determined by the level of one's consciousness and being*.

From an esoteric perspective, modern psychologists' commitment to studying consciousness solely through external observation constitutes a methodological error which has led them to look for consciousness where it cannot be found. As Nicoll observed, human beings stand between two worlds—an inner and outer reality—and both of those realms are verifiable experimentally. Self-knowledge acquired through systematic self-observation, which is the basis of all esoteric teachings, reveals that consciousness can only be known within oneself and that our normal waking consciousness is most assuredly *not* final. Esoteric methods, practices, and disciplines reveal

that our capacity *to know* may be transformed, to an unfathomable degree, by awakening our dormant faculties of higher consciousness and being. Further, esoteric teachings maintain that the most objective knowledge of the Universe can only be attained by those who *know themselves*—by acquiring the states of higher consciousness and being that allow one to transcend the limitations of the “normal” subjective, egoistic state of consciousness—and, in doing so, realize the Self and its unity with the Universe.

The “Natural” and the “Spiritual” Man

The debate between modern science’s materialism and mystical/esoteric teachings’ metaphysical perspective hardly comprises a new argument—or, to be more accurate, is illuminated by comparing a literal and an esoteric interpretation of the Gospels. In his books, *The Mark* and *The New Man*, Nicoll examines the Gospels in order to present the differences between the “natural” or “sensual man,” who understands life only through the evidence of his senses, and the “spiritual man” who thinks psychologically, that is, in terms beyond literal interpretation. “How does a man *walk the Earth*?” Nicoll asks in *The Mark*.²¹ A sensual man, whose mind is based on the senses—“the mind of the flesh”—thinks *from his feet*; more specifically, from the “shoes” that cover his feet. His truth is always of the same order or on the same level. His understanding of parables is always at one level: he takes everything literally. Nicoll asks: “Why does it so frequently say in the Scriptures and other esoteric literature “that a man must *remove his shoes* before entering a sacred place?””²² He says that this refers to the necessity of going beyond sense-based truth in order to understand psychological truth. Hence, a man must remove his shoes—his usual sense-based truth—because a mind based on the senses and the truth derived from their evidence cannot understand higher levels of truth. The mind exists at different levels and *the lower cannot fathom the workings of the higher*. The sensual is unable to comprehend the spiritual:

So *those shoes* must be removed when entering into the sphere of knowledge above sense-knowledge. *To drag psychological understanding down to the level of sensual understanding is to destroy everything in Man that can lead to his internal development and make him a man inwardly.*²³ [emphasis added]

According to Nicoll, this psychological understanding and the psychological man recur in visions, dreams, and parables. The psychological man is divided into inner and outer parts, or higher and lower levels, respectively. The head is the highest or inner division of the psychological man; its thinking concerns the inner meaning of things. The feet constitute the lower level or outer division; their thinking is sensual and forms the shoes. These two orders of truth exist on different levels, rather than being contradictory. But one who thinks only from his feet cannot understand a higher level of truth. Trying to do so, he reduces everything to the familiar categories of a lower level of truth. He turns things into opposites which are not opposites. The result of failing to understand this distinction between orders of truth, Nicoll says, is that “when people lose all sense of levels—of higher and lower—the world turns into opposites and violence.”²⁴

This antagonism between sensual and psychological thinking prevents the natural man from developing consciousness and spiritual being. As long as he remains attached to his senses, he is incapable of the psychological thinking necessary for this development. What is necessary to fulfill this development is *faith*. While “faith” is typically equated with unsubstantiated and unverifiable beliefs, Nicoll argues that *faith (pistis)*, as it is translated in the New Testament, means more than belief. It means “*another kind of thinking*.”²⁵ He cites a passage from *Matthew XVI: 10-12* to illustrate this point:

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus per-

ceived, he said unto them, ‘O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? ... How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?’ Then understood they how he bade them beware not of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.²⁶

In this incident, the disciples respond to Christ’s words literally and, therefore, misunderstand him. When he says that they have little faith, he is not referring to “belief.” In this instance, “faith” means understanding on a level other than the sensual man’s literal interpretation. Christ was not speaking sensually, but rather psychologically; his meaning can only be understood psychologically. The leaven of which Christ spoke was *psychological*—not literal. The bread about which he was speaking was not meant literally; instead, he was referring to the *idea* of “falsity infecting good.” There are always Pharisees and Sadducees amongst us: fundamentalists, who understand everything literally, in terms of fixed ideas and prejudices; hypocrites, who do everything for the sake of appearances, without inner belief or conviction. Christ connects the disciples’ littleness of faith with *their inability to understand psychologically*. Sensual thinking cannot make contact with the meaning of Christ’s teaching. Thus, Nicoll states: “*Faith is necessary to open a part of the mind not opened by the senses.*”²⁷

Nicoll continues this examination of the higher meaning of faith by turning to *Hebrews* XI:1, in which faith is called “a *basis* for belief in what *is not seen*.”²⁸ This is not simply a matter of believing in the invisible, but is, according to Nicoll, “a basis or plane on which another world of relations and values can be reached, one that is above the seen world and the cause of it.”²⁹ This perception of a world, which is above the world of appearances and is the cause of it—but invisible to the senses—provides one with a sense of scale. One acquires an understanding of the existence of higher and lower levels. Thus, in *Hebrews* XI:3, it says: “It is faith that lets us understand

how the worlds were fashioned by God’s word; how it was that from things unseen all that we see took their origin.”³⁰

The unknown writer of *Hebrews* continues: “it is impossible to please God without faith.” (XI: 6)³¹ In other words, without a foundation in the faith that allows one to go beyond the evidence of the senses and literal thinking, one cannot perceive the existence of this invisible scale, and understand the meaning of things psychologically. To recognize scale is to realize that meaning exists on different levels and that the same words may be understood literally or psychologically.

Matter Transcends Itself

Nicoll’s commentaries about the limits of sensual thinking, the importance of faith in opening the mind to that which lies beyond the reach of the senses, and the significance of scale are as equally applicable to modern psychology’s study of consciousness as they are to interpreting scripture. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this concept of scale and how it places one’s perspective and understanding of the meaning of everything—consciousness, being, knowledge, understanding, meaning, reality, matter, mind, spirit, and God—in a new and startling light. Furthermore, these considerations are of the utmost importance in assessing the explanatory limitations imposed by adherence to a reductionist theoretical and methodological framework.

Strangely enough, when the history of twentieth-century physics’ formulations of relativity theory and quantum theory—arguably, modern science’s greatest achievements—are considered, it might be said that those successes have revealed the limits of sense-based thinking, the importance of faith (in terms of another kind of thinking), and the significance of scale. While Newtonian mechanics was regarded for many years as the ultimate theoretical description of the laws of Nature, the discovery of electric and magnetic phenomena was but the first in a series of developments revealing the theory’s essential limitations. In *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra explains that we know now:

... that the Newtonian model is valid only for objects consisting of large numbers of

atoms, and only for velocities which are small compared to the speed of light. When the first condition is not given, classical mechanics has to be replaced by quantum theory; when the second condition is not satisfied, relativity theory has to be applied.³²

Thus, physicists have discovered that the supposed universality of Newton's model collapses at the sub-atomic level and as bodies approach the speed of light. In these other dimensions—these other levels in the hierarchy of the physical world—our normal conceptualizations of matter fail, and it is necessary to think in new ways to enter the new order of meaning imposed by each particular level of reality. Einstein's magnificent theory of relativity not only defies common sense in its unity of space and time, but also brilliantly overthrows thousands of years of philosophy and science. Quantum mechanics—a collective achievement which represents an even more provocative and astounding challenge to previous thought—provides a mathematical description of a level of reality, at which our normal everyday concepts and assumptions are inapplicable: an impossibly bewildering world, which confirms J.B.S. Haldane's famous assertion that the Universe is “not only queerer than we suppose but queerer than we *can* suppose.” Both relativity theory and quantum theory then have furnished us with a world-view—derived by apprehending reality on another level of scale—in which the limits of our sense-based thinking and language are revealed.

Ironically, then, it is physics—with its ancient quest to determine the elementary constituents of matter—which has developed an understanding of the nature of reality which poses some of the most difficult problems for science's materialist - mechanistic - reductionist paradigm.

Describing the bafflingly incomprehensible sub-atomic world, in which “matter does not exist with certainty at definite places, but rather shows ‘tendencies to exist’, and atomic events do not occur with certainty at definite times and in definite ways, but rather show ‘tendencies to occur,’” Capra writes:

Quantum theory has thus demolished the classical concepts of solid objects and of strictly deterministic laws of matter. At the subatomic level, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities, and these patterns, ultimately, do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections. A careful analysis of the process of observation in atomic physics has shown that the subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities, but can only be understood as interconnections between the preparation of an experiment and the subsequent measurement. Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated ‘basic building blocks, but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole.³³

It is difficult to grasp the extraordinary significance of what Capra is saying in describing quantum physicists' discoveries about the bewildering and unfathomable nature of reality. In searching for the basic indivisible unit which occupies the lowest rung in the hierarchy of matter, physicists have been confronted by the oneness of the Universe! Instead of identifying some fundamental building block, physicists have discovered the webs of relationships linking parts to wholes. It was these extraordinary discoveries which led philosopher Karl Popper to observe that, in the quantum Universe, “matter has transcended itself.”³⁴ It is the significance of these discoveries that have led Theodore Roszak, Stephen Talbott, and other critics of the materialist-mechanistic-reductionist paradigm to ask: what exactly does it mean to be an ardent materialist?

But the implications of what quantum physics has revealed about the nature of reality are even more incredible. Capra explains that the web of relations:

... always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes

the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid. The Cartesian partition between the I and the world, between the observer and the observed, cannot be made when dealing with atomic matter. In atomic physics, we can never speak about nature without, at the same time, speaking about ourselves.³⁵

Thus, physics has led us to a dimension in which the external physical world cannot be described or its meaning defined without connecting it to the much greater invisible world which permeates *it*. The materialist's Holy Grail—the fundamental building block—is chimerical; his faith in reductionism has betrayed him, even as it mocks him with his own reflection. Ultimately, what matters is not matter; what is fundamentally material is immaterial. Our attempts to understand the rudimentary constituents of the physical world yield *no thing*, but instead a system of relationship in which consciousness participates.

The challenges to materialism presented by twentieth - century physics become even more striking when considering the work of David Bohm. An esteemed colleague of Einstein's at Princeton University, Bohm's theoretical work had involved attempting to understand the importance of "hidden variables" in resolving the paradoxes of relativity theory and quantum theory. Despite the dramatic contradictions in the two perspectives' interpretation of the nature of physical reality, Bohm was struck by the fact that each theory suggested, *for entirely different reasons*, that an explanation "implying the undivided wholeness of the universe would provide a much more orderly way of considering the general nature of reality."³⁶ It was that paradox which inspired Bohm to develop a theory which began by recognizing the wholeness of the Universe as the primary reality.

In his groundbreaking 1984 book, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Bohm presents a model of wholeness by which he attempts to reconcile relativity and quantum theory, while

also addressing non-local effects and other quantum paradoxes. He distinguishes between an *explicate order*—the world of separate things and events—and an underlying, hidden *implicate order* of undivided wholeness. In the explicate order, there exist all the independent material particles—the quanta—that interact locally in the space/time configuration. Bohm's revolutionary proposal is that there exists an implicate order—an invisible, unmanifested realm—which informs the explicate order. In this deeper level of reality, the quanta—which appear to be separate and unconnected in the explicate order—are connected and unified. Everything in the implicate order is, according to Bohm, enfolded into everything else. Thus, he claims that all the phenomena of the observable explicate order—manifest physical reality—*unfolds* from the implicate order. The implicate order is simultaneously available to each part of the explicate order. Thus, the Universe is conceived of as a hologram in which each part is in the whole, and the whole is in each part—although Bohm, believing that the term "hologram" implied a misleading and untenable stasis, coined the term "holomovement" to describe the dynamic nature of these processes of enfolding and unfolding by which the implicate order informs the explicate order.

Discussing the significance of his theoretical position, Bohm contrasts it with the mechanistic world-view which strangely—in light of physics' revolutionary discoveries—continues to dominate contemporary science:

Whereas the mechanistic picture regarded discrete objects as the primary reality, and the enfolding and unfolding of organisms, including minds, as secondary phenomena, I suggest that the unbroken movements of enfolding and unfolding, which I call the *holomovement*, is primary while the apparently discrete objects are secondary phenomena. ... the whole universe is *actively* enfolded to some degree in each of its parts. Because the whole is enfolded in each part, so are all the other parts, in some way and to some degree. Hence, the mechanistic picture, according to which the parts are only externally related to each other, is denied.

That is, it is denied to be the primary truth; external relatedness is a secondary, derivative truth, applicable only to the secondary order of things which I call the explicate or unfolded order.³⁷

In essence, Bohm turns the mechanistic world-view upside down. Rather than attempting to understand the whole by reducing matter to its most elementary parts, Bohm asserts that what he calls “postmodern physics” must begin with the whole. By turning the supposition as to the nature of the primary reality on its head, Bohm is proposing a radical reformulation of the discipline: one which, in its assumptions, resonates with the assertions of mystical and esoteric teachings throughout the ages.

As astonishing and intriguing as these views about the unity of the Universe are, the concept of non-locality represents perhaps the most revolutionary development in modern physics’ fantastic history. Einstein famously opposed quantum theory and was particularly convinced of its deficiencies because it implied “non-local effects” or “action at a distance”—which he regarded as an absurdity. In 1935, Einstein and his colleagues, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen, devised a thought experiment to illustrate quantum theory’s incompleteness. The so-called “EPR paradox” posed the seemingly impossible existence of instantaneous communication of information—beyond the speed of light—which emerged from a singularity condition. In 1964, physicist John Bell tested the EPR paradox; assuming that reality is local and that measurement of one particle could not affect its paired particle. But Bell’s results revealed that his assumption of locality was incorrect. Consequently, non-locality became a baffling, unsettling, and highly disturbing yet incontrovertible quantum fact. Further research has upheld Bell’s work; as unsettling as the concept of non-locality may be, it is here to stay. On that basis, physicist Nick Herbert maintains that any theory in physics, which does not include non-local effects, is incomplete. Nevertheless, Herbert also notes the decidedly “unscientific” stubborn resistance to non-locality which prevails amongst physicists:

It’s difficult to convey to outsiders the distaste which the majority of physicists feel when they hear the word ‘non-locality.’ ... these guys so treasure locality that they are willing to deny reality itself before accepting a world that’s non-local.³⁸

Despite their radically different approaches, then, both scientists and mystics have concluded that our sense-based perceptions of the externally observable world are fundamentally incomplete and, therefore, illusory. Commenting on the illusory nature of the physical realm, Sir Arthur Eddington declared that “the exploration of the external world by the methods of physical science leads not to a concrete reality but rather to a shadow world of symbols”³⁹ That statement is intriguingly reminiscent of Plato’s depiction of the human condition in his famous tale of the cave: wherein he likened men to prisoners chained in a cave, unable to turn round and see the source of illumination behind them, and thus failing to understand that the externally observable figures on the wall before them are insubstantial—merely shadows. According to physicists, matter is almost totally comprised of empty space—but it is only when our senses are *extended by instrumentation*, providing a more comprehensive *order of scale*, that it is possible to understand this truth. According to the mystical/esoteric tradition, the material world is a projection of higher dimensions—but it is only by developing our dormant faculties of consciousness, acquiring *the instrument of receptivity* and experiencing *a more comprehensive scale of materiality and consciousness*, that we can understand the nature of our illusions. In each approach, then, “reality” is defined by a process of observation and relation, within an order of scale, through levels of meaning.

Māyā as a Lesser Degree of Reality

Even without this dissolution of the nature and primacy of matter in quantum physics, the materialist faces some rather exacting difficulties in conceptualizing, if not studying himself. That is, if he maintains that “he” is “nothing more” than the aggregate of material

processes and events, at what level of these processes and events does he assign meaning? How does he reconcile this level of interpretation with mind, self, being, soul, spirit, thought, imagination, emotion, identification and all the other aspects of himself that elude his touch. Typically, he has responded that human beings are “nothing but” and “nothing more” than biochemical mechanisms ... but biochemistry leads to molecules and thence to atoms, and from there ... to what we know is trouble. As Capra explained, the materialist cannot “go all the way” in his quest to reduce matter to its primary state without, in some sense, “knowing himself.” In light of that apparent road to ruin, there is something essentially untenable and incomplete about the scientist’s subscription to a mechanistic-reductionist-materialism as being *the way* to study reality objectively. Lama Anagarika Govinda—the twentieth century German philosopher who became a Tibetan Buddhist monk—poses the question of how objective reductionism can claim to be in this way:

If we examined a master-work of art, say a painting, with a microscope and come to the conclusion that it is nothing but some sort of fibrous matter combined with some coloured substance, and that all this can again be reduced to mere elementary vibrations—this would not bring us one step nearer to the phenomenon of beauty or to the understanding of its significance, its meaning or its message; it would only reveal the senselessness of such a philosophy of ‘nothing but-ism’ and its methods of ‘objective’ analysis. (In reality, reality it is neither ‘objective’, i.e., unprejudiced, nor

an analysis of the thing in question, *because it is an intentional arbitrary suppression of all non-material factors, without which the particular form and composition of matter could not exist.*)⁴⁰ [emphasis added]

We are turned round, like the prisoners in Plato’s cave, taking shadows for substance: without seeing them as projections; without understanding them as partial aspects of a more comprehensive whole; and without relating them to their source. Our understanding of consciousness, knowledge, and reality is partial, and therefore, illusory. As long as we fail to “relativize” each by connecting it with its higher dimensions, we live under the spell and divisions of *māyā*.

Indeed, it is this “intentional arbitrary suppression of all non-material factors” or the reduction of everything to “nothing but” material factors which comprises the materialists’ grand illusion that their science is objective and value-free. It is an indisputable truth that neither the Universe nor our own beings consist of merely what the senses reveal: that which we examine always represents a combination of ourselves with that which we observe. And that combination is much more complex and meaningful than materialist-mechanistic scientists

know or suspect. The precision that they have sought—by adhering to a method which ostensibly eliminates them from the observational process—demands the very opposite. By studying and understanding the extraordinary dynamics, linking levels of consciousness of the observer and levels of reality observed, it is possible to enter a new order of exactitude and meaning. But to do so means, at the very least, to accept that there may be higher levels of consciousness than our normal waking consciousness. And it is precisely the refusal to admit this possibility that is the essential flaw—the blindness—of the materialists’ approach. Seeking to reduce everything to simple material explanations, they arbitrarily suppress the possibility that “consciousness” may be something other than a phenomenon produced by the brain’s material processes, or that it may exist at levels above that which they experience and take for granted as final. Attached to

their senses, they live under the spell of illusion, or *māyā*. They interpret a partial or lower degree of reality as complete, without understanding that it is a projection of higher (more subtle) and more integrated levels of reality. Lama Govinda characterizes and explains the illusory quality of our normal waking state:

Compared with the highest or “absolute” reality, all forms, in which this reality appears to us, are illusory, because they are only partial aspects, and as such incomplete, *torn out of their organic connexions and deprived of their universal relationship*. The only reality, which we could call “absolute,” is that of the all-embracing whole. Each partial aspect must therefore constitute a lesser degree of reality—the less universal, the more illusory and impermanent.⁴¹ [emphasis added]

Lama Govinda continues by stating that “to a point-like consciousness the continuity of a line is inconceivable”⁴²—that is, the higher dimension of a line is invisible. Yet, from the perspective of this linear consciousness, a point-like consciousness is clearly visible; it is understood to be a subsidiary part of the whole defined by a line. To this linear or one-dimensional consciousness, however, the continuity of a plane—a two-dimensional consciousness—would also be inconceivable and invisible. Lama Govinda extends this analogy through the higher dimensions given by three-dimensional space consciousnesses, concluding that:

Thus, the consciousness of a higher dimension consists in *the co-ordinated and simultaneous perception of several systems of relationship or directions of movement, in a wider, more comprehensive unity, without destroying the individual characteristics of the integrated lower dimensions*. The reality of a lower dimension is therefore not annihilated by a higher one, but only “relativized” or put into another perspective of values.⁴³ [emphasis added]

Lama Govinda goes on to explain how the perception and co-ordination of the different phases in the movement of a point proceeding in one direction leads to the perception of a

straight line. Likewise, the perception and co-ordination of the phases of a straight line movement leads to the conception of a plane. The same process applied to a plane leads to the perception of a body, and in turn, when applied to a body, results in being conscious of its “inherent laws and mode of existence.” Succeeding steps in this ascending hierarchy yield: awareness of a conscious being’s individuality and psychic character; the law of *karma*; and finally, a consciousness of “supra-individual *karmic* interrelatedness”:

In short, we arrive at the perception of a cosmic world order, an infinite mutual relationship of all things, beings and events, until we finally realize the universality of consciousness in *Dharmakāya*, when attaining Enlightenment.

Seen from the consciousness of the *Dharmakāya*, all separate forms of appearance are *māyā*. *Māyā* in the deepest sense, however, is reality in its creative aspect, or the creative aspect of reality. Thus, *māyā* becomes the *cause* of illusion, but it is not illusion itself, as long as it is seen as a whole, in its continuity, its creative function, or as infinite power of transformation and universal relationship.

As soon, however, as we stop at any of its creations and try to limit it to a state of “being” or self-confined existence, we fall a prey to illusion, by taking the effect for the cause, the shadow for the substance, the particular aspect for the ultimate reality, the momentary for something that exists in itself.⁴⁴

Lama Govinda articulates the essence of the esoteric viewpoint: that the way to truth and contact with ultimate reality lies in the transformation of one’s being and consciousness. Doing so, it is at once “relativized”—through the co-ordination and simultaneous perception of the hierarchy of dimensions in which reality is manifested—and returns to that unity which is the source of all Creation. Of course, as long as we believe that we know ourselves ... as long as we take our normal state as the only consciousness possible for human beings ... as long as we deny the integral relationship be-

tween consciousness and our capacity to apprehend reality ... as long as we see meaning as nothing more than the end-product of our interaction with the world of our senses ... as long as we regard the Universe as nothing but the culmination of a process in which simple matter has blindly evolved into increasing complexity, life, and consciousness ... as long as we entertain the rather presumptuous conceit that there is no intelligence in the Universe superior to our own ... then we live in *māyā*. We are turned round, like the prisoners in Plato's cave, taking shadows for substance: without seeing them as projections; without understanding them as partial aspects of a more comprehensive whole; and without relating them to their source. Our understanding of consciousness, knowledge, and reality is partial, and therefore, illusory. As long as we fail to "relativize" each by connecting it with its higher dimensions, we live under the spell and divisions of *māyā*.

The Great Nest of Being

Ken Wilber is a contemporary consciousness theorist whose work involves a scholarly and insightful appreciation of the mystical-esoteric tradition. A prolific writer, Wilber's impressive body of work involves an attempt to develop a model of consciousness by incorporating esoteric spirituality, philosophy, psychology and modern science in a comprehensive synthesis. In his book, *The Marriage Of Sense And Soul: Integrating Science And Religion*, Wilber presents a concise and intriguing analysis of the conflict between religion and science in which he argues that much of the supposed antagonism between the two approaches to knowing reality represents a failure to understand that they are grounded in two distinct and radically different epistemologies. In addition, Wilber exposes materialist scientists' self-serving misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the meaning of empiricism and the scientific method. He argues that they cannot claim that their pronouncements on all matters pertaining to the inner domains of being and the subtle realms of reality are based on science—because materialist science long ago banished from consideration all *interior dimensions of reality*. Instead, Wilber ar-

gues for epistemological pluralism: the recognition that there are three fundamental modes of knowing that, when taken together, yield the most comprehensive apprehension of the self and the cosmos. On that basis, he contends that esotericism must be recognized as a science of consciousness and being. Finally, in discussing the collapse of "the Great Chain of Being," Wilber reveals an aspect of materialist reductionism which is generally overlooked—even by its most vocal critics.

The concept of the Great Chain of Being—a hierarchical conceptualization of consciousness, being, and the cosmos—has been consistently articulated in various spiritual and esoteric teachings throughout the ages. In his classic work, *The Great Chain of Being*, Arthur Lovejoy described it as having "been the dominant official philosophy of the larger part of civilized humankind through most of its history."⁴⁵ Houston Smith—perhaps the foremost contemporary authority on comparative religion—states that virtually all the great wisdom traditions have subscribed to the concept of the great chain as "a hierarchy of being and knowing." Noting the inadequacies of the metaphor of a "Great Chain," Wilber proposes that these hierarchies should be more appropriately labeled a "Great Nest." Thus, he characterizes these different levels of consciousness as constituting "nested hierarchies": in which each of the lower levels, while possessing its unique characteristics and laws, is subsumed by those levels above it. As such, the higher levels contain and inform those levels below which remain intact. Furthermore, as each level of human consciousness is "nested" within those above it, so too are the different dimensions of Creation. Hence, the esoteric maxim asserts that: "man is a microcosm of the macrocosm." This means that, within human beings—their "inner Universe"—there exists a "cosmos" which mirrors the essential principles and structure of the external cosmos.

In essence, the view put forth is that of a nested hierarchy of different levels of being, in which each higher level both *transcends* and *includes* that which is lower. Wilber describes this position to mean that:

... reality is a rich tapestry of interwoven levels, *reaching from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit*. Each senior level “envelops” or “enfolds” its junior dimensions—a series of nests within nests of Being—so that everything, and event in the world is interwoven with every other, and all are ultimately enveloped and enfolded by Spirit, by God, by Goddess, by Tao, by Brahman, by the Absolute itself.⁴⁶

While the number of levels within the Great Nest may be divided in different ways in different traditions—from three to five to seven to the twelve that Plotinus describes—Wilber states that there is widespread recognition that there are, at the very least, three distinct levels. Thus, in Buddhism and Hinduism, there exist the three great stages of being: *gross* (matter and body); *subtle* (mind and soul); and *causal* (spirit). No matter what model one considers, Wilber states that the fundamental idea recurs throughout various esoteric teachings and wisdom traditions:

Reality is a series of nests within nests within nests, reaching from matter to mind to Spirit, with the result that all beings and all levels were ultimately enfolded in the all-pervasive and loving embrace of an ever-present Spirit.⁴⁷

Wilber explains that the post-Enlightenment, modern West “became the first major civilization in the history of humanity to deny almost entirely the existence of the Great Nest of Being.”⁴⁸ When scientific materialism became “the dominant official philosophy of the modern West,”⁴⁹ the Great Nest—a ladder of Creation which ascended from matter to God—collapsed into the “flatland” of matter. Describing the essential consequences of the triumph of materialism, Wilber states:

According to scientific materialism, the Great Nest of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit could be thoroughly and rudely reduced to systems of matter alone; and matter—whether in the material brain or material process systems—would account for all of reality, without remainder.⁵⁰

Max Weber summarized this transformation of worldviews—which led to “the death of God,”

the replacement of quality with quantity, the loss of value and meaning, the denial of the significance of experience, and a host of other materialist secular assumptions—by characterizing it as “the disenchantment of the world.” Lewis Mumford coined the memorable phrase, “the disqualified universe,” to describe the fulfillment of Galileo’s objective of reducing all aspects of “reality” to only that which the senses can apprehend and that which can be measured.

The Three Eyes of Knowing

Despite the enduring and significant problems created by the collapse of the Great Nest, Wilber points out that there have been numerous significant advances and positive developments which have accompanied the emergence of Western modernity: such as the establishing of liberal democracies; widespread ideals of equality, freedom, and justice for all; modern medicine, physics, biology, and chemistry; the end of slavery; and the rise of feminism, amongst others. In attempting to define modernity, Wilber notes that various scholars—including Max Weber and Jurgen Habermas—have identified “the differentiation of the cultural value spheres” as its essential feature; particularly, the differentiation of the domains of the arts, morals, and science. Prior to the Enlightenment, each of these spheres was “fused,” and; therefore, a scientist such as Galileo could not freely report that which he had observed or his theories because art and morals and science were all under the Church’s authority. With the rise of modernity, each sphere freed itself from the Church and became a distinct domain, free to develop at its own pace, using its own tools, and no longer fearful of the intrusions from other spheres. This differentiation led to science being able to pursue truth on its own terms, without interference from religious or state authority. Similarly, artists and moral theorists pursued their aims without fear of being sanctioned or suppressed by the Church or the state. The fulfillment of this differentiation is what Wilber terms “the dignity of modernity.” It is this differentiation which freed science from the Church’s condemnation; liberating it to

search for truth in terms of its own methods, standards, and protocols.

By contrast, Wilber argues that the “bad news” of modernity was that differentiation “went too far into actual *dissociation*, fragmentation, alienation.”⁵¹ Scientific materialism’s dominance became so thorough and so unquestioned within its own ranks that it devolved into “scientism”—as evidenced by its adherents’ dismissal of all other value spheres as being worthless or illusory. Accordingly, Wilber says, scientific materialism “*pronounced the Great Chain of Being to be non-existent.*”⁵² He describes the results of this wholly arbitrary and decidedly unscientific declaration:

Gone was mind and gone was soul and gone was Spirit—gone, in fact, was the entire Great Chain, except for its pitiful bottom rung—and in its place, as Whitehead famously lamented, there was reality as “a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless; merely the hurrying of material endlessly, meaninglessly.”⁵³

To fully understand the significance of the “disaster of modernity,” Wilber argues that it must be understood within the context of scientific materialism’s simultaneous rejection of not just the Great Nest, but also “epistemological pluralism.” Scientific materialism routinely asserts that it represents the most reliable and objective means of knowing. In order to expose the dogmatic nature of that assumption, Wilber undertakes an examination of the traditional conceptualization of the three ways of knowing—the *eye of the flesh*, the *eye of the mind*, and the *eye of contemplation*—as articulated by Christian mystics such as Bonaventure and Hugh of St. Victor. Each of these modes of knowing, he explains, discloses its own dimension of being: respectively, *gross*, *subtle*, and *causal*. Further, the realities apprehended by each mode, when taken together, yield a balance of *empirical knowledge* (science), *rational knowledge* (logic and mathematics), and *spiritual knowledge* (gnosis).

In elaborating on the distinction between the three eyes, Wilber characterizes the eye of the flesh as being *monological*, the eye of the mind

as being *dialogical*, and the eye of the spirit as being *translogical*. The eye of the flesh is monological: speaking to oneself, in so far as it deals with objects and things in the external world—various “Its”—whether they are rocks, stars, kidneys, atoms, or gases. One does not talk to objects or things; one simply apprehends them through the senses or through instruments that extend the senses—such as microscopes, electroencephalograms, and telescopes. The eye of the mind is dialogical—insofar as the attempt to interpret the meaning of symbols involves an exchange of ideas. The act of interpretation does not involve treating the author of a text or a formula as an *object*—such as a rock or a star—but rather as a *subject*, with whom one would converse if he or she were present. There is a presumption of an operative intelligence which has devised language, mathematics or logic and which could amplify upon its meaning or revise it in response to another speaker’s commentary. Translogical refers to that which transcends the rational, the logical, and the mental. The eye of the spirit is translogical: in that it sees *beyond the reach of the senses and mental functioning*, apprehending through gnosis—a direct non-dualistic knowing—that which is revealed only to the eye of contemplation.

Wilber notes that it is common amongst many of those who identify themselves as proponents of a “new [scientific] paradigm” to disclaim the validity of the mechanistic Newtonian-Cartesian worldview in which the Universe is conceptualized as being atomistic, fragmented, and divided. They note the similarities between the holistic perspectives of the wisdom traditions, and the “web of life” views that have arisen from systems and complexity theory, relativity and quantum mechanics. Doing so, they herald the creation of a new quantum self/quantum society holistic paradigm which will be ushered in by science itself. But Wilber argues that such arguments miss the point entirely about the essential limitations of all of these scientific perspectives: that they are all *monological*. They are all based on that which is grounded in sensory apprehension. Thus, he states:

... the real problem of our modern fragmentation is not that empirical science is atomistic rather than systems-oriented; the real problem is that *all higher modes of knowing have been brutally collapsed into monological and empirical science*. Both atomism and systems theory are monological/empirical, and *it is the reduction of all knowledge to monological modes that constitutes the disaster of modernity*.⁵⁴

In further analyzing the “disaster of modernity,” Wilber focuses on the significance of the different types of language which are spoken in the spheres of arts, morals, and science. He notes that the expressive-aesthetic language of the arts is an “I” language, while that of morals is a “We” language, and that of objective science is an “It” language. With the modern differentiation of the three spheres, Wilber claims that they became the realms of the I, the We, and the It; each being insulated from the others and allowing for the dignified pursuit of its own truths on its own terms. But, as noted, this differentiation—which Wilber says began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—began to devolve into a “pathological dissociation” as the stunning ascendancy of monological materialist science resulted in its dominance of “serious discourse in the Western world.”⁵⁵ As a result, Wilber says, “the I and the WE were colonized by the IT”⁵⁶ and materialist science’s monological truth:

... became grandiose in its own conceit and cancerous in its relations to others. Full of itself and flush with stunning victories, empirical science became *scientism*, the belief that there is no reality save that revealed by science, and no truth save that which science delivers. The subjective and interior domains—the I and the WE—were flattened into objective, exterior, empirical processes, either atomistic or systems. Consciousness itself, and the mind and the heart and the soul of humankind, could not be seen with a microscope, a telescope, a cloud chamber, a photographic plate, and so all were pronounced epiphenomenal at best, illusory at worst.

The entire interior dimensions ... were dismissed by monological science because

none of them could be registered by the eye of the flesh or empirical instruments. Art and morals and contemplation and spirit were all demolished by the scientific bull in the china shop of consciousness. And there was the disaster of modernity.⁵⁷

According to Wilber, the problem with modern materialist science is not that it is atomistic; on the contrary, he asserts that it was basically holistic from its inception. No, the problem is that it is a “*flatland holism*” which deals with Its and *nothing but Its*. Within that flatland, there are no “I”s or “We”s interwoven Its”⁵⁸—which scientists assure us provides the most objective and comprehensive understanding and description of reality.

The triumph of materialist monological science meant that only that which could be described in valueless, empirical, process It-language was real and meaningful. Whitehead described such Its as having simple location: you can apprehend them with your senses or, literally, put your finger on them. But, as Wilber points out, you cannot put your finger on compassion or consciousness ... or honor or value or justice—none of the interior dimensions of I and We—because they do not have simple location. Nevertheless, under the imperial rule of materialist science, all interior dimensions were reduced to exterior Its. As R.D. Laing argued, this is the fulfillment of Galileo’s vision: a world in which only that which is quantifiable is real. Never mind that it represented what Laing terms a “*most profound corruption*” of the Greek view of Nature as being alive, dynamic, and integrally related to human consciousness and being. Ironically, then, it is Galileo—the fabled victim of religious persecution by those too ignorant and fearful to overcome their dogmatism and attempt to understand the Universe as it is, rather than how it is supposed to be—who himself prescribed an epistemological monopoly which was fulfilled in the disaster of the modern scientific mind.

Wilber concludes that when modern science rejected the reality of the interior domains, it effectively rejected the Great Chain of Being “because all of the levels of the Great Chain except the lowest (the material body) happen

to be *interior realities* of the I and the WE, of the subjective and interior-subjective domains.”⁵⁹ In turn, this rejection constituted the rejection of spiritual teachings and the wisdom traditions. Moreover, it did away with all questions regarding the relationship between interior and exterior realities; there is no need to relate the substantial reality of that which is externally observable to that which is internal, insubstantial, and unreal. Wilber succinctly and poignantly summarizes the effects of the rejection of the Great Chain of Being to mean that:

... all interiors were reduced to exteriors. All subjects were reduced to objects; all depth was reduced to surfaces; all I's and all WE's were reduced to ITS; all quality was reduced to quantity; levels of significance were reduced to levels of size; value was reduced to veneer; all translogical and dialogical were reduced to monological. Gone the eye of contemplation and gone the eye of mind—only data from the eye of the flesh would be accorded primary reality, because only sensory data possessed simple location, here in the desolate world of monochrome flatland.⁶⁰

Empiricism and “The Myth Of the Given”

Wilber argues forcefully and compellingly that scientific materialism's claim to be the most objective approach to studying and apprehending the nature of reality is not only fraudulent, but based on a blatant misrepresentation of the scientific method. He notes that empiricists—behaviorists, positivists, and materialist scientists—typically subscribe to what he terms “the myth of the given”: the contention “that the sensorimotor world is simply given to us in direct experience and that science carefully and systematically reports what it there finds.”⁶¹ But that view is a fantasy. As Wilber explains, philosophers of science are essentially unanimous in agreeing that this is most certainly *not* how scientists study and interpret anything. Nevertheless, by clinging to this myth, scientific materialists invoke its power and glory as the basis on which they

deny the significance of interior realities, including all spiritual influences and forces.

Continuing, Wilber asserts that exposing the myth of the given reveals *the necessity of recognizing the reality of interiors and the need to address the question of how interiors are related to that which is exterior*. He adds that science's rejection of interior knowledge is absurd—insofar as logic and mathematics are derived from interior knowledge. Any scientist who uses mathematics already knows that reality does not simply consist of that which is apprehended by the senses. For that reason, most scientists reject the myth of the given. Nevertheless, most scientists who subscribe to the materialist-mechanistic-reductionist perspective routinely make pronouncements about the nature of reality which reveal that they are tacitly and unequivocally subscribing to the myth of the given! Commenting on that paradoxical position, Wilber states that, while the subjective and inter-subjective domains are clearly integral to the development of scientific knowledge, *scientists seem to be in denial about what they do and how they do it*. Thus, he explains that:

... science approaches the empirical world with a massive conceptual apparatus containing everything from tensor calculus to imaginary numbers to extensive intersubjective linguistic signs to differential equations—virtually all of which are *nonempirical* structures found *only* in interior spaces—and then it astonishingly claims it is simply “reporting” what it “finds” out there in the “given” world—when, in fact all that is given is colored patches.”⁶²

Wilber states that empirical science can hardly deny the importance of these interior tools—given that its objective operations are dependent upon them. Yet, that is precisely what has happened with the degeneration of science into scientism: a denial of the interior domains, both subjective and intersubjective. Empirical science, in its most brutish forms, has simply rejected these interiors altogether because they cannot be accessed by the monological eye and sensorimotor methods. He then provides this scathing summary of the reductionist-

materialists' misrepresentations of what scientists do and how they do it:

This self-obliterating reductionism is not genuine science, it is simply science the village idiot. And, as everybody knows, it takes a village to raise a complete idiot—the village of collapsed modernity, in this case. Science becomes imperial scientism and falls into the simpleminded myth of the given, naively ascribing to its colored patches a great deal of what is found in the conceptual apparatus, whose existence it has just denied.⁶³

One of the most important aspects of “the myth of the given,” according to Wilber, is the idea that the “scientific method” deals only with “sensory empiricism”: that is only, the sensory domains or sensory experience. Although he acknowledges that, historically, empiricism has been associated with sensorimotor evidence, Wilber explains that there is certainly mental empiricism: for example, mathematics is grounded in interior mental experiences, perceptions, and processes. Similarly, the wisdom traditions are premised on the rigorous and systematic observation and examination of the interior domains of consciousness and being. To be an empiricist means, then, that one demands *evidence* to verify pronouncements of truth, rather than accepting assertions on the basis of dogma or faith. Consequently, Wilber asserts that there is “*sensory empiricism* (of the sensorimotor world), *mental empiricism* (including logic, mathematics, semiotics, phenomenology, and hermeneutics), and *spiritual empiricism* (experiential mysticism, spiritual experiences.)”⁶⁴ There is evidence that is apprehended through the eye of the flesh, the eye of the mind, and the eye of contemplation; there is monological, dialogical, and trans-logical science. If we extend empiricism to the interior domains, we then have “a science of sensory experience, a science of mental experience, and a science of spiritual experience”⁶⁵

A “Spiritual Science”

In developing his argument for a spiritual science, Wilber asserts that there are three essential aspects of the scientific method: that

which he terms the “three strands of all valid knowing.” They consist of: (1) *an instrumental injunction*; (2) *a direct apprehension*; and (3) *a communal confirmation or rejection*. The injunction involves a practice, an experiment ... a directive that says: “If you want to know this, do this.” The direct apprehension is “an immediate experience of the domain brought forth by the injunction”⁶⁶ Communal confirmation is “a checking of the results—the data, the evidence—with others who have adequately completed the injunctive and apprehensive strands.”⁶⁷ Authentic spirituality must be falsifiable, Wilber argues. As such it cannot be imaginal, mythic, mythological or mythopoeic. But insofar as it apprehends the world through the eye of contemplation and fulfills these three strands, a religious or spiritual teaching is “*a science of spiritual experience*.”⁶⁸

When we examine the great religious and spiritual traditions, Wilber notes, we find that their founders underwent a profound *spiritual experience*. Their experiences involved “direct union or even identity of the individual and Spirit”⁶⁹ And that realization conferred “a great liberation, rebirth, metanoia, or enlightenment on the soul fortunate enough to be immersed in that extraordinary union”⁷⁰ Rather than imparting a series of dogmatic beliefs, these spiritual pioneers gave their followers practices, disciplines, methods, *instrumental injunctions*. Wilber describes the “do this” injunctions as including:

... specific types of contemplative prayer, extensive instructions for yoga, specific meditation practices, and actual interior exemplars: if you want to *know* this Divine union, you must *do* this.

These injunctions reproduced in the disciples the spiritual experiences or the spiritual data of the evolutionary pioneers. In the course of subsequent interior experiments (over the decades and sometimes centuries), these injunctions and data were often refined and sophisticated, with initial or preliminary methods and data polished in the direction of more astute observations.⁷¹

To answer the question, then—“does Spirit exist?”—Wilber states that the answer is straight forward and clear: “Take up the injunction, perform the experiment, gather the data (the experiences), and check them with a community of the similarly adequate.”⁷² As he explains, you cannot mentally or verbally or rationally answer the question; you have to take up the injunction. Otherwise, you are attempting to apprehend with the eye of the mind that which can only be seen or stated with the eye of contemplation. This is precisely what scientific materialists have failed to grasp and which, in light of the esoteric tradition’s adherence to this protocol, reveals all of their pronouncements about consciousness, the soul, Spirit, and God to be transparently ill-informed and dogmatic assertions of their own beliefs—in other words, *nothing but* and *nothing more* than unsubstantiated subjective statements. They have not done the experiments; they have no knowledge of the results that those who have done them have attained; and they are unaware of the communities of those possessing this expertise. Nevertheless, Wilber explains:

The great and secret message of the experimental mystics the world over is that, with the eye of contemplation, Spirit can be seen. With the eye of contemplation, God can be seen. With the eye of contemplation, the great Within radiantly unfolds.⁷³

Concluding Remarks

There exists a profound disconnection between scientific knowledge and the continued reign of the materialist-mechanistic-reductionist paradigm. Indeed, in light of physicists’ discoveries about the inadequacies of the material-mechanistic model in conceptualizing the physical Universe and the unequivocal limitations of reductionism in studying and analyzing it, the extent to which the materialist paradigm continues to dominate scientific research is perplexing. Despite the astonishing implications of quantum theory, most scientists continue to adhere to a materialist perspective of both the Universe and themselves—one which has been unequivocally disproved.

Within the life sciences, the continued application of the materialist paradigm and enduring faith in reductionism leads biologists to evince an exaggerated faith in the explanatory power of genes and psychologists to regard neurons as somehow harboring the key to unraveling the mysteries of consciousness. Such views attest to the power of habitual thinking—even within science—and the resistance to revisiting and re-examining the assumptive framework which underlies conventional knowledge and understanding.

Ken Wilber’s claim about the “disaster of modernity”—wherein the triumph of science has collapsed the Great Chain into the flatland of scientific materialism—identifies the wholly arbitrary and indefensible denial of the significance of all interior domains. Scientific materialism begat “the myth of the given” and “the myth of the scientific method” which, in turn, begat scientism. As a result, psychologists and scientists have pursued the study of consciousness in terms of a materialist-mechanistic-reductionist paradigm which addresses only that which is externally observable. Because materialists conceive of the Universe as being nothing but the manifestation of insentient matter and energy—devoid of intelligence, purpose, meaning, and Spirit—they have concluded that consciousness must be generated by the human brain. In doing so, human consciousness has been torn out of its organic connections and universal relationship.

In the next article in this series, an esoteric model of consciousness—that of G.I. Gurdjieff’s Fourth Way teaching—will be presented and evaluated as a reply to the deficiencies of the materialist paradigm. Gurdjieff’s conceptualization of consciousness will be contrasted with that of modern psychology, and assessed in terms of its potential to accommodate the most startling advances in physics, as well as those altered states of consciousness about which modern psychology remains, for the most part, tellingly mute. Finally, Gurdjieff’s startling claim—that the separation of psychology and cosmology is essentially arbitrary and untenable—will be explicated with the purpose of suggesting the basis for a radical re-

conceptualization of the origins and nature of human consciousness.

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- 2 Floyd Matson, *The Broken Image: Man, Science and Society* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964); Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost in the Machine* (London, ENG: Hutchinson of London, 1967); Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972).
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Symbolic Interpretation of the Book of Job: A Poem of Initiation

Zachary F. Lansdowne

Abstract

The *Book of Job*, one of the books of the Hebrew Bible, tells the story of a man named Job: his tests brought about by Satan, his argument with three friends on the meaning of his suffering, a sermon from another speaker, and a response from God. The traditional approach of interpreting the story is to accept its literal presentation. This article, however, considers the elements of the story to be symbols that signify psychological or philosophical referents, so that the story depicts the tests and crisis of what Theosophy calls the “third initiation.”

The Book of Job

The *Book of Job* has been heralded as a masterpiece, and is included in lists of the greatest books in world literature.¹ Ezekiel (14:14, 20), written early in the sixth century BCE, cites Job as an historical figure, and makes the only references to him in the Hebrew Bible outside of the book that bears his name. James (5:11) also cites Job as an historical figure, and makes the only reference to him in the New Testament. A passage from Job (5:13) is quoted by the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 3:19), using the usual form of quoting scripture, “For it is written,” thereby showing that early Christians regarded this book as inspired scripture.

The *Patriarchal Age* is the period during which the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are thought to have lived. Roy Zuck, a Christian theologian, provides evidence that Job is described as living during the Patriarchal Age:

1. Job lived 140 years after his calamities (Job 42:16) so he may have lived to about

210. This corresponds roughly to the length of the Patriarchs’ lives.

2. Job’s wealth was reckoned in livestock (Job 1:3; 42:12), which was also true of Abraham (Genesis 12:16; 13:2), and Jacob (Genesis 30:43; 32:5).

3. The Hebrew word *qesîṭâh*, translated “piece of silver” (Job 42:11), is used elsewhere only twice (Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32), both times in reference to Jacob.

4. Job’s daughters were heirs to his estate along with their brothers (Job 42:15). This, however, was not possible later under the Mosaic Law if a daughter’s brothers were still living (Numbers 27:8).

5. The *Book of Job* includes no references to the Mosaic institutions (priesthood, laws, tabernacle, special religious days, and feasts).

6. Several personal and place names in the book were also associated with the Patriarchal Age.²

Some scholars argue that the *Book of Job* was written by Job himself during the Patriarchal Age (2100 – 1900 BCE), because the recorded conversations give the impression of an eyewitness account. Other scholars believe that the linguistic evidence of its text indicates that

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the book was written centuries later. Although the Jewish tradition considers the author to be Moses (1391–1271 BCE), some argue for Solomon (970 – 931 BCE), because of a few similarities to Proverbs, but others suggest Isaiah (731 – 681 BCE), because of a few similarities to the latter’s writings. Thus the author and date of the book are shrouded in mystery.³

This article contrasts two interpretative approaches to the *Book of Job*: the traditional approach, which accepts the story as it is literally presented; and the symbolic approach, which identifies the book’s symbols and their associated referents. The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* provides the traditional views of the book’s meaning:

Through the years, many purposes have been suggested for the book. Perhaps the one that has been mentioned more often than any other is that of answering the question of why the righteous suffer. Certainly this question was prominent in Job’s day, for ancient society believed that human suffering was the result of one’s sin or at least a God’s displeasure. Even the meaning of the name Job (the persecuted one) seems to support this suggestion, but that may not be all that is involved in the book. Another popular suggestion is that the book has been preserved to illustrate for us the nature of true faith both from the point of view of people and of God.⁴

Helena Blavatsky (1831 – 1891), founder of the Theosophical Society, offers a radically different view: “The *Book of Job* is a complete representation of ancient initiation and the trials which generally precede this grandest of all ceremonies.”⁵ She speaks of “the *Book of Job*, a Kabalistic treatise on Egypto-Arabic Initiation, the symbolism of which conceals the highest spiritual mysteries,”⁶ showing that her interpretation of the book is based on taking its elements as symbols. Blavatsky quotes and then comments on Job 38:17:

“Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?” Thus asks the “Lord, the Hierophant, the Al-om-jah, the Initiator of Job, alluding to this third degree of Initia-

tion. For the *Book of Job* is the poem of Initiation *par excellence*.⁷

The word *Hierophant*, which comes from Ancient Greece, denotes the conductor of an initiation, and the word *Al-om-jah* denotes the highest Hierophant in Ancient Egypt. Blavatsky regards the “Lord,” who is the speaker of the verse, as “the Hierophant, the Al-om-jah, the Initiator of Job,” and regards Job as undergoing the “third degree of Initiation,” but what does that mean?

Alice Bailey (1880 – 1949), a modern theosophical author, considers each initiation as marking a point of attainment. She characterizes the achievement of what Theosophy calls the “third initiation” in the following way: “Freedom from the ancient authority of the threefold personality,”⁸ in which the threefold personality consists of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies.

Blavatsky provides only a brief account of how the *Book of Job* could be viewed as a poem of initiation. This article, however, presents a detailed symbolic analysis that corroborates her conclusion, and covers the following initiatory stages: the tests, occult blindness, internal and external conflicts, inner purification, crisis of the third initiation, and aftermath.

All Biblical quotations in this article are from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.⁹ The NKJV updates the vocabulary and grammar of the King James Version, which was completed in 1611, while preserving its classic style. A few verses are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is another modern translation.¹⁰

Prologue: Chapters 1 and 2

Norman Habel, Professor of Biblical Studies, describes the basic structure of the book’s 42 chapters: “It has generally been accepted that the book of Job consists of two basic parts—a prologue and an epilogue in prose form which together constitute a discrete story framework (chs. 1-2; 42:7-17), and an extended dialogue in poetic form which represents the author’s contribution to Israelite thought (3:1-42:6).”¹¹

Chapters 1 and 2 constitute the prologue: the LORD boasts about Job's character and allows Satan to test it. Job's tests include losing his wealth and ten children as well as incurring a horrible skin disease. Let us consider in detail verses 1:6-12:

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.⁷ And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."⁸ Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"⁹ So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.¹¹ But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Several exalted beings are mentioned in these verses. The "LORD," written entirely with capital letters in the NKJV, substitutes for the Hebrew name *YHWH*, which means "the self-existent One."¹² Following an earlier quotation from Blavatsky, the LORD is taken as the Hierophant for the third initiation. Bailey provides additional information about this Hierophant:

It is only at the third initiation that the great Hierophant, the Lord of the World, Himself officiates. It is the first at which He contacts the initiate.¹³

The Lord of the World, the One Initiator, He Who is called in the Bible "The Ancient of Days," and in the Hindu Scriptures the First Kumara, He, Sanat Kumara it is, Who from His throne at Shamballa in the Gobi desert, presides over the Lodge of Masters.¹⁴

Thus the LORD is said to have the following roles: Hierophant, for what Theosophy regards as the major initiations, starting with the third initiation; Ancient of Days, who is mentioned in Daniel 7:9-10; Sanat Kumara, a Sanskrit name that means "Eternal Youth," who is mentioned in both the *Mahabharata* and *Chandogya Upanishad* of Hinduism;¹⁵ and King of Shamballa (also spelled Shambhala), which is the mythical kingdom described in the *Kalachakra Tantra* of Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁶ The LORD's reported association with Theosophy, Hinduism, and Buddhism may explain the similarity of the initiatory processes that are found in those systems.¹⁷

"God" is a translation of the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which means "the One who is the totality of powers, forces and causes in the universe."¹⁸ Do these two words, LORD and God, represent the same concept or can they be differentiated? Bailey gives this definition: "The Being Who is the life of our planet, the One in Whom we live and move and have our being. This being, or sum total of organised lives is sometimes called the planetary Logos, ... sometimes God, and sometimes the One Life."¹⁹ Bailey also speaks of "the manifested form of the planetary Logos in the Person of Sanat Kumara."²⁰ Thus, from a theosophical perspective, these words denote similar but slightly different concepts: God can be understood as the planetary Logos, and the LORD as the manifested form of the planetary Logos.

"The sons of God" are depicted in verse 1:6 as presenting themselves before the LORD. A previous quotation describes "the Lodge of Masters" as being presided over by Sanat Kumara, who is thought to be the same as the LORD, so "the sons of God" are taken to be "the Lodge of Masters."

"Satan," which literally means "the adversary" (Numbers 22:22), has various connotations in the Bible. In the *Book of Job*, Satan belongs to the Lodge of Masters according to 1:6, and is responsible for Job's tests according to 1:12. Bailey speaks of "The Guru or Master who leads a pupil up to the door of initiation and who watches over him in all the initial and subsequent tests and processes,"²¹ so Satan

appears to be the Guru or Master who has been assigned to Job from the Lodge of Masters. Bailey describes the role of such a Teacher:

Then the Teacher stands aside and watches the aspirant achieve. As He watches, He recognises points of crisis, where the application of a test will do one of two things, focalise and disperse any remaining unconquered evil—if that term might here be used—and demonstrate to the disciple both his weakness and his strength. In the great initiations, the same procedure can be seen, and the ability of the disciple to pass these greater tests and stages is dependent upon his ability to meet and surmount the daily lesser ones.²²

The LORD characterizes Job as “a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (1:8), so perhaps he does not have any flaws. Moses Maimonides (1135 – 1204), a medieval Jewish philosopher, perceives Job to be a person with moral virtue but not wisdom, implying that he does have something to learn:

The most marvelous and extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that knowledge is not attributed in it to *Job*. He is not said to be a *wise* or *comprehending* or an *intelligent man*. Only moral virtue and righteousness in action are ascribed to him. For if he had been *wise*, his situation would not have been obscure to him, as will become clear.²³

Job’s Opening Soliloquy: Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is Job’s opening soliloquy and consists of two primary sections: his curse (3:3-10) and lament (3:11-26). Job’s curse calls for his birth to be negated, invokes forces of darkness, and sets himself against God. His lament expresses misery and bitterness. Let us consider in detail verses 3:23-24:

²³ *Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in?*

²⁴ *For my sighing comes before I eat, And my groanings pour out like water.*

Zuck interprets “the subject of light and darkness as indicative of life and death,”²⁴ so Job’s

question in the first part of 3:23 has this meaning: Why is life given to a man whose way, or path, is hidden? This question indicates that Job does not see where he is going. In other words, he is experiencing what is sometimes called “occult blindness.”

Bailey considers this condition to be the stage mentioned by the prophet Isaiah (45:3):

Blindness is a prelude to initiation of no matter what degree ... Occult blindness is spiritually induced and “blacks out” the glory and the promised attainment and reward. The disciple is thrown back upon himself. All he can see is his problem, his tiny field of experience, and his—to him—feeble and limited equipment. It is to this stage that the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of giving to the struggling aspirant “the treasures of darkness.” The beauty of the immediate, the glory of the present opportunity and the need to focus upon the task and service of the moment are the rewards of moving forward into the apparently impenetrable darkness.²⁵

In the second part of 3:23, Job ponders why God has given him both life and suffering, because his use of the word “hedged” indicates that he blames God for his suffering. In 3:24, Job observes himself with some detachment, because he describes both the timing of his sighing and a simile for his groaning. Thus Job’s occult blindness is already starting to yield two “treasures of darkness”: greater self-reliance, because he is pondering his own questions; and greater self-knowledge, because of his detached self-observation. Bailey gives this explanation:

In the loneliness which is the lot of every true disciple are born that self-knowledge and self-reliance which will fit him in his turn to be a Master. This loneliness is not due to any separative spirit but to the conditions of the Way itself.²⁶

The Friends’ Argument with Job: Chapters 4 through 27

Chapters 4 through 27 present an extensive argument between Job and three friends who are introduced in the following way:

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite” (2:11). Traditional commentators simply accept the story as it is literally presented in these chapters. For example, Tremper Longman, Professor of Biblical Studies, provides a brief summary of the traditional perspective:

Finally, the silence is broken by Job, who utters a heartrending lament, bemoaning his condition and wishing he would die, indeed that he had never been born (Job 3). This lament transforms Job’s comforters into disputants as they argue over the cause of and solution to his suffering. This debate continues from Job 4 to Job 27 and takes place in three rounds with each of the three friends speaking in turn with Job responding to them individually.²⁷

Job’s three friends, called “comforters” in the above quotation, have unusual characteristics that raise questions, or paradoxes, about the traditional perspective. The first characteristic is that they make similar judgments, as shown by the following summaries:

1. *Righteous people prosper.* Eliphaz asks, “Remember now, who *ever* perished being innocent? Or where were the upright *ever* cut off?” (4:7). Bildad states, “Behold, God will not cast away the blameless” (8:20). Zophar counsels, “If iniquity *were* in your hand, *and you* put it far away, And would not let wickedness dwell in your tents; Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; ... And *your* life would be brighter than noonday” (11:14-17).

2. *Wicked people are punished.* Eliphaz states, “The wicked man writhes with pain all his days” (15:20). Bildad says, “The light of the wicked indeed goes out, And the flame of his fire does not shine” (18:5). Zophar asks, “Do you not know this of old, Since man was placed on earth, That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is *but* for a moment?” (20:4-5).

3. *Job’s affliction indicates his unrighteousness.* Eliphaz asks, “Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquity without end?” (22:5). Bildad asks, “You who tear yourself in anger, Shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed from its place?” (18:4). Zophar declares, “Know therefore that God exacts from you *Less* than your iniquity *deserves*” (11:6).

Because of this similarity among the three friends, Longman raises the following question:

The debate has four participants but really only two viewpoints. If there are differences between the arguments of the three friends, they are subtle at best. The three really represent one position, thus raising the question of why the book creates three rather than one debating partner for Job.²⁸

Stanley Diamond, an American poet and anthropologist, makes a key observation about Job’s friends: “They are not only interchangeable, but are interchangeable with Job himself.”²⁹ Indeed, Job himself speaks of changing places with his friends: “I also could talk as you do, if you were in my place; I could join words together against you, and shake my head at you” (16:4, NRSV). Diamond concludes, “The paradox is that the common values that motivate Job and his friends make it impossible for them to rely on each other or even to understand each other in their extreme moments even though, or rather because, they speak the same language.”³⁰

Charles Swindoll, Chancellor of the Dallas Theological Seminary, raises questions regarding the temperament of Job’s three friends:

Let me add here, *all three are legalistic.* They are judgmental and condemning. To a man, they resort to shame-based counsel. Sometimes you’ll shake your head and say, “How in the world could they say that? Why would they say something like that to somebody they called their friend?”³¹

Jack Kahn, Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, comments on the manner in which the three friends communicate:

Any group feeling which might have existed between Job and the comforters had been dissipated because they had failed to reach any common ground in their dispute. What transpired between them was scarcely dialogue; it was little more than collective monologue. The arguments were exhausted because the comforters had remained steadfast in their aim to compel Job to confess himself in the wrong, while Job remained steadfast in his aim to prove himself in the right. For all intents and purposes they had failed to communicate.³²

In this context, *communication as monologue* is characterized by condescension, dogmatism, coercion, self-defensiveness, and judgmentalism. *Communication as dialogue* is characterized by equality, open-mindedness, non-manipulative intent, empathy, and respect.³³ One would expect a dialogue to occur between friends, so why would Job and his three friends produce a collective monologue instead?

As shown by the foregoing observations, "Job's three friends" share these unusual characteristics: they make similar judgments, are interchangeable with Job, are condemning, and produce a collective monologue rather than a dialogue. These three friends do not seem to be independent human characters, but what else could they be? Bailey provides the following analysis of the friends based on the meaning of their Hebrew names:

Eliphaz the Temanite means "my God is gold," and also "the southern quarter," the opposite pole to the north. Gold is the symbol of material welfare, and the opposite pole to spirit is matter, therefore in this name we have symbolised the tangible outer form of man, actuated by desire for material possessions and comfort. Zophar the Naamathite means the "one who talks," and his theme is pleasantness, which is the interpretation given to the word "Naamathite." Here we have the desire body typified, with its longing for pleasantness, for happiness and for pleasure, and an indication of the constant and ceaseless call and voice of the sentient nature, to which we can all testify. Bildad the Shuhite represents the mental nature, the mind, signify-

ing as he does "contrition," which becomes possible only when the mind is beginning to be active (including the conscience). Shuhite means "prostration or helplessness," signifying that alone and unaided the mind can reveal but cannot help. Remorse and sorrow, involving memory, are the result of mental activity. Thus, in Job's three friends the three aspects of his lower nature stand revealed.³⁴

Bailey's insight is that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are actually symbols that represent Job's threefold personality, implying that Chapters 4 through 27 depict a heated *internal* argument rather than an *external* argument. William Wells, a Christian theologian, has a similar insight:

The Book of Job reads like an introspective study, which gives the book a modern feel. No other book of the Bible has this same quality. The entire story revolves around Job's internal struggle to reconcile a just God with unjustified suffering. Job's three friends and especially the mysterious Elihu at the end all reflect Job's own attitudes, beliefs and character. As a result, the extended dialogs have the quality of a heated internal argument.³⁵

Carl Jung (1875 – 1961), the eminent Swiss psychiatrist, characterizes inner conflict: "Neurosis is an inner cleavage—the state of being at war with oneself ... What drives people to war with themselves is the intuition or the knowledge that they consist of two persons in opposition to one another."³⁶ Jung gives these definitions: "The *persona* is ... a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual,"³⁷ "The *shadow* personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly."³⁸

Jung also gives this definition: "The *ego* is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness."³⁹ Murray Stein, a Jungian scholar, clarifies Jung's definition: "The term *ego* refers to one's experience of oneself as a center of willing, desiring, reflecting, and acting."⁴⁰ This

notion of ego is not equivalent to the personality, but is a center of consciousness that acts through or on the personality, and it may or may not identify with various parts of the personality, such as the persona and shadow. As explained next, Chapters 4 through 27 depict the internal argument that arises when Job's ego defends his persona against the attacks of his shadow. To simplify this exposition, Job's ego is denoted simply as Job.

Job says, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me" (29:14), showing that Job's persona is his self-image of being righteous. He says, "May my enemy be like the wicked, and may my opponent be like the unrighteous. For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts them off, when God takes away their lives?" (27:7-8, NRSV). Thus Job condemns unrighteous people as being "godless" and as deserving of God's punishment.

Job gives his reason for performing righteous duties: "For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty" (31:23, NRSV). Thus, by his own admission, Job is motivated by a fear of being punished rather than by a feeling of generosity or compassion towards the poor and weak. This verse illustrates a key psychological principle: condemning other people establishes the possibility of self-condemnation. *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM), a modern system of spiritual psychology, gives this explanation: "If you can condemn, you can be injured. For you have believed that you can injure, and the right you have established for yourself can be now used against you, till you lay it down as valueless, unwanted and unreal."⁴¹ Job, through his condemnation of other people for their unrighteousness, has accepted the belief that he de-

serves condemnation if evidence of his own unrighteousness were found.

Soon after being afflicted, Job states, "For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me" (3:25). Thus, even though Job claims to be righteous, his latent fear is that he would be punished for being unrighteous, so he must have a shadow that consists of suppressed judgments of his own unrighteousness. Job also says, "I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made them drop their prey from their teeth" (29:17, NRSV), which shows that he hates unrighteous people. This verse illustrates another key psychological principle: when Job hates unrighteous people, he is actually projecting his shadow onto them as a way of defending himself from it. Jung gives this explanation: "When [the patient] projects

negative qualities and therefore hates and loathes the object, he has to discover that he is projecting his own inferior side, his shadow, as it were, because he prefers to have an optimistic and one-sided image of himself."⁴²

Cognitive dissonance is a state of internal conflict and discomfort that occurs when one's existing belief is contradicted by new evidence. In Job's case, his self-image of being righteous, which is his persona, is contradicted by the new evidence of his affliction. Leon Festinger (1919 – 1989), an American social psychologist, states the following principle: "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance."⁴³

Job's speeches portray his efforts to reduce his cognitive dissonance. His strategy is to use

Helena Blavatsky ... founder of the Theosophical Society, offers a radically different view: "The *Book of Job* is a complete representation of ancient initiation and the trials which generally precede this grandest of all ceremonies." She speaks of "the *Book of Job*, a Kabalistic treatise on Egypto-Arabic Initiation, the symbolism of which conceals the highest spiritual mysteries," showing that her interpretation of the book is based on taking its elements as symbols.

consonant cognitions for defending and supporting his persona, as shown by the following examples. Job, although agreeing that God punishes the wicked, accuses God of being unjust in his case: “For He crushes me with a tempest, And multiplies my wounds without cause” (9:17). He accuses God of punishing him for the sins of his youth rather than for any present sin: “For you write bitter things against me, and make me reap the iniquities of my youth” (13:26, NRSV). In addition, he has a hope of future vindication, “See now, I have prepared *my* case, I know that I shall be vindicated” (13:18); affirms his righteousness, “My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside” (23:11); and accuses the three friends of allowing an evil spirit to speak through them, “With whose help have you uttered words, and whose spirit has come forth from you?” (26:4, NRSV).

Job’s strategy would work better if he could avoid environmental cues, or stimuli, that amplify his dissonant cognitions. He, however, cannot avoid such cues, because he is constantly shocked by the evidence of his affliction: “If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint; I will put off my sad countenance and be of good cheer,’ I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know you will not hold me innocent” (9:27-28, NRSV).

The friends’ speeches are the dissonant cognitions and include the judgments listed earlier. Diamond has this insight: “For there is nothing that Job’s friends say that Job himself has not said.”⁴⁴ For example, the friends say that righteous people prosper and wicked people are punished, but Job made the same judgments before he was afflicted (29:18-20; 31:3). The friends say that Job’s affliction indicates his unrighteousness. Job made the same judgment before his affliction: he regarded the outcasts of his community as “vile men,” about whom he said, “I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock” (30:1-8), but those outcasts had characteristics similar to his own after his affliction. For each judgment that Job made regarding someone’s circumstance, he accepted the belief that he deserved the same judgment if he ever found himself in a similar circumstance. The friends’ speeches rise out of Job’s shadow,

because they are the amplification of Job’s own suppressed judgments of his unrighteousness. Even though the amplified judgments are attacking his persona, Job accepts them as being true, because he had made the same judgmental attacks on other people.

Job’s and the friends’ speeches depict the internal argument that rages within Job’s mind: the consonant cognitions, which defend Job’s persona, oppose the dissonant cognitions, which attack it. These speeches depict a collective internal monologue, rather than a dialog, because there is no attempt to find common ground: Job tries to defend what he pretends to be against the threat of what he really thinks he is.

Let us examine how this internal argument ends in Chapter 27. Job says, “As God lives, *who* has taken away my justice, And the Almighty, *who* has made my soul bitter” (27:2), so he still blames God and still is full of bitterness. He also says, “My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go” (27:6), so he still supports his persona. Yet Job shows cognitive dissonance, because he says, “This is the portion of a wicked man with God, And the heritage of oppressors, received from the Almighty” (27:13), and then describes the wicked man’s fate as being much the same as his own plight.

Thus, in the final chapter of the argument, Job’s speech incorporates both consonant and dissonant cognitions, thereby blending the earlier conflicting monologues. This blending indicates that his strategy of dissonance reduction *has failed*. Consequently, according to Festinger’s principle, Job is motivated to seek another strategy for reducing his cognitive dissonance.

Poem on Wisdom: Chapter 28

Chapter 28 consists of a self-contained poem on wisdom. It has a tranquil and reflective tone that contrasts sharply with the argumentative and emotional style of the preceding and subsequent chapters. Habel mentions its controversial nature: “Job 28 is a brilliant but embarrassing poem for many commentators. It has been viewed as an erratic in-

trusion, an inspired intermezzo, a superfluous prelude, and an orthodox afterthought.”⁴⁵

According to this poem, human beings can mine for various kinds of treasures, such as silver and gold, but they cannot find wisdom, which is the greatest treasure, by searching for it in the natural world. So how can wisdom be found? The poem’s conclusion is: “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom, And to depart from evil *is* understanding” (28:28).

Nancy Detweiler, a Bible scholar, gives her interpretation: “I believe this chapter to be a depiction of the Holy Spirit teaching Job through his own intuitive thought processes.”⁴⁶ The Hebrew phrase *ruach hakodesh*, usually translated as “Holy Spirit,” appears in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature, but not in the *Book of Job*.⁴⁷ Is Detweiler’s interpretation compatible with the *Book of Job*, even though the phrase “Holy Spirit” does not appear in it?

The adjective “holy” indicates a divine source, and the noun “spirit” translates Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*) words that denote “wind” or “breath.” Job 32:8 provides a related concept: “But *there is* a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding.” The notion of the “Holy Spirit,” such as in John 14:26, seems equivalent to the “breath of the Almighty” in Job 32:8, because both breaths are regarded as coming from God and giving understanding. Thus Detweiler’s interpretation seems compatible with the intrinsic concepts of the *Book of Job*.

Chapter 28, however, could be interpreted in a second way: Job simply takes a break from his internal conflict, realizes that he lacks wisdom, and then thinks about what he has read or understood regarding wisdom. These two ways of interpreting this chapter are not mutually exclusive, and either way would support our subsequent analysis of the overall story.

Job’s Closing Soliloquy: Chapters 29 through 31

Chapters 29 through 31 comprise Job’s closing soliloquy. Chapter 29 is Job’s speech of remembrance in which he recalls how he was formerly treated by his fellow citizens, such as in verses 29:7-12 (NRSV):

⁷ When I went out to the gate of the city,
when I took my seat in the square,
⁸ the young men saw me and withdrew,
and the aged rose up and stood;
⁹ the nobles refrained from talking, and
laid their hands on their mouths;
¹⁰ the voices of princes were hushed, and
their tongues stuck to the roof of their
mouths.
¹¹ When the ear heard, it commended me,
and when the eye saw, it approved;
¹² because I delivered the poor who cried,
and the orphan who had no helper.

Chapter 30 is Job’s speech of lament in which he recounts how he is currently being treated, such as in verses 30:9-13 (NRSV):

⁹ And now they mock me in song; I am a
byword to them.
¹⁰ They abhor me, they keep aloof from me;
they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of
me.
¹¹ Because God has loosed my bowstring
and humbled me, they have cast off re-
straint in my presence.
¹² On my right hand the rabble rise up; they
send me sprawling, and build roads for my
ruin.
¹³ They break up my path, they promote my
calamity; no one restrains them.

Although Job has a skin disease (2:7), the foregoing verses indicate that he is primarily concerned with the change in the way that he is being treated by other people—a change brought about by his skin disease—rather than with his skin disease itself. Henry Ellison, a Bible scholar, makes a similar observation: “in the poem there is far less allusion to Job’s physical sufferings than has often been assumed. Job is concerned less with his physical pain than with his treatment by his relations, his fellow-townsmen, the mob and finally his friends.”⁴⁸

Why, then, does Job suffer? As indicated by the foregoing verses, Job craves honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Job gains pleasure when this craving is satisfied, as described in Chapter 29, but suffers when it is not satisfied, as described in Chapter 30. Even though these two experienc-

es are contrasted in successive chapters, Job does not acknowledge the following truth about himself: *his own craving causes his suffering*. This truth is related to what Buddhists call “The Second Noble Truth,” as the Buddha Dharma Education Association explains:

By watching people Buddha found out that the causes of suffering are craving and desire, and ignorance. The power of these things to cause all suffering is what Buddhists call The Second Noble Truth.⁴⁹

Why doesn’t Job acknowledge that his own craving causes his suffering? Acknowledging this truth would be acknowledging an unrighteous motivation, namely, the craving to receive honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Instead, Job blames his troubles on God in 30:11, quoted above, and also in 30: 21: “*But You have become cruel to me; With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.*”

Here is where the poem on wisdom in Chapter 28 plays an interesting role, because that poem ends with the statement, “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom” (28:28). As Zuck explains, to fear God means to “venerate and submit to” God,⁵⁰ so Job is not fearing God when he accuses God of cruelty and persecution. Thus, to maintain his self-image of being righteous, Job ignores both his unrighteous motivation and a principle of wisdom that he had embraced. The foregoing Buddhist quotation states that “the causes of suffering are craving and desire, and ignorance.” Correspondingly, Job’s suffering is caused by his craving to receive honor and respect for being righteous, his desire to defend and support his self-image of being righteous, and his willful ignorance of his hypocrisy.

Chapter 31 is Job’s effort to force God to break his silence, and includes this plea: “Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. *Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, That my Prosecutor had written a book!*” (31:35). In this plea, “one to hear me” appears to be someone like an arbiter or judge in a formal legal proceeding; “my mark” suggests that Job figuratively signs his statement of defense; and “my Prosecutor” indicates that Job considers God to

be his legal adversary. Zuck gives this explanation: “If Job were innocent, then God would be required, according to legal practice, to speak up and affirm it. If Job were guilty, then God would be expected to bring down the imprecations on him.”⁵¹

Thus, whether innocent or guilty, Job has invoked God’s answer. The final sentence in Chapter 31 is: “The words of Job are ended” (31:40), indicating that Job is waiting in silence to hear God’s answer. What will be the response?

Elihu’s Speeches: Chapters 32 through 37

Chapters 32 through 37 introduce a new speaker, Elihu, who is the only speaker in those chapters, starting with verses 32:1-4:

¹ So these three men ceased answering Job, because he *was* righteous in his own eyes. ² Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than God. ³ Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and *yet* had condemned Job. ⁴ Now because they *were* years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job.

Habel provides a traditional assessment of this new speaker: “Elihu, who is introduced to us as a hothead, but claims to be patient, perceptive, and wise, unknowingly discloses his true nature as a biased and brash fool in spite of his glib speech and florid apology.”⁵² Elihu, however, has some unusual characteristics that are not noted by traditional commentators.

Jacques Ellul (1912 – 1994), a French philosopher, analyzes Elihu’s four associated names given in 32:2:

Elihu means ‘He is my God.’ Virtually all Hebrew scholars agree that when the Hebrew for ‘he’ is used in the composition of a name, it always designates the God of Israel. Hence, Elihu means ‘YHWH is my God’ ... Elihu is called the son of Barachel, which means ‘Elohim has blessed him.’ Hence, Elihu is the son of the benediction

of God ... Elihu comes from the land of Buz, which in Hebrew refers to 'he who is despised.' It is the word which the prophet Isaiah uses to designate God's servant ... Finally, Elihu is of the family of Ram, which means 'from above,' in the sense of the heavens. Putting all this together we have Elihu, YHWH is my God, son of Elohim's blessing, bearing the title of the despised servant, and coming from the heavens.⁵³

Charles Fillmore (1854 – 1948), founder of the Unity School of Christianity, states, "Elihu of the book of Job represents the Holy Spirit."⁵⁴ This identification is supported by the foregoing analysis of Elihu's associated names as well as by additional evidence that is discussed next.

Elihu teaches the discernment of what is false, "Look, *in* this you are not righteous" (33:12), and teaches wisdom, "Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom" (33:33). Moreover, Elihu can bring to Job's remembrance what Job had said in the past: Elihu tells Job, "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, And I have heard the sound of *your* words" (33:8), and then quotes Job sixteen times in Chapters 33 through 36. Elihu's abilities to teach and bring to remembrance corroborate his identification with the Holy Spirit, because John 14:26 states: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

Elihu speaks about himself: "I will fetch my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. For truly my words *are* not false; One who is perfect in knowledge *is* with you" (36:3-4). Elihu also speaks about God: "Do you know how the clouds are balanced, Those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?" (37:16). Thus Elihu is an intermediary: his "words *are* not false" because he can fetch perfect knowledge from God. Elihu's abilities to speak truth and be an intermediary further corroborate his identification with the Holy Spirit, because John 16:13 states: "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He

will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak."

According to 32:4, Job's three friends "*were* years older" than Elihu. This statement is construed to mean that Job's threefold personality—symbolized by his three friends—exists in time, whereas the Holy Spirit—symbolized by Elihu—exists in eternity. Hebrews 9:14 likewise mentions "the eternal Spirit." Verse 32:4 also states that "Elihu had waited to speak to Job." In fact, Elihu had waited to speak until after Job invoked God's answer in 31:35, so Elihu's timing is consistent with him fulfilling the promise of James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Thus 32:4 provides further corroboration that Elihu symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

Verses 32:2-3 say that Elihu is "aroused against" both sides of the internal argument described in Chapters 4 through 27. As mentioned earlier, Elihu teaches the discernment of what is false, so both sides of this argument must be false. In other words, both Job's persona and shadow are illusions, or false beliefs. *ACIM* gives this explanation: "One illusion about yourself can battle with another, yet the war of two illusions is a state where nothing happens. There is no victor and there is no victory. And truth stands radiant, apart from conflict, untouched and quiet in the peace of God."⁵⁵

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), a spiritual philosopher, explains the difficulty in recognizing illusions:

Ignorance of the ways of the self leads to illusion; and once caught in the net of illusion, it is extremely hard to break through it. It is difficult to recognize an illusion, for, having created it, the mind cannot be aware of it.⁵⁶

Job's internal argument is a war of two illusions, implying that he is caught in the net of illusions and is unable to recognize them. Nevertheless, Job can recognize his illusions if he listens to Elihu, because the latter teaches the discernment of what is false.

Job is confronted with a choice: either recognize his illusions by listening to Elihu; or defend his illusions by ignoring Elihu. Recognizing illusions is the uncomfortable option, because, in Bailey's words, "few people care to face the actual truth, for it involves ... the ability to recognise error and to admit mistakes, and this the false pride of the mind will not permit."⁵⁷ Elihu bears "the title of the despised servant," according to Ellul's earlier analysis, perhaps because of the uncomfortable effect of his instructions. Defending illusions is the futile option, because it results in what Elihu calls "empty talk" and "words without knowledge" (35:16, NRSV). Thus Job must choose between uncomfortableness and futility. During Chapters 32 through 37, Job chooses to recognize his illusions by having them pointed out, one by one, by Elihu. Put differently, Job acquiesces to the uncomfortable process of inner purification. Bailey writes, "Purification of the self leads one up to the portal of initiation."⁵⁸

Let us examine Elihu's instructions in Chapter 36 in some detail. Job believes that God afflicts in order to punish (31:2-3). Elihu considers that belief to be an illusion, because he says that God afflicts in order to teach in verses 36:8-10 (NRSV):

- ⁸ And if they are bound in fetters and caught in the cords of affliction,
⁹ then he declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly.
¹⁰ He opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity.

Job's condition illustrates these verses. He is "behaving arrogantly" because of his false pride in being righteous. His affliction opens his "ears to instruction" from Elihu, who tells Job what he has done and to "return from iniquity."

Elihu continues: "But you are filled with the judgment due the wicked; Judgment and justice take hold of you" (36:17). *ACIM* gives a similar account of Job's fundamental error: "the belief that anger brings him something he really wants, and that by justifying attack he is

protecting himself."⁵⁹ Because of this belief, Job condemned both God (9:17) and unrighteous people (27:7-8). To the extent that Job recognizes that this belief is an illusion, he can release himself from his self-condemnation.

Elihu continues: "Beware that wrath does not entice you into scoffing, and do not let the greatness of the ransom turn you aside" (36:18, NRSV). In other words, Job receives this warning: Do not allow the wrath of others to entice you into deriding them, and do not allow the apparent attraction of anger to turn you aside from giving it up. The first part of the warning is applicable to Job, because he scoffed at his tormentors by calling them "A senseless, disreputable brood" (30:8, NRSV). In the second part of the warning, "ransom" is the price, or sacrifice, that is demanded for advancement. Job is reluctant to sacrifice his condemnation of God and unrighteous people, because he uses such judgments to defend his false pride. Thus, to make progress, Job must sacrifice something that he values. Bailey gives this explanation: "Each step up is ever through the sacrifice of all that the heart holds dear on one plane or another, and always must this sacrifice be voluntary."⁶⁰

Elihu begins a new speech in Chapter 37 that uses images of an approaching storm, starting with verses 37:1-5:

- ¹ At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place.
² Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling *that* comes from His mouth.
³ He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth.
⁴ After it a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain them when His voice is heard.
⁵ God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend.

Traditional commentators simply accept this storm as it is literally presented. For example, Steven Lawson gives this paraphrase: "Elihu was gripped with a deep sense of awe at the mighty power of God in nature ... He directed Job to hear and sense God's power in a thun-

derstorm.”⁶¹ Other Bible scholars, however, assign symbolic meanings to several words used by Elihu. Herbert Lockyer says, “But for the prophets of old, *voice* stood for the resultant inward demonstration of the divine will.”⁶² Emanuel Swedenborg says that Daniel 10:6 uses the phrase “His face appeared as lightning and His eyes as a flame of fire” to signify the Lord’s Divine love.”⁶³ Geoffrey Hodson says, “*Earth* and all physical, solid objects refer, in the main, to the physical body.”⁶⁴ Thus “thunder of His voice,” “His lightning,” and “earth” can be assigned these meanings: divine will, divine love, and physical body, respectively.

Let us compare 37:1-5 to Bailey’s instructions to students preparing for the third initiation:

Students would do well to ... pay more attention to the recognition of that in them which “having pervaded their little universe with a fragment of itself remains.” They will then have anchored their consciousness in the centre of transcending power and guaranteed the flow of the will-to-achieve. From that high point in consciousness (imaginatively reached at first and practically achieved later) they would find it useful to work at the process of transmission, knowing themselves to be agents for the transmission of the will-to-good of the Transcendent One. They should next pass on to the stage of transformation wherein they would visualise and expect to see developed the needed transformation carried forward in their lives; then—equally expectant—they should believe in the transfiguration of those lives in line with the will of the Transcendent One, the success of the Transmitting One, and the activity of the Transforming One—all of Whom are but the One, the Monad, the Self. All this is done by the use of the will, conditioning, fulfilling and overcoming.⁶⁵

Elihu’s recognition of divinity in 37:1, “At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place,” corresponds to Bailey telling the students to “pay more attention to the recognition of that in them which ‘having pervaded their little universe with a fragment of itself remains.’” In other words, the divine presence,

which is denoted later in the quotation as “the One, the Monad, the Self,” is to be recognized as both immanent and transcendent. Elihu’s directive in 37:2, “Hear attentively the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling *that* comes from His mouth,” when symbolically understood, corresponds to Bailey saying that the students “will then have anchored their consciousness in the centre of transcending power and guaranteed the flow of the will-to-achieve.” Elihu’s lesson in 37:3, “He sends it forth under the whole heaven,” corresponds to Bailey telling the students “to work at the process of transmission, knowing themselves to be agents for the transmission of the will-to-good of the Transcendent One.”

Consider Elihu’s lesson also in 37:3: “His lightning to the ends of the earth.” Its symbolic meaning is that divine love eventually transforms physical behavior, assuming that the “ends of the earth” denote the extremities, such as hands and feet, of the physical body. Thus this lesson corresponds to Bailey telling the students to “visualise and expect to see developed the needed transformation carried forward in their lives,” even though the latter instruction does not explicitly mention either divine love or the physical body. Elihu’s lesson, however, has a meaning similar to Bailey’s statement given elsewhere, “the fire of divine love destroys the loves and desires of the integrated personality,”⁶⁶ which indicates that divine love does transform physical behavior.

Consider Elihu’s lesson in 37:4: “He thunders with His majestic voice, And He does not restrain them when His voice is heard.” “Them” refers back to the “ends of the earth,” because “ends” is the only plural noun in the earlier verses, and this referent represents physical behavior, as explained in the preceding paragraph. If such behavior is not restrained by the divine will, then there must be what is called the “transfiguration of the personality,” defined as “its liberation from the alluring imprisonment of the three worlds,”⁶⁷ in which “the three worlds” denote the physical, emotional, and mental worlds of human endeavor. Thus 37:4 corresponds to Bailey telling the students that “they should believe in the trans-

figuration of those lives in line with the will of the Transcendent One.” Finally, Elihu’s lesson in 37:5, “God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend,” corresponds to Bailey saying, “All this is done by the use of the will, conditioning, fulfilling and overcoming.”

During the remainder of Chapter 37, Elihu praises God’s knowledge, power, justice, and righteousness, which helps to prepare Job for the crisis of initiation that he is about to confront. This chapter concludes with Elihu’s statement about God: “Therefore mortals fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit” (37:24, NRSV).

The LORD’s First Speech and Job’s Reply: 38:1–40:5

Chapters 38 and 39 describe the LORD’s reappearance in the story, starting with verses 38:1-5:

¹ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

² “Who *is* this who darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?

³ Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

The LORD continues with a long speech that asks Job many more questions about the observable world. Leo Perdue, Professor of Hebrew Bible, gives a traditional interpretation of this speech:

What follows in the first speech of God is a lengthy list of questions directed to Job, questions that ask if Job has the wisdom to understand the workings of the cosmos and if he possesses the power to rule over it. Yet the questions are asked in such a way as to emphasize that while Job may lack the knowledge and power to direct the cosmos, he should know that God does not. Thus, the first speech not only attests to God’s wisdom and power in creating and main-

taining the structures of the cosmos and its orders of life, but it also demonstrates Job’s own obvious limits as a finite human creature.⁶⁸

From our perspective, the LORD has begun to act as the Hierophant for Job’s initiation. What is the meaning of the “whirlwind” out of which the LORD speaks in 38:1? Several theosophical writers use the expression “winds of thought,”⁶⁹ which suggests that Job’s initiation takes place on the mental plane. Bailey provides this explanation:

We are considering facts which are substantial and real on the *mental plane*—the plane on which all the major initiations take place—but which are not materialised on the physical plane, and are not physical plane phenomena. The link between the two planes exists in the continuity of consciousness which the initiate will have developed, and which will enable him to bring through to the physical brain, occurrences and happenings upon the subjective planes of life.⁷⁰

Bailey describes the crisis of initiation:

Initiation might be defined at this point as the moment of crisis wherein the consciousness hovers on the very border-line of revelation. The demands of the soul and the suggestions of the Master might be regarded as in conflict with the demands of time and space, focussed in the personality or the lower man. You will have, therefore, in this situation a tremendous pull between the pairs of opposites; the field of tension or the focus of the effort is to be found in the disciple “standing at the midway point.” Will he respond and react consciously to the higher pull and pass on to new and higher areas of spiritual experience? Or will he fall back into the glamour of time and space and into the thralldom of the personal life? Will he stand in a static quiescent condition in which neither the higher trend nor the lower pull will affect him?⁷¹

“The demands of the soul” are represented by Elihu’s speech in Chapter 37, because Bailey’s “soul” is comparable to the “Holy Spirit” and to the role played by Elihu. “The suggestions

of the Master” are represented by the LORD’s speech in Chapters 38 and 39, because the presiding Master in this case is the LORD. Both messages pull in the upward direction, because they proclaim the superiority of divine knowledge; but they conflict with the demand of Job’s personality that its intelligence remains in control, which pulls in the downward direction. Job is “standing in the midway point,” being pulled between this pair of opposites, and his response is in verses 40:3-5:

³ Then Job answered the LORD and said:

⁴ “Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth.

⁵ Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

In the final verse of his response, Job says, “I will proceed no further” (40:5). Using Bailey’s words from her last quotation, he appears to “stand in a static quiescent condition in which neither the higher trend nor the lower pull will affect him.”

The LORD’s Second Speech and Job’s Reply: 40:6–42:6

Chapters 40 and 41 contain the LORD’s second speech, starting with verses 40:6-8:

⁶ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

⁷ “Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me:

⁸ “Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?

James Wharton, Professor of Homiletics, gives a traditional interpretation of the speech’s conclusion:

God’s second speech concludes with poems describing two quite indescribable “beasts” or “monsters” that have puzzled biblical interpreters for the better part of two millennia. Who is “Behemoth” (40:15-24)? Who is “Leviathan” (41:1-34)? Vivid and complex as these twin poems are, their import in the context of God’s speech to Job is simple in the extreme: They are surely to be taken, in the first line, as variations on the theme that God is God and Job is not. Job is

expected to be overwhelmed by the sheer power and terror of these beings, but even more so by the fact that they exist as signs of God’s overarching power, which includes them, in all their chaotic terror, but also controls them.⁷²

Bailey continues her explanation of initiation, in which “astral vehicle” and “Angel of the Presence” are alternative names for emotional body and soul, respectively:

It is at this process, the Master *presides*. He is able to do nothing because it is the disciple’s own problem. He can only endeavour to enhance the desire of the soul by the power of His directed thought. The personality can also do nothing, for at this point both the physical body and the astral vehicle are simply automatons, waiting responsively for the decision of the disciple, functioning in his mental body. Only the disciple can act upon the mental level of consciousness at this point of endeavour. Once he does so, the die is cast. He either moves forward towards the door of light where the Master takes his hand and the Angel of the Presence becomes potent and active in a way which I may not describe to you, or he drops back *temporarily* into the life condition of the lower man.⁷³

The LORD’s first speech demonstrates that Job is ignorant about the observable world. The LORD’s second speech demonstrates that Job is ignorant about the occult, or hidden, world. Because of these speeches, Job realizes that his personality’s knowledge is meager when compared to divine knowledge, and responds in verses 42:1-3, 6:

¹ Then Job answered the LORD and said:

² “I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose *of Yours* can be withheld from You.

³ *You asked*, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

⁶ Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes.”

In the final verse of Job’s response (42:6), “myself” is taken as Job’s personality, because

its nature can be assessed through self-observation; to “repent” means to turn towards God (Acts 26:20); and “dust and ashes” signify humility, or the lack of false pride (Genesis 18:27). Consequently, Job rejects the control by his personality (“Therefore I abhor *myself*”), and turns his mind towards the Holy Spirit’s divine knowledge (“And repent”) and away from false pride (“in dust and ashes”). These mental actions enable Job to go through the door of the third initiation, because that initiation is characterized by Bailey in the following way:

At the third Initiation of Transfiguration, the control of the personality in the three worlds is broken in order that the Son of Mind, the soul, may be substituted finally for the concrete and hitherto directing lower mind. Again, through the Law of Sacrifice, the personality is liberated and becomes simply an agent of the soul.⁷⁴

Bailey continues her explanation of initiation:

Should he, however, go forward through that door, then (according to the initiation which becomes possible) will be the revelation and its attendant consequences. The revelation will *not* be the revelation of possibilities. It is a factual experience, resulting in the evocation of new powers and capacities and the recognition of new modes and fields of service.⁷⁵

According to this quotation, Job’s initiation results in the evocation of new powers, capacities, and recognitions, but what are they? We agree with the traditional commentators, such as Purdue and Wharton, that the LORD’s two speeches have the purpose of impressing on Job the meagerness of his personality’s knowledge and abilities. Another purpose emerges, however, after his initiation: Job, according to our extrapolation of the story, finds that those speeches evoke his new powers, capacities, and recognitions. Consequently, the LORD’s speeches are actually much more profound than traditionally thought.

Let us reconsider the LORD’s first speech, given in Chapters 38 and 39. It asks more than 70 questions about the observable world: from phenomena of the heavens, such as celestial

laws and constellations, to phenomena of the earth, such as the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Our extrapolation is that Job’s recollection of these questions after his initiation evokes his understanding of them, because of the knowledge that is imparted at his initiation, as Bailey explains:

At the third initiation “the secret of fohat” is given to him, and then the mystery of the threefold *body* of the triple Logos is his, and the *why* of the phenomena of the dense, liquid and gaseous bodies of the Supreme Being is enfolded before his amazed vision ... By the knowledge thus imparted, and the progress which the initiate has made in the study of the law of analogy, he can comprehend the manipulation of the same forces on a vastly larger scale in the planetary scheme and in the solar system. The method of development in the three earlier rounds is revealed to him, and he understands, practically as well as theoretically, the evolutionary process in its earlier stages. The key to the three lower kingdoms of nature is in his hands, and certain ideas anent the subject of polarity, of at-onement, and essential union, are beginning to come within his range of consciousness.⁷⁶

The above quotation contains some terms that have not yet been defined. Bailey characterizes *fohat* as “divine Purpose, actively functioning.”⁷⁷ The “triple Logos” is taken to be the Planetary Logos, because Bailey mentions “the triple nature of the Planetary Logos.”⁷⁸ “The three lower kingdoms of nature” are the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms.

According to Theosophy, our universe consists of seven worlds that are often called “planes” and that are arranged metaphorically in an upper and lower manner. The physical plane, which is the lowest plane, is said to have seven subplanes. The three lowest physical subplanes, called the dense, liquid, and gaseous subplanes, provide the substance for the dense physical bodies of human beings. An analogous situation holds for the Planetary Logos. Bailey writes, “our seven planes are only the seven subplanes of the cosmic physical plane,”⁷⁹ and speaks of “the appropriation of a dense physical body by the Planetary Logos;

this body is composed of matter of our three lower planes.”⁸⁰ The point is that our physical, emotional, and mental planes, which are the three lowest cosmic physical subplanes, provide the substance for the dense physical body of the Planetary Logos, and thereby form what the above quotation calls “the dense, liquid and gaseous bodies of the Supreme Being.”

Some additional definitions need to be considered. Bailey speaks of “the Great Illusion, in its three forms of illusion, glamour and maya.”⁸¹ For a person, *illusion* is a false belief, *glamour* is an illusion that has been intensified by desire,⁸² and *maya* is a glamour that has been intensified by vital energy.⁸³ For the planetary correspondences, Bailey uses the terms *world illusion*, *world glamour*, and *world maya*.⁸⁴

For example, when Job created his persona as his self-image of being righteous (29:14) and used it to feel superior to unrighteous people (30:1), it became an *illusion*. When Job intensified this illusion by adding the desire to defend and support it (27:6), he turned it into a *glamour*, which in turn formed and projected his shadow. Job’s shadow consisted of suppressed judgments of his own unrighteousness, and the projection of his shadow resulted in his condemnation of God and unrighteous people (9:17; 27:7-8). When Job intensified this glamour by adding vital energy to it (23:11), he created *maya*, which appeared outwardly as physical activity that was obsessional, compulsive, or based on fantasy. When Job regularly performed ritual sacrifices on behalf of his children in case they might have sinned (1:5), his physical activity was obsessional, because it was a persistent preoccupation that supported his own self-image of being righteous. When he wore sackcloth and put his head in the dust (16:15-17),

his physical activity was compulsive, because it kept him from feeling unrighteous. After Job imagined himself as presenting his case in God’s celestial court (23:3-7), he physically acted out that inner fantasy by presenting formal testimony to a public assembly as though

God were in attendance (30:20-23).

Let us reconsider the LORD’S second speech, given in Chapters 40 and 41, which describes the characteristics of two occult beasts: Behemoth and Leviathan. Our extrapolation of the story is that Job can understand this speech after his initiation, because he recognizes the two beasts as the planetary correspondences of his own personal beasts, namely, his personal maya and personal glamour. As discussed earlier, he broke the control of his personality at his initiation,

which means that he broke the control of his own personal beasts, which in turn means that he apprehended their characteristics.

Behemoth is interpreted as world maya for the following reasons: “Look now at the behemoth, which I made *along* with you” (40:15), which is similar to Bailey’s statement, “the Lord of the World is not identified with the maya which He has created”;⁸⁵ “He eats grass like an ox” (40:15), indicating that maya acts through the physical body, because an ox symbolizes the animal nature;⁸⁶ “Its strength is in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly” (40:16, NRSV), indicating that maya has the powers of both vitality and glamour, because these powers are seated in those areas;⁸⁷ “It makes its tail stiff like a cedar” (40:17, NRSV), which symbolizes maya’s involvement in sexual compulsions, because Habel regards the “Beast’s tail as a euphemism for his penis”;⁸⁸ “His bones *are like* beams of bronze, His ribs like bars of iron” (40:18),

Job craves honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Job gains pleasure when this craving is satisfied . . . but suffers when it is not satisfied . . . Even though these two experiences are contrasted in successive chapters, Job does not acknowledge the following truth about himself: *his own craving causes his suffering*. This truth is related to what Buddhists call “The Second Noble Truth.”

meaning that maya compels all parts of the physical body to use their strength for acting out strongly felt fantasies; “only its Maker can approach it with the sword” (40:19, NRSV), which means that only the Holy Spirit can subdue maya, because the Holy Spirit conveys “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17); “For the mountains yield food for it where all the wild animals play” (40:20, NRSV), indicating that maya fulfills fantasies of using the physical body for self-glorification, thereby reinforcing feelings of identification with that body, because mountains symbolize both idolatrous worship (Deuteronomy 12:2) and false pride (Isaiah 40:4); and “The lotus trees cover him *with* their shade; The willows by the brook surround him” (40:22), which indicates the difficulty of recognizing maya as being what it is, because both the mind and emotions accept its underlying illusion.

Leviathan is interpreted as world glamour for the following reasons: the question “Shall *one not* be overwhelmed at the sight of him?” (41:9), to which the answer is “yes,” but only if one observes glamour while detached from one’s feelings; the question “Who can remove his outer coat?” (41:13), to which the answer is the “Holy Spirit,” because only it can recognize glamour’s underlying belief as an illusion;⁸⁹ “There is terror all around its teeth” (41:14, NRSV), symbolizing that one’s glamour bites other people in the sense of making cruel, incisive criticisms of them (Galatians 5:15); “Its back is made of shields in rows, shut up closely as with a seal” (41:15, NRSV), indicating that glamour is constructed to defend false pride; “His breath kindles coals, And a flame goes out of his mouth” (41:21), signifying that glamour incites resentment, which is smoldering anger, and rage, which is intense anger, because fire is a symbol of anger (Isaiah 30:27); “His undersides *are* like sharp potsherds; He spreads pointed *marks* in the mire” (41:30), referring to glamour’s shadow and its suppressed judgments of self-condemnation; “He makes the sea like a pot of ointment” (41:31), which means that glamour uses feelings like an ointment that protects the persona in a superficial way, because the sea symbolizes the emotional body;⁹⁰ and “He *is*

king over all the children of pride” (41:34), signifying that glamour engenders false pride.

The LORD asks Job, with regard to Behemoth, “Can one take it with hooks or pierce its nose with a snare?” (40:24, NRSV), and then asks, “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down its tongue with a cord?” (41:1, NRSV). The hooks, snare, and cord are instruments for subduing animals, so Job is asked whether he can subdue Behemoth and Leviathan. After Job takes the third initiation and understands the meaning of these beasts, he realizes that his answer to both questions is “yes,” because he recognizes that he can subdue both world maya and world glamour with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Bailey writes, “At the third initiation ... a part of the plans of the Planetary Logos becomes revealed to him, and the vision includes the revelation of the plan and purpose as it concerns the planet.”⁹¹ The LORD’s second speech fulfills this pronouncement by revealing these goals: subduing world maya, symbolized by Behemoth; and subduing world glamour, symbolized by Leviathan. In our extrapolation of the story, Job’s recollection of this speech after his initiation evokes his recognition that his new fields of service involve these goals, as Bailey explains:

*Fancy rests upon images which have no real existence ... This is one of the sutras which, though apparently short and simple, is of the most profound significance; it is studied by high initiates who are learning the nature of the creative process of the planet, and who are concerned with the dissipation of planetary maya.*⁹²

It is the problem of humanity itself, as a whole, to work in the world glamour; it is the responsibility of the aspirants of the world to guide humanity out of the valley of glamour. Men must learn to understand it and eventually—aided by the senior disciples of the world, trained by the Masters of the Wisdom—to transmute and dispel it.⁹³

Epilogue: 42:7-17

The remainder of Chapter 42 is the epilogue. We comment only on the initial

portion in verses 42:7-9:

⁷ And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*.⁸ Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your* folly; because you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*.⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job.

William Stevenson, Professor of Semitic Languages, describes the contradictions that arise from the traditional method of interpreting these verses:

No sentence in the folk-tale has had a more mischievous influence on the interpretation of the poem than the words addressed to Eliphaz by the Almighty, as recorded at the end of the book, in ch. 42, ver. 7: ‘you have not spoken truth regarding me, as my servant Job has done.’ When the poem is read without the prejudice injected by this sentence, it is clear that Job’s words were generally less in agreement with religious principles than were those of his three comforters. God’s judgment on Job’s speeches is expressed in the poem in the words: ‘who here darkens debate in words devoid of knowledge?’ (38:2).⁹⁴

Stevenson resolves these contradictions by regarding the prose framework, consisting of the prologue and epilogue, as a “folk-tale” that is independent of the enclosed poem. Our symbolic analysis, however, treats the entire book as a coherent narrative without yielding any contradictions, as shown next.

Before interpreting 42:7-9, let us consider the meaning of its symbols. The Sanskrit word *chakra* literally means “wheel.” Yoga philosophy describes seven wheels of energy, called chakras, that belong to the subtle counterpart

of the dense physical body and have the following locations and Sanskrit names:

1. Head centre—sahasrara chakra
2. Centre between eyebrows—ajna chakra
3. Throat centre—vishuddha chakra
4. Heart or cardiac centre—anahata chakra
5. Solar plexus centre—manipura chakra
6. Sacral or sexual centre—svadhisthana chakra
7. Centre at base of spine—muladhara chakra.⁹⁵

The “seven bulls and seven rams” (42:8) are taken as the evolutionary and involutionary energies associated with the seven chakras, because the up-turned horns of the bull depict the push upward towards illumination, and the down-turned horns of the ram depict the downward attraction for the material world. The bull and ram have similar astrological significances.⁹⁶ These energies include thoughts and their interior results, such as feelings, desires, and urges. There are no neutral energies, since, in the words of *ACIM*, “A neutral result is impossible because a neutral thought is impossible.”⁹⁷ Thus the bull and ram for a chakra depict the whole range of bodily and psychic energies that are associated with that chakra.

Matthew Easton, author of a leading Bible dictionary, gives this definition for *burnt offering*: “the whole being consumed by fire, and regarded as ascending to God while being consumed. Part of every offering was burnt in the sacred fire, but this was wholly burnt, a ‘whole burnt offering.’”⁹⁸

The Sanskrit word *kundalini* literally means “coiled.” Yoga philosophy considers kundalini to be an instinctive force that lies coiled at the base of the spine. Bailey defines *Word of Power* as “enunciated sound ... with the full purpose of the will behind it”⁹⁹ and gives this description of the raising of kundalini:

The Kundalini Fire, about which so much is taught and written in the East, and increasingly in the West, is ... then raised by the use of a Word of Power (sent forth by the will of the Monad) and by the united authority of the soul and personality, integrated and alive. The human being who can do this in full consciousness is therefore an ini-

tiate who has left the third initiation behind him. He, and he alone, can safely raise this triple fire from the base of the spine to the head centre.¹⁰⁰

When the kundalini fire rises from the base of the spine, it becomes a great moving force that carries all before it, for which Bailey describes this result: “the final transference of all the bodily and psychic energies into the head centre.”¹⁰¹ The kundalini fire acting on the whole range of energies of a chakra is analogous to a sacrificial fire consuming the whole animal on an altar, because the ascension of the whole range of energies to the head center is like the ascension of the whole burnt offering to God.

Let us now consider the symbolic meaning of 42:7-9. As discussed previously, Job’s three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) represent Job’s threefold personality. The LORD states in 42:7 that Job’s personality has not spoken “*what is right*” but Job has. In other words, at the third initiation, Job frees himself from being controlled by his personality and instead expresses the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The LORD gives Job’s personality the following command in 42:8: with regard to the whole range of energies for each of the seven chakras, submit to Job’s authority and offer up these energies as “a burnt offering”—which means that they ascend to the head center through the raising of the kundalini fire—whenever Job issues an appropriate Word of Power, or “prayer.” According to 42:9, Job’s personality did as the LORD commanded it, raising kundalini whenever Job issued his order; for Job gained this ability through being accepted by the LORD as an initiate of the third degree.

Conclusions

Blavatsky makes a key distinction: “Every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship.”¹⁰² The traditional method of interpreting the *Book of Job*, which accepts the story as it is literally presented, yields an exoteric teaching; the symbolic method of interpretation, which takes the story as a poem of initiation, yields an esoteric teaching. In our view, both kinds of

teachings were intended by the original author, and either kind can be helpful for those who can relate to it. The various paradoxes and contradictions that arise with a traditional interpretation serve as clues to a deeper meaning.

Bailey speaks of the following phenomenon: “a revelation has precipitated upon the mental plane and—owing to failure rightly to apprehend and interpret it or to apply it usefully—it has developed into an illusion and enters upon a career of deception, of crystallisation and of misinformation.”¹⁰³ A symbolic interpretation of the *Book of Job* has precipitated upon the mental plane in the form of this article, and it is a revelation in the sense that it makes many claims that have not been published elsewhere. Whether or not this interpretation is essentially valid, if it is misapprehended or misapplied, it would develop into an illusion and enter upon a career of deception and misinformation. To avoid that unhappy outcome, let us consider how this symbolic interpretation might be misapprehended or misapplied during each initiatory stage:

1. *The Tests*. In Chapters 1 and 2, a Master discerns Job’s weaknesses and imposes tests that will enable him to grow in self-mastery. One should not deliberately try to attract the attention of a Master, however, as Bailey explains: “Students must attend to the immediate duty and prepare their mechanisms for service in the world, and should desist from wasting time and looking for a Master; they should achieve mastery where now they are defeated and in the life of service and of struggle they may then reach the point of such complete self-forgetfulness that the Master may find no hindrance in His approach to them.”¹⁰⁴

2. *Occult Blindness*. In Chapter 3, the tests induce in Job what is called “occult blindness,” which leads to greater self-reliance and self-knowledge. One should not deliberately impose such an experience on oneself, however, as Bailey explains: “Blindness nurtures and protects, provided it is innate and natural, soul-imposed or spiritually engendered. If it is willfully self-induced, if it provides an alibi for grasped knowledge, if it is assumed in order to avoid re-

sponsibility, then sin enters in and difficulty ensues. From this may all of you be protected.”¹⁰⁵

3. *Internal Conflict*. In Chapters 4 through 27, the tests induce Job’s internal conflict by contradicting his self-image of being righteous. Having such a self-image is not necessarily unwise, because it is an admirable ideal at an early stage of one’s evolution. Bailey speaks of the progress that occurs when “your ideals have been superseded by greater and more spiritual ones.”¹⁰⁶ Job’s progress was blocked when he became attached to an ideal that was no longer appropriate for him.

4. *External Conflict*. In Chapters 29 through 31, the tests induce Job’s external conflict by frustrating his craving to receive honor and respect from his fellow citizens for being righteous. Having such a craving is not necessarily unwise, because everyone needs to pass through a stage in which there is, in Bailey’s words, “Power to influence, sway, guide and hold others within the range of individual purpose and desire.”¹⁰⁷ Job’s progress was blocked when he became attached to a stage that he outgrew.

5. *Inner Purification*. In Chapters 32 through 37, the tests induce Job’s receptivity to the Holy Spirit’s teaching, which enables him to resolve his internal and external conflicts through inner purification. An aspirant should not simply follow any inner voice that is heard, however, because it may be one of these listed by Bailey: “his subconscious ‘wish life,’” “the result of the man tuning in telepathically upon the mind or the minds of others,” “all kinds and types of incarnate or discarnate men, ranging in character from very good to very bad,” and “the injunctions and impulses of his own personality.”¹⁰⁸ People can be left to the guidance of the Holy Spirit only when they understand what is happening to them and can discriminate among their various inner voices.

6. *Crisis of Initiation*. In Chapters 38 through 41, Job undergoes the crisis of the third initiation, showing that he was able to

learn from and surmount his tests. The conclusion should not be drawn, however, that one should seek to be initiated. Bailey writes, “There is much talk these days concerning the mysteries of initiation. Every country is full of spurious teachers, teaching the so-called Mysteries, offering spurious initiations (usually at a cost and with a diploma) and misleading the people.”¹⁰⁹ Seeking to be initiated could be a form of spiritual selfishness that leads to separateness rather than usefulness in service.

7. *Aftermath*. In Chapter 42, Job gains the ability to raise kundalini as a consequence of taking the third initiation. Such raising should not be attempted earlier, as Bailey explains: “The raising of the kundalini force—if brought about ignorantly and prematurely—may produce the rapid burning through of the protective web of etheric matter which separates the various areas of the body (controlled by the seven centres) from each other. This causes serious nervous trouble, inflammation of the tissues, spinal disease, and brain trouble.”¹¹⁰ Here, the term “etheric” denotes the subtle counterpart of the dense physical body.

Perhaps this symbolic interpretation of the *Book of Job*, when augmented by the above reservations, may be found to be helpful.

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³ *Ibid.*, 716.

⁴ Charles W. Draper, Chad Brand, and Archie England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 924–925.

⁵ Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II (1877; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1976), 494.

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- 8 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 686.
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- 84 Ibid., 88, 125, 184.
- 85 Ibid., 242.
- 86 Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 69.
- 87 Bailey, *Glamour*, 149.
- 88 Habel, *The Book of Job*, 566.
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- 90 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 283.
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- 92 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 19-21.
- 93 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 69.
- 94 William B. Stevenson, *The Poem of Job: A Literary Study with a New Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 21-22.
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- 97 *ACIM*, vol. II, 26.
- 98 Matthew G. Easton, *The Bible Dictionary* (1897; reprint; Central, Hong Kong: Forgotten Books, 2007), 106.
- 99 Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, 150.

¹⁰⁰ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 185.

¹⁰¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), 527.

¹⁰² Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (1889; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1972), 8.

¹⁰³ Bailey, *Glamour*, 175.

¹⁰⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 595.

¹⁰⁵ Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 200.

¹⁰⁶ Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II, 532.

¹⁰⁷ Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 394.

¹⁰⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 488-491.

¹⁰⁹ Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (1948; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 125.

¹¹⁰ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 539.

The Spiritual Significance of Silence: Two Writings

Roberto Assagioli and Vincent Beltran Anglada

Introduction and Translations by Mike Malagreca, Gail Jolley and Carmen Barber

The significance of silence has been highlighted in practically all spiritual and esoteric traditions around the world since the very beginnings of time. In the impossibility of doing justice to all of these traditions, let us be content with just a few. In many of the different forms of Christianity, the ritual of transmuting bread and wine into the sacrament of the Eucharist during the Holy Mass is preceded by a period of expectant and silent prayer. The Sepher HaSh'tikah or *The Book of Silence* is a sacred Kabbalistic text whose teachings begin by exhorting the reader to “learn the fine art of silence” as the first step in the acquisition of wisdom. Vipassana meditation, which comes from the tradition of Theravada Buddhism, combines breathing techniques and silence to help the practitioner reach a state of awareness of the impermanence of existence. Inner silence, Castaneda tells us, is what indigenous sorcerers are after in most dramatic shamanic rites, reaching the threshold of silence, a moment when the world “stops” and everything ceases to be what it has always been. H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Voice of Silence* opens with a reference to the Soundless Sound, the voice of *Nada*:

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal. Tis on such soil that grows the midnight blossom of Buddha more difficult to find, more rare to view than is the flower of the Vogay tree. It is the seed of freedom from rebirth. It isolates the Arhat both from strife and lust; it leads him through the fields of Being unto peace and bliss known only in the land of Silence and Non-Being.¹

Silence is abundantly elaborated on in the works of the Tibetan as well. In a *Treatise on White Magic*, for instance, a passage of the Old Commentary expresses:

When communion is established, words are forthwith used, and mantric law assumes its rightful place, provided that the One communicates the words and the three remain in silence. When response is recognized as emanating from the three, the One, in silence, listens.²

Historically, however, we live in a time that seems to undervalue, if not fear, silence. Ours is a time characterized by communication strains. We suffer the risks of mental congestion from an excess of information technology, industrial noise and the many other forms of noise pollution. It seems difficult to reconcile the perennial wisdom with our current emphasis and passion for noise. Yet, it might be a time of transition only. Fourth Ray Humanity, still in its adolescence, probably needs to experience an excess of noise before reaching a stage of equilibrium when it will sound its note harmonically.

The two texts that follow provide us with important clues about the lost art of silence. The first one, written by Roberto Assagioli, is an English language translation of an unpublished manuscript by the Italian genius who developed psychosynthesis. The article is based, in part, on his own direct experience with Ageless Wisdom teachings and the Tibetan’s work in particular. Assagioli needs little introduction to the English-speaking readership, and we are certain much will be learned from his usual didactic exposition and practical approach to the topic. The article reproduced here appeared in the October 2012 issue of the *Journal of Psychosynthesis*. We thank the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence for granting permission to reprint, and we encourage our readers to visit the journal website: <http://www.psicosintesi.it/>, which publishes all its articles in Italian and English.

The second article is by Vicente Beltran Anglada. The English-speaking audience is probably less familiar with the work of this Spanish writer. Anglada was a loving, extraordinary human being and a person of advanced spiritual stature. He was a devoted teacher, an articulate public speaker, a secretary for the Arcane School in Geneva, a prolific writer and dedicated server who touched the heart of countless people in Europe and Latin America. While his work touches on several topics, he is most commonly identified with the development of Agni Yoga and books on the Deva kingdom. Anglada had a special sensibility to interpret the mysteries of the Angelic kingdom and was given the task of writing a series of books that would help bring together the Human and Deva Hierarchies—a task he accepted humbly and to which he devoted his entire incarnated life until his passing in 1988. We translate this work from a conference with the kind permission of the Asociacion Vicente Beltran Anglada:

<http://www.asociacionvicentebeltan-anglada.org/>.

It should be noted here, that there are a number of points of similarity between these writers. Both Assagioli and Anglada lived in post-war Europe, both were very close to the Tibetan's foundational group, both wrote and spoke publicly on the same Teaching, both had students and both developed—in their own ways—methods for spiritual unfoldment. And both were silent about their occult mission: Assagioli insisted throughout his life in keeping his psychological approach separate from his link with the Tibetan; Anglada kept a secret diary about discipleship that only recently became a book. Most importantly, both Assagioli and Anglada are remembered by their students as being *true to themselves*; apparently, they were ordinary individuals who quietly helped transform our noisy world.

The Art and Technique of Silence

Roberto Assagioli

It might seem a contradiction in terms, or at least a paradox, to talk about silence, but actually, it isn't. As with many other pairs of

opposites, the two poles of speech and silence aren't antagonistic; they don't exclude each other, and both are necessary. The problem lies not in suppressing one of them, but rather in the wise regulation of both of them; this is one aspect, one important application of the Law of Right Relations.

Let's begin, then, by examining this topic from the point of view of the relationship between silence, on the one hand, and speech and sound on the other. What I'm about to say is not meant to disturb the silence, but merely to serve as a guide to the "Temple of Silence."

Silence follows sound, and each sound or creative word should come from silence. Thus, the first type of right relationship between silence and speech is that of using them in right proportion. I don't need to talk at length here about the enormous disparity that exists nowadays between silence and sound ... or noise. Our civilization has been called the culture of noise; all kinds of noises bombard us in what has been called "the jungles of the West." Continuous noise is actually harmful for physical health, and the worst thing is that present-day humanity, especially young people, not only become used to noise; they actually desire it, so much so that they produce it when there is none, for example, by turning up the radio when they become unable to bear the silence.

This last point refers to noise and sounds from outside, but the situation isn't any better regarding sounds that come from within us, especially idle talk or nonsense. If there were instruments to measure the amount of energy wasted in vain and harmful words, we would be really shocked, but of course, we don't need much imagination or a special word counter to understand this. The habit of speaking too much and too negatively has been encouraged by what may be called the modern cult of expression, the right to self-expression. This has been a reaction to the excessive repression of the nineteenth century, but, like all reactions, it went to the opposite extreme, and now there is an urgent need to reduce the current excessive, unregulated "expressionism."

Here too the solution lies in proper regulation, which simply means to *think before we speak*,

to consider whether what we are about to say has any value or serves any good. It has been said that “Humanity as a whole needs silence now as never before; it needs to reflect on and perceive the Universal Rhythm.”

This need is particularly great and urgent for those who are spiritually oriented, and this leads us to consider another type of silence, more subtle but no less vital and necessary, and that is, *inner silence*.

“Silence” is not just refraining from talking. There is no real silence when emotional storms are raging within us, when we find our mind constantly chattering to itself. Silence is not just refraining from speaking, but also abstaining from certain lines of thought and eliminating reveries and the unhealthy use of the imagination.

There are different types of inner silence, and it could be said that every sphere of life has its own silence. We all know the wonderful silence of nature on a summer afternoon, or especially during the night: the silence of a starry sky. Then there is the silence of the emotions—of desire, fear and imagination—which is a positive step toward peace and serenity. Silence at the mental level consists of slowing down the mind and curbing its activity.

There is also a “silence of the will,” i.e. the personal will, which means the dedication of one’s will and its unification with Spiritual Will. The highest form of silence is that achieved and maintained through contemplation. On the religious and mystic path, this is called “the prayer of quietude,” and in all respects, contemplation is the highest form of silence because it encourages and includes all other forms.

Joy is an aspect of silence that is generally not taken into full consideration. Joy has been given an interesting definition; it is the “silence

that sounds,” and it has been said that it is a characteristic of someone who knows and appreciates the values of the Spirit.

Another fact even less recognized is that silence is an Entity; there is a Spirit of Silence in the same way that there is a Spirit of Love, a Spirit of Light, a Spirit of Beauty. To our materialistic mind, this seems strange and difficult to conceive. Yet all the attributes and qualities of God are Beings; they are His Angels, His Messengers; they are living and conscious Forces. Everything in the Universe is alive, and in all religions, the faithful turn to the Angels, Spirits, or Higher Beings. Our Souls, which have been called “Solar Angels,” are Living Beings that work on the higher planes where the qualities or keynotes of the Spirit exist as Living Beings. Recognizing this

gives us a wonderful sense of the Universal Life that is the One and the Many manifested in myriads of entities hierarchically ordered.

Thinking of Silence as an Entity can be particularly beneficial. It helps us understand His positive and active nature, and it allows us to understand that Silence is not mere the absence of sound or speech, which is what most people usually think. Silence is a positive and spiritual energy, and if we want to practice silence this can be facilitated by invoking the Spirit of Silence, by entering into communion with Him, and hence by becoming receptive to the impressions that come to us when we are, metaphorically speaking, “enfolded in His wings.” There is a close relationship between silence and higher telepathic reception; it has been said that the Science of Receptivity is based on various kinds of silence.

Now I will say something about the practice, or technique, of this art of silence. As with the development of any spiritual quality, an easy and useful preparation is to first “set the

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mood” by reading something on the subject. Among the writings suitable for this purpose I would point to the fine essay on silence by M. Maeterlinck in the book *Le Trésor des Humbles* and the celebration of silence in T. Carlyle’s book *On Heroes*. Also, the Quakers have written extensively on silence because they base their religious practice on silent meetings for worshiping.³

We can also find encouragement in the exemplary lives of those who have practiced silence. A modern example would be Aurobindo, who used to remain silent for 360 days a year for many years. During that time, he would write a lot while keeping absolutely quiet. Another less extreme example is that of Gandhi. Once a week, on Monday, he used to observe 24 hours of silence.

After this preparation, we then have to “maintain quietness” internally, and this can be achieved through the various stages of meditation. First of all, *direct* the attention from “the periphery to the center,” then raise the center of consciousness by moving from feeling to aspiration, and direct the attention of the mind toward the Soul or, generally, toward the world of Spirit and Reality. It’s important to move through the emotional-imaginative level *quickly* so as not to get distracted by any psychic impressions that might come through if we linger too long on this plane.

Consciousness must be kept at a high point of inner tension. This tension—which is a vigilant form of awareness, a spiritual attitude of “being present” to ourselves—is the essential prerequisite for any spiritual conquest. It can be seen as a combination of *Intention* and *Attention*. Intention urges us to penetrate into higher levels of consciousness; Attention is the concentration or “centeredness” of consciousness and the act of keeping it fixed at the level reached.

Notice that *spiritual tension* is different from personal tension. They are, in fact, two opposite conditions. The second is an obstacle to the first, as spiritual tension can best be achieved in a state of physical relaxation and mental and emotional calm. This tension is followed by silence, a living silence that cre-

ates the necessary conditions for any revelation.

Everything that has been said so far refers to individual silence, but it can and actually should be applied as well to silence in groups and to the silence of the group. Group gatherings should utilize the practice of silence, not just because it provides an opportunity and satisfies a need to be in silence, but also because it creates an imperceptible but indeed real communion among a group of people, as well as between two people who sit together in silence. In *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, there is an anecdote that shows how well the Franciscans knew the value of silence.

Soon after the death of Saint Francis, Saint Louis King of France set off to Perugia to see Brother Giles in person. He arrived at the convent gate as if he were a poor unknown pilgrim, but having been revealed to Brother Giles that the pilgrim was the King of France, he left his cell in haste and ran to the gate without asking any questions. They both knelt down and embraced each other with great reverence and many outward signs of love and charity, as if a long friendship had existed between them, though they had never met before in their lives. Neither of them spoke a word, and after remaining clasped in each other’s arms for some time, they separated in silence. Then, when the other brothers found out who the pilgrim was, they bitterly complained to Brother Giles. He answered: “Beloved brothers, be not surprised at this, that neither could I say a word to him, nor he to me; for no sooner had we embraced each other than we saw into each other’s hearts, and knew far better what we had to say than if we had explained in words that which we felt in our hearts. For so imperfectly the tongue of man reveals the secret mysteries of God, that words would have been to us rather a hindrance than a consolation.” (Chapter 1, XXXIV).⁴

The effects of silence on the personality include the replenishment of energy, a sense of reinvigoration, and a true process of regeneration of all personal aspects. Another effect of

group silence is that of harmonization. When there are conflicts or disagreements within a group, or simply differences of opinion about some decision to make, or about which activities to undertake, the best thing is to maintain silence, to spend some quiet time together (this of course implies that all group participants know and appreciate the art of silence). After a period of silence spent together, it's easier to understand each other because we will have considered the problem from a higher impersonal perspective. The separative personalities will have been silenced, and the participants will have symbolically gathered in the Temple of Silence. There, after having aligned more closely with the Soul and uniting with the Souls of everyone else, they will see the points of agreement, of contact, and of understanding with each other.

But the beneficial effects of silence are not limited to this. Along with the practice of silence, what gradually develops has been called "the double life of the disciple," meaning the ability to maintain a "zone of silence" during daily life amid noise and turmoil: "The silence of the center preserved within the worldly noise." Here too there is an encouraging example, that of Brother Laurence of the Resurrection, who was able to keep a sense of the presence of God while he was busy in a noisy kitchen.

Another positive effect of the practice of silence is learning to *act quietly*, without fuss and noise.

In Maria Montessori's educational approach, there is an exercise that is used to train children to move carefully in attentive silence. They do this willingly, and in so doing, they learn self-control.

A similar exercise, but with a very different purpose, is performed by hotel thieves, who are able to steal silently into a hotel room without waking up the guests! In doing so, they are actually practicing a form of yoga. In fact, up to a certain point, certain skills developed in yoga can be used both selfishly or unselfishly and beneficially.

The difference lies in the *motive*, not in the technical skill. Hence, we can learn much from

those who behave wrongly. Too often they do very bad things very well, while we often do good things not well enough! Remember, in the Gospel it is said that Christ will come "like a thief in the night."

Another benefit of maintaining a zone of silence—a state of dis-identification or meditation that can be maintained as we perform daily activities, investing in them the needed energy and attention level (but not more)—is to be able to listen carefully and recognize those insights, messages and inner forces that can often be more easily accessible when we are externally active and thinking of other things, rather than in moments of deep reflection.

I think these quick notes might be enough to encourage us to put into practice or intensify the practice of silence. Let us consider ourselves, individually and in our groups, as "Friends of Silence," serviceable followers of the Spirit of Silence.

On Silence

Vicente Beltran Anglada

There is an esoteric axiom that every student has to bring about in his or her life: "To know, to dare, to keep silent." An exegesis of this ancient esoteric saying would require volumes in order to analyze in depth each of these three verbs that, through the ages, have been presented to the consideration of every aspirant on the Path. Therefore, we will only consider herein the third one: TO KEEP SILENT.

The first thing we notice is that *keeping silent* has two possible meanings: to keep a secret, or to simply remain silent. This last meaning is the one we will be commenting on.

Apparently, in the eyes of ordinary people—and we mean this with no disrespect—silence is not valued and is discredited in society to such an extent that people strive not to be alone. They continuously seek the company of others and prefer to live among noise and sound, including the background din of radio and television, which, often unheeded, "keeps them company."

When it is time to go through the door that leads to the Inner Planes, every disciple is stunned to experience the profound Silence that reigns in these places, an absolute cosmic silence in which are immersed the most August Logos as well as the disciple or initiate who has decided to enter the Way of Salvation. The Law of Silence is a Cosmic Law, and is an aspect of that state of perpetual meditation in which everything that exists is submerged as beings within the continuously flowing Life stream. It is only in our lower spheres of manifestation that we have noise and dissonance. Silence doesn't mean the absence of sound, but it is never noisy and dissonant. We have heard more than once about *the music of the spheres* — the great chord emitted by the planes, each with its characteristic note in honor of the Creator. The whole of existence—the human, subhuman, deva kingdom, etc.—issues its own specific note within the whole of Creation. These notes together comprise only one octave out of the many octaves contained within the Logos. Extending this analogy further, we might intuit the great Cosmic Symphony that plays continuously within the Universal Great Silence.

Each Logos seeks to harmonize the infinite number of lives inhabiting their bodies and forming their body of expression. Evolution is the sum total of efforts that each life makes in order to emit its own corresponding note within the chord of Logoic Life. Evolution is merely the realization and fulfillment of the incommensurable Cosmic Destiny of the Logos, and in the process all that exists within the Logos is simultaneously transformed.

It may seem that the above considerations stray from the initial idea and purpose that we had in mind to write about here. Yet this is far from the case. The Law of Analogy will bring us

[An] attentive state not only facilitates control over the elementals, but it also produces a quiet expectation, which makes them aware of the calm they lack. This will slowly result in the bodies becoming more luminous. They will emit a soft and subtle sound that will, paradoxically, allow us to hear the Voice of Silence.

back to the heart of our consideration of *silence*. Each one of us is, within the limitations of our own small scale, an analogy of a Creator Logos. Countless small lives (devas) make up our dense, emotional and mental bodies, and the note they emit together is our own note—

the note that we contribute to the Logos. These small lives, each with their own unique notes, are constantly “talking,” trying to tread their own path with no consideration of the larger whole, without respecting the pauses, rhythms or silences that the Consciousness (Soul) or Life (Monad) aspects try to impose upon them during their karmic evolution.

Esoterically, we know

that all the devas forming a body of manifestation build up a strong elemental. Our major elementals—our physical, emotional and mental elementals—have become very powerful due to the great length of time in which they have been exerting their own will. So logically it is very difficult to force them to work in a way that differs from the one they are used to. These elementals follow their own evolutionary path, which is on a lower or involutory arc. This is why it has been—and continues to be—so difficult for many people to subjugate themselves to the discipline of the Soul.

It is generally believed, when speaking of silence, that it is a physical discipline requiring that one remain quiet and not speak or make audible sounds. And while this is indeed silence, it is not everything silence is. We may suppress our desire to talk, but our mind keeps manifesting endless thoughts. We may be able to limit the dissonance of our physical elemental by imposing external silence, but our emotions continue to bounce around unchecked. Additionally, our mind may send forth a note quite different from the one the Thinker is trying to produce, causing the personality to be at odds with the Consciousness and Life aspects.

To a great extent, the disciple's work involves silencing the three elementals that make up the personality and getting the lunar pitris to become *radiant points of light* that emit their own corresponding note. Personal evolution is the alchemical process of transmuting Light and Sound. But personal evolution is meaningless if it isn't taking place within a larger group, which in turn is part of other Larger Groups, and the whole process disappears in the vastness of Space. Only through the Synthesis achieved at the Third Initiation does each of the three bodies become radiant and emit the exact note needed to produce the perfect triadic chord composed of the personality, Soul and Monadic notes.

We often refer to Agni Yoga and its characteristics—quiet expectation and attention—but we may not have noticed that they are the consequence of Silence. It would be impossible to reach a state of *quiet expectation* if the desires of our lower quaternary are in constant discord and generating tremendous noise. We will not be able to maintain constant attention if we are incessantly assailed by our elementals.

Therefore, we have to keep the elementals quiet, in utter stillness, if we want to live by the rules of Agni Yoga. Yet it is also interesting to note that the best way to keep them quiet is to cultivate a state of constant attention. This attentive state not only facilitates control over the elementals, but it also produces a quiet expectation, which makes them aware of the calm they lack. This will slowly result in the bodies becoming more luminous. They will emit a soft and subtle sound that will, paradoxically, allow us to hear the Voice of Silence.

This is true esoteric silence. In the Ancient Mysteries, the aspirants and the candidates for initiation had to remain silent for years; it was one of the tests they had to pass as well as being a rite of purification. Such a measure had a rationale: it was intended that the candidate, by means of quietness, attention and observation, would reach a point of effective control over the lesser lives.

We have seen how, from a Cosmic perspective, Silence is inherent in our lives; we are in

a silent, yet sonorous, Universe; we are made up of minuscule lives that need to be kept silent so that they may be transmuted into a given sound. This work is the responsibility of the Consciousness and Life aspects of our Being. When it becomes a reality in our lives, we will be rendering an important service to the Plan that the Masters know and serve. May SILENCE pour forth as a nectar of PEACE to our HEART.

The Angels of Silence

There is a kind of devic sensitivity that comes from the highest subplanes of the astral plane, and its impact on the mystical life of humanity can be measured in terms of peace, quietness and self-communion. Hence, the angels who live and move and have their purpose on such levels are esoterically called “Angels of Silence.” This reality is difficult for our concrete mind to accept because it is constantly subject to the pressure of objective and tangible objects. But when the psychological life of a human being has deeply developed “divine love,” which is very different indeed from what we call “human love,” the idea discussed above begins to have a full and absolute meaning. This leads to a clear and conclusive understanding that meditation and the usual techniques to achieve mental silence will only have true value and effectiveness if the heart is free and detached from the things of the world, and also from spiritual ambition.

The Angels of Silence are invoked by the silence of the heart, and this requires “dispassion.” This dispassion can only be achieved when, as a result of our spiritual search, we leave behind “bits and pieces of our conquered self” in every fold of the mind and at every turn of the path. This is the “residue” of the things we have outgrown.

Nevertheless, the silence of the heart is not the result of a struggle or resistance to life, but rather an impulse of sacred understanding that allows us to triumph over all the obstacles in our path. Humans usually understand struggle

as a reaction against something or someone, but that concept will never bring us to the

Abode of the Angels of Silence. What we really need is to recognize—without struggle or resistance—that certain thoughtforms, emotions and other things no longer have a place in our lives. The aim shouldn't be to stifle or destroy them, but just to observe them so that their underlying meanings and causes can be revealed.

Once the true meaning of something is discovered, it disappears from our conceptual field of consciousness without any struggle or conflict, and leaves us free from the karmic wheel of the capricious whims and futility of human reasons. Then a wonderful devic action takes place within the ether that helps dissolve the residue left in our magnetic aura. Natural Silence implies “auric sharpness,” and no one will be able to really enjoy its extraordinary and impersonal benefits if the etheric aura is full of karmic residue. The root of this karmic residue can be found in our crystallized possessive desires that condition and impoverish our behavior.

Future esoteric psychology will be based on the deep and sustained individual observation of one's personal reactions to life and events and not, as now, by continuing to follow the Piscean method of dredging up the countless memories we have accumulated over time that constitute what is called the “subconscious,” the basis on which all psychological complexes and human traumas are created.

True psychological healing is brought about precisely by “disassociating” from these memories, and not by bringing them back and reliving them in order to find the causes for our psychic disturbance.

Esoterically speaking, true psychological salvation comes about when we begin to grasp

the meaning of life, by facing the immediate present calmly and with indomitable energy. Obviously, this will require a great deal of attention and observation. But thanks to the intensity that this approach generates the accumulative self, who creates all our problems, gradually stops interfering and finally disappears altogether from our field of consciousness.

It is when we arrive at this point that the previously described removal of psychic residue to the periphery of our magnetic or etheric aura takes place. And the subsequent activity of the Angels of Silence, whose main task is to clean our magnetic field, is to facilitate in this way the outpouring of resplendent energies over the planet Earth. These energies, still unknown to the vast majority of people, will produce an “etheric redemption” and will introduce a new social order in the life of humanity, more in harmony with the sacred laws of the Hierarchy and with the holy purpose of Shamballa.

¹ Helena. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of Silence* (Theosophy Trust, 2006), 18.

² Alice A. Bailey, *Treatise on White Magic* (New York, NY: Lucis Trust, 1951), 75.

³ See, among others, Nico Varo, *L'Arte del Silenzio e l'uso della Parola* (The art and use of speech) (Rotondi Ed., Rome, 1969); C.H. Herper *The Fellowship of Silence* (London, Mac Millan, 1915); L.V. Hodkin, *Silent Workshop* (London, Swarthmore, 1919); G. Hoyland, *The Use of Silence* (Wallingford, Pondle Hill, 1961).

⁴ NT: Assagioli's account of the vignette is slightly shorter than the actual passage. For the whole vignette, see:

<https://www.ewtn.com/library-MARY-/flowers.htm>

An Interview

With Rev. Susan Hamilton

Rev. Susan Hamilton, D. Min., served for fifteen years as pastor of Parkside Community United Church of Christ, a multicultural congregation in Sacramento, California. Then in February 2011, she was appointed Dean of Sancta Sophia Seminary in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Dr. Hamilton earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from California State University. She received her ministerial certificate from Sancta Sophia and was ordained in the Light of Christ Community Church in 1992. Hamilton earned Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Dr. Hamilton's doctoral dissertation developed into her recent book *Seeking Sophia: 33 Lessons for Discovering the Divine Feminine*. Its stated purpose is to provide a curriculum to lead church people to understand the presence of the Divine Feminine in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and to increase their awareness of the universality of Sophia in creation and creativity.

Esoteric Quarterly: You left the pastoral ministry to return to academia. Can you share some insights into what motivated that career change?

Susan Hamilton: I see synchronicity as a clear working of the Spirit. Three things came together in this career change. First, there comes a time in a pastor's tenure when he or she has taken the congregation as far as it can go, and it is best for both to grow in new directions. While my ministry was successful and flourishing in Sacramento, it was time for me to move on—

heart wrenching as it was. Second, the opportunity arose for me to become Dean at Sancta Sophia Seminary, my alma mater, and it felt "right." There was a part of me that long ago sensed that I could be involved as one of the next generation to carry the work forward. The third synchronistic component related to my mother, who had devotedly served the seminary for 27 years and was aging. Moving to Oklahoma to be near her during the last years of her life was additional motivation for change. Little did I know that my mother would make her transition one year after I arrived.

EQ: Who were your most important mentors as a student at Sancta Sophia and later at San Francisco Theological Seminary? In what ways did they influence you?

SH: During the early and mid-90's when I was a student, there were the five wise women of the Village; founder, Carol Parrish, Grace Bradley, Marjorie Stuth, Sally Brown, and my mother, Betty Carper. They were recognized as being the pillars of the institution and community. Mature spiritually and chronologically, these women guided students with firm hands gloved with grace. So many of us were molded and shaped by their wisdom, wit, and living example.

At San Francisco Theological Seminary, I was astounded that a traditional seminary could be so accepting of what others considered heresy! Since SFTS was a member of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, my enrollment afforded me the opportunity to attend classes at any of the

other eight seminaries on “Holy Hill” as it was called. This ecumenical broad consortium provided me a rich and diverse spiritual community that nurtured my education and spiritual formation. Specific professors were instructional in their field of specialty; Dr. James Noel and Dr. Jana Childers refined my skills in “preaching” while Hana Matt expanded my education and appreciation of mysticism in the world religions.

EQ: Were Alice Bailey, the Theosophical writers like Annie Besant and Geoffrey Hodson, and great writers in the western esoteric tradition important to you?

SH: When I was directed by Spirit (through a mystical experience) to attend Sancta Sophia, I knew nothing of the esoteric traditions. Despite my mother’s own deep involvement, she did not share these teachings with me. She wanted me to follow my own path through my involvement in mainline Christianity. Admittedly, I struggled at first with some of the concepts presented in Bailey’s and Besant’s writings as they did not “fit” with traditional doctrine. However, I had always raised questions which my pastors could not answer, so the more I read of the Ancient Wisdom the more it made sense to me. My Soul recognized the Truth even while my personality strove to find biblical validation. The Ageless Wisdom has its own systematic theology which answers such questions as: What is the nature of God? How was the world created? What is the relationship of humans to the Divine? And how do we explain evil and suffering in the world? Each culture in each era has sought to find the answers to these questions and has structured and shaped their spiritual practices and doctrines accordingly. The esoteric traditions, however, present the “larger picture” of creation and humanity’s evolutionary process. The teachings are called ageless be-

cause they contain the timeless truths of all sacred writings. Yet I also believe there are contemporary writers and teachers who are revealing wisdom that is as valuable as Bailey, Besant and Hodson.

EQ: Much has been written about esoteric Christianity, but there have been few signs that the major western or Eastern Orthodox denominations have embraced its tenets. Do you think esoteric Christianity is destined to remain focused in fringe denominations like the Unity Church and the Liberal Catholic Church?

SH: I would be hard-pressed to describe anyone’s destiny, let alone the entirety of Esoteric Christianity! However, orthodoxy is once again being given an opportunity to change. As in the past, the acceptance of new teachings (esoteric or otherwise), will most likely still be a challenge to all spiritual leaders. Some will “understand” and some, not ready for the new, may cling instead to the known and therefore, to more comfortable tenets and theology. There is an increased acceptance of reincarnation as a viable spiritual concept, and metaphysical interpretations are fairly common in some progressive Christian congregations. Full esoteric interpretations are still considered “heresy” by western denominations. By definition, heresy opposes and challenges orthodoxy, yet we have seen how today’s heresy becomes tomorrow’s orthodoxy. So, with the change from the Piscean to Aquarian era, we may see a radical evolution of all forms of spirituality and religion. Those of us in the esoteric community may find ourselves equally as challenged by new truths as are those in major western Christianity and Eastern Orthodox groups.

EQ: The Divine Feminine Sophia evidently has meant much to you, and you have helped promote awareness of her in

your writings and teachings. How do you view Sophia—as compared, say, with Mary the mother of Jesus or the Buddhist Kwan Yin—as a guiding principle for the Aquarian Age?

SH: Sophia is the current *nom du jour* for the Divine Feminine in western Christianity. She has gone by many names in various cultures before: Isis, Shekina, Maat, Quan Yin, Mary, Pachemama, a plethora of Hindu goddesses, and many more. While always present, the recognition of Her importance has paralleled the dawning of the Aquarian Age. The astrological glyph for Aquarius is the two wavy lines of water. Turned on end, they represent the two

equal poles of masculine and feminine energy; a key component of the Aquarian Age. In the esoteric teachings, we have the axiom “As above, so below” so we see the balanced masculine and feminine divine energies being manifested (recognized and valued) on the earth as evidence of the incoming Aquarian influences. The return of the Sacred Feminine in the United States has coincided with the women’s movement which began in force in the 1970’s. Feminist theologians and biblical scholars challenged the orthodox patriarchy and laid the foundation in traditional Christianity for the acceptance of God as feminine *and* masculine. She (Sophia) is being welcomed and honored, and I would venture to say “restored,” to Her rightful place.

All serious seekers naturally find themselves out of step with some orthodoxy or another. Questions are met with everything from suspicious glances to, at worst, direct punishment. As we develop spiritually, we eventually outgrow any and all “congregations.” And if we settle into one, it is the one which offends us the least.

EQ: In a liturgy for Advent, you wrote: “*The Holy Mother and the Holy Father live within us.*” Can you be precise in explaining what that means?

SH: I am drawing on the Jungian concepts of the anima and animus in our psyche as well as theological principles. We each have masculine and feminine energies and capabilities within us, just as we have positive and negative energies in our body systems and cellular structure. Extrapolating from the physical to the metaphysical and spiritual, we have the divine feminine and divine masculine within us. Judeo-Christian scriptures hold that we are created after the image of God. Therefore, we contain the mother and the father within us. Our spiritual work is to balance our-

selves, to bring the polarities into harmony, right relation, and right use. We are to develop the Divine Masculine and the Divine Feminine potential within ourselves, to become like Christ-Sophia, to harmonize love-wisdom.

EQ: You have written some elegant poetry. Did you start composing poetry when you were a child? Do you feel that poetry offers a way to express esoteric insights that might otherwise be impossible?

SH: I confess that my poetry is unbidden and unpredictable. There have been times of great pain in my life in which the best way to express my feelings was through poetic language. Likewise, feelings of relief and joy have been expressed poetically. Poetry is a creative expression. It is the result of one of Sophia’s creative muses at

work! The writers of spiritual poetry are often mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen, Theresa of Avila, Meister Eckhart, and Julian of Norwich. The world of the mystic can be difficult to describe and is often best articulated through poetic words. However, poetry is only one medium of expressing esoteric insights. I know great painters of inspiring visual art; others who write moving music of the song of the Soul; still others who offer spell-binding dance; and there are those who drum to connect with and express their unique relationship with the Divine.

EQ: You were raised in the United Methodist Church, spent some time as a Southern Baptist and Presbyterian, and finally came to the United Church of Christ. Did you encounter any theological or other road bumps along the way? Did you feel impulses towards esoteric Christianity early in this spiritual journey?

SH: Yes, of course! All of us encounter these bumps along the way. Certainly, no one on the spiritual journey progresses without challenges to their beliefs, their stability, their relationships, or their sense of sanity. That is the nature of the path. My journey through eclectic ecumenism is not unique. Others have taken circuitous routes on their spiritual journey as well. All serious seekers naturally find themselves out of step with some orthodoxy or another. Questions are met with everything from suspicious glances to, at worst, direct punishment. As we develop spiritually, we eventually outgrow any and all “congregations.” And if we settle into one, it is the one which offends us the least. As I shared earlier, the questions I raised as a youth in the Southern Baptist church, and the ones I raised in the United Methodist Church as an adult, were not welcomed and went unanswered by the clergy. I wanted to know more; I sought *gnosis*. Was that an esoteric impulse? In a

way, I suppose it was. No one offered me the support to find the answers within, nor could they lead me into the mystery, for they did not know how.

EQ: What form do you think organized religion will take over the next century or two, and what will be its relationship to esoteric studies and practice?

SH: Would that I had a crystal ball to see centuries into the future. What I see happening now; despite the polarization we find between the extremes of fundamentalist religion and secular atheism is a sincere desire on the part of the next generation for genuine spiritual connection to the Divine. The youth of today, as far as I can tell, want it “real.” By that I mean that they are not satisfied with simply learning doctrine. What they accept are the teachings they can validate through personal spiritual experiences and live by to help to create a better world. They are not interested solely in mental experience, nor simply an emotional experience, or a social justice application—they want all three. If the teaching, preaching and “worship” does not connect in all three arenas and provide them with a transcendental encounter, they will sniff it out as inadequate. The youth of today want to be part of creating and leading the collective evolution. Group work—another hallmark of the Aquarian Age—is what they seek. Leadership is essential and yet paying attention to the voices of everyone is equally important.

There will always be a need for “churches” of some kind, since the corporate experience of worship, learning, and serving is a basic requirement for humanity. However, the churches of the future will not look like the churches of the 1950s; they will need to change as society changes and develops. Indeed, this is already taking place. For example, spirituality and

mysticism have become mainstream in some progressive congregations.

But the transformation does not end there. The esoteric community will also need to change. To be relevant to present and future generations, our congregations, esoteric organizations and study groups will need to blend their heady intellectual teachings and mental body disciplines with a heart-centered compassion. If we are to be effective with the youth of today, we will need to find a way to engage in tangible ways with the evolutionary process of humanity. The elitist stance taken by some esoteric Christians that allows them to focus solely on their own spiritual development or soul-infusion is not enough. While it is true that this work impacts the consciousness and development of all humanity, there is more we can do to be of service. Further engaging and connecting our empathetic heart and physical body *with* our mental body aspirations will make us more whole and balanced and “real” to the youth.

I see a future in which esotericism and traditional western religions can interface well. Because mysticism has become more widely accepted in Christian, Hebrew, and Islamic expressions, we esotericists now have greater common ground for discussion, and we are in a position to offer guidance and direction to aspiring mystics. That work has already begun, as evidenced by the recent students enrolled at Sancta Sophia who were involved in traditional Christian churches and were finding language to bridge their two worlds. The systematic theology of esoteric theosophy will likely still be challenging to any other faith’s cosmology.

EQ: What do you consider your greatest accomplishment on your spiritual path thus far?

SH: I feel satisfaction as I recall my years of pastoral ministry and the growth I was privileged to witness in the lives of members at Parkside Community Church. Serving as the Dean of Sancta Sophia, brief as it was, also gives me a sense of accomplishment. However, the work that warms my heart with a realization that “yes, you’ve done a holy work” are the times I’ve gently helped to open someone up to a new understanding; the times when I’ve been a loving and listening presence with someone who is emotionally or spiritually hurting; and the times I’ve led a playful, creative, and joyful worship service from which people left smiling with the love of God and each other.

EQ: What advice would you give your students and other young people embarking on careers in the ministry?

SH: The classic advice to those embarking on careers in ministry, which many of my colleagues would corroborate, is: “If you can do *anything* else but the ministry, do it!” Ministry is very hard work, unless one is doing it as a hobby while having a full-time career in some other area. The ministry demands a great deal of energy with very little reward or adequate pay. Think of being a teacher or home caregiver or daycare provider or all three combined. At the same time, if one is called, then one is called. Despite the hard work, low pay, and long hours, there are those sacred moments of privilege, as I noted earlier, when one feels that they are standing upon holy ground. It is those sacred moments that re-energize a person called to ministry, and they know their “yes” answer to God was the right one.

EQ: Sancta Sophia’s demise must have been a terrible blow to you—as it was to the many other people associated with the seminary. Do you think there will be opportunities for other institutions to offer

similar programs in the foreseeable future?

SH: Closing the seminary was not what I came there to do. And yet, if we accept the teachings that all is in divine right order, and the universe is unfolding as it should, and nothing is ever wasted, and that we are doing exactly what we are supposed to be doing at any given minute—then I guess I did come to close the seminary, heart-breaking as it was.

I've spoken to some of our graduates recently who are considering forming their own schools with colleagues nearby, and I'm excited about their potential. Fr. John Dominic Crossan, a progressive Christian theologian, describes the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus. He likens John the Baptist to a monopoly and Jesus to a franchise. John the Baptist had a monopoly on his work because none of his students set up baptizing stations along the rivers or lakes. Everyone came to John for baptism. When he was beheaded his movement died, and his followers dispersed. When Jesus led his disciples, he empowered them to do as he did so that when he died the work carried on in multiple locations—like a franchise. Perhaps

this will be the description of Sancta Sophia in the future; her graduates will establish franchises in their local areas to carry on the work.

EQ: Is there anything else you would like to tell readers of *The Esoteric Quarterly*?

SH: Briefly, I would like to say something about the future of Sparrow Hawk Village, the church, and the seminary. At this point, we are open to Spirit's guidance. The world is different than it was then 30-plus years ago when the Village was founded. The era into which we have been called will demand something different from us in terms of education and service. Members of our community are working together and with renewed energy and unity to redefine our future. We are in dialogue with groups who are interested in spiritual and sustainable living, holistic healing, and true communal life. And we have readied and sold a number of new wooded lots to people who want to be a part of the Village and its possibilities for the future. We invite others to join us in this adventure.

EQ: We very much appreciate your taking the time for this interview. We wish you every blessing for the future!

Book Reviews

***The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*, by George M. Young, Oxford University Press, 2012.**

The *Russian Cosmists*, by George M. Young, is an enriching and comprehensive contribution to an area about which most Western scholars and esotericists are singularly ill-informed. Not only its scope but the depth of his analysis is a testimony to the author's decades-long engagement with his subject.

Young is keen to immediately disclaim any personal endorsement of the material he presents, insisting that many of these ideas in the wrong hands can be dangerous and are for "mature audiences only." With that warning in hand, the reader is immersed in an engaging historical and cultural appraisal of a fascinating intellectual, philosophical, scientific and spiritual landscape largely unknown in the West. Cosmism was a submerged tradition in Soviet Russia as well, though since the demise of Communism (which some of its proponents idealistically endorsed only to fall victim to it themselves) it is being embraced with a nationalistic fervor as an example of a distinctly original Russian tradition.

While Western esotericists will clearly be familiar with the work of Madame Blavatsky or the Roerichs, how many have honestly heard of Nikolai Fedorov, the reluctant guru to the likes of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Pasternak in his *Doctor Zhivago*? Not to mention the likes of Vernadsky, phenomenally gifted as a linguist and one of the great figures of Western science who was also one of the first scientists to state that science proves what mystics and poets have long experienced, or Tsiolkovsky, the inventor of rocket science who believed in channeling, or the Russian Orthodox philosophers and polymaths Solovyov, Bulgakov, Florensky, Berdyaev? And there are many more.

Nikolai Fedorov (1829-1903) is at the cornerstone of this whole movement and so he is the cornerstone of this book. Young provides the

historical setting, showing Fedorov's links to the Russian tradition of spiritual sages who combined Russian Orthodox beliefs with shamanistic or yogic practices and equally his links to Russia's abiding fascination with the esoteric and the occult. In fact, esoteric teachings underlie much of cosmist thought even though they are mostly unacknowledged.

Some readers of the *Esoteric Quarterly* may be familiar with the figure of the Siberian sage, Anastasia, whom Young does not include in his survey. What they may not realize is how deeply embedded she is in this very Russian tradition, which combines science, technology, art, the social order, religion and spirituality—and touches on everything in between. Readers of Anastasia will be familiar with her concepts of kinship, her shamanistic siddhic powers (such as regulating her body temperature), her belief in the power of the Word and in directing matter through thought, her involvement in technology and science. Anastasia hearkens back to a Russian Vedic Golden Age of kinship with all life, and forward to an active evolution that embraces the full potential of "Man" (*chelovek*), with Russia taking on the role of spiritual wayshower for the rest of the world as the place where this paradise is to be first realized: all of these are very Fedorovian and cosmist ideas as we shall see.

What strikes one from the outset is the very Russian nature of Cosmism, which also gives it its challenging and, at times, disturbing originality. Fedorov was one of many Russians who believed in Russia's special spiritual Destiny at the intersection and confluence of East and West, showing a Third Way, echoing back to Moscow's supposed role as the Third (and final) Rome with Russia taking its place at the center of a universal Christianity. This mission led the Cosmists to all kinds of speculations as to how this destiny and the ideal society it was to engender were to be achieved, ranging from benevolent autocracy (a favorite of Fedorov's) to the willing surrender of the individual to the communal good. Given that Russia does not

generally share western evaluations of the rights of the individual as inalterably above the collective, the subjugation of the individual's interests to the "common good" or to a benevolent autocratic government becomes a viable alternative. The fact that this scenario does not sound quite so alarming to many Russians is something which a study such as this helps to clarify. For instance, the book helps us to understand what is meant by a surrender of individuality to society at large. What is crucial to cosmist thought is the lack of separation between disciplines or between areas of human experience. Thus, the political cannot be separated from the spiritual. *Rodstvo*—kinship—is at the heart of Fedorov's thought, and it is a concept that remains at the heart of Russian culture. *Rodstvo* is what links us to "the other" in a sacrosanct and unbreakable chain. Our prime responsibility is to this link, this kinship, which ultimately we experience with all of humanity and the entire natural world. Fedorov aspires to a perfect brotherhood which would obliterate the need or the desire for equality or for a self-serving definition of freedom through the recognition of oneself as part of the greater whole. In essence, this is like looking for an ideal fusion with the will of God. The Cosmists see another way in which this can be achieved, and that is through finding one's rightful place within the greater whole. The ultimate model for this is the Holy Trinity in which the Three are One and yet Three, neither separated nor fused. In fact, much cosmist thinking, most notably that of Florensky (whose extraordinary accomplishments made him a Russian Leonardo), eschews the "either/or" model of thought in favor of "both/and." For Florensky truth is both something and its negation, the thing and its other, and his new paradigm of discontinuity in mathematics and in reason is being borne out by the paradoxes of the new physics.

The upshot is that Western sacred cows such as progress, freedom, equality, diversity and democracy are dismantled in favor of an alternative worldview of kinship, brotherhood and connection to the All. Young's research helps us to appreciate the extent of the challenge of this alternative worldview, as well as giving us a greater understanding of the nature of Russian politics, in itself a valuable contribution for anybody seeking to engage with Russia on a cultural

or political level. Once we get past the initial shock of the challenge we are jolted into a more nuanced understanding of our own values and ideas. However, the question cannot help but be raised as to the extent to which such a mindset made Russia fertile ground for being taken over by the Communists who appeared to express a similar ideology and operational model for society. The very real question remains as to whether the experience of Communism means that such a model does not work.

The second striking factor about Cosmism is the number of fields of human endeavor and experience, which most of the Russian Cosmists sought to explore, to contribute to and integrate into a truly cosmic vision. These men were not only "jacks of all trades," they were masters of most. Science, art, philosophy, religions are not approached as distinct fields but seen in relation to each other and the whole. The Cosmists offer an alternative that is the very opposite of the increasingly narrow specializations and empiricism of the West. Theirs is a truly multidisciplinary phenomenon looking for a totality of vision and a new unity of art, science, philosophy and spirituality.

The third and possibly most important point is that, disparate as these thinkers are, they share a belief in the continued active and self-directed evolution and perfectibility of the human being. This gives rise to an implicit optimism about the future which is a refreshing alternative to the doom and gloom scenarios of environmental degradation. While the Cosmist thinkers acknowledge the extent of the problem, they also assume that human beings are capable of and have the responsibility to solve any problem they have caused. This is not a disembodied solution – technological advances are very much part of the picture. Paradise itself is not disembodied or sought in a different dimension—it includes matter as well as spirit, albeit an increasingly spiritualized matter, for the Cosmists seek nothing less than the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God on earth. Not surprisingly, the recognition and experience of Sophia as the underlying truth of reality and as an aspect of the Holy Trinity, becomes of prime importance to some of the Cosmists, notwithstanding Fedorov's own strictly patriarchal

thought in which eros is an exclusively negative force (inspiring Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata*). In fact, it is just possible that it is the inclusion of the Divine Feminine principle itself in their thought which could save the Cosmists from the totalitarian interpretations they invite.

Going further, many Cosmists believe in the evolution of a new form of humanity in its ascension to a higher mode of functioning. This leads to discussions of increasing longevity (no longer such an extreme idea), curing aging, using machines as extensions of limbs, regenerating organs, and ultimately, attaining immortality. Once again, many of these ideas are beginning to sound less extreme thanks to technological advances, with technological enhancements of bodily functions through machines already taking place, while even scientific immortalism is being discussed in more mainstream publications, to say nothing of the Cosmists' dreams of space travel and the colonization of the cosmos. Some of their pronouncements are bold to the point of ludicrousness – Fedorov's Common Task after all is the physical resurrection of the fathers by the sons going back all the way to Adam—yet who knows which of their imaginings and visions are destined to be manifested as part of our reality?

The book is rich in extracts and quotations and provides a wealth of challenging perspectives for esotericists, cultural and religious philosophers, and historians. Make no mistake—these thinkers offer a different way of approaching both material and spiritual issues, not that they would mostly adhere with that distinction in any case. Thus Fedorov himself, for all his endorsement of technology, states clearly that it must be allied to spiritual development if we are not to end up in a machine regulated hell. Science and art must both be linked to spirituality if evolution is to take place.

The Cosmists' big achievement is also to bring esoteric topics into the mainstream – they simply

view them as attainable concretely in this world and research them in a scientific way. In fact, there is ongoing research in Russia into psychic powers, telepathic communication (enhanced by the Kozyrev Mirror), the aether, time travel and the like, all of which fits well with Russia's continuing obsession with the esoteric and the occult.

This book is in itself exhaustive of cosmist thought, but can also be used as a launching pad into the writings of any of the thinkers whose work is examined. Its material is enough to tempt anyone seriously interested in the future evolution of humanity. In addition, the Cosmists challenge models of the future and of future government and society, they challenge human capability and the necessity of death, and they provide alternative models for a functioning harmonious society. They are also responsible for transforming knowledge hidden in alchemy and archaic occult traditions into respectable theology and science bringing it into conventional thought, akin to the work of Deepak Chopra, who brings ancient Vedic knowledge into the mainstream.

The "Russianness" of Cosmist thought should no longer be a barrier to discovering and appreciating its bountiful offerings. And this book is a very valuable introduction to this rich and largely unknown tradition, which needs to be discovered and engaged with.

Young makes an important point at the close of his book: "Perhaps the most important contribution the Russian Cosmists have made to modern intellectual life, however, is to offer a centered, directed, positive vision in a largely uncentered, rudderless, negative time." (p.241) For this alone, the Russian Cosmists are worth discovering.

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***Quiet Horizon: Releasing Ideology and Embracing Self-Knowledge*, by Greg Jemsek.** Trafford Publishing Co., 2011, 322 pages. List price US\$24.95. Available in hardcover and paperback from online and other booksellers.

The author's experience with the cult of Ananda Marga (the Path of Bliss) in the 1970s, led him to analyze the attraction of restrictive ideologies, not only religious ideologies, but also political and social systems of belief. He wondered why people would be willing to give up their intellectual freedom and unquestioningly accept the dogma of the ideology.

Jemsek refers to ideological conversion as a "swoon," and he says it is as intoxicating as falling in love. It engenders a willingness to believe that the secrets of life will be made clear as long as the dictates of the organization are religiously followed.

In the author's case, his susceptibility to the ideology of Ananda Marga was increased due to his lifelong desire to re-enter the "golden world" he discovered during a mystical experience in his youth. He also points to the "narcissistic damage" he experienced as a youth and his desire to belong to a loving family of like-minded people. He was impressed by the forcefulness exhibited by a group of committed and organized people who seemed to have a handle on spiritual transformation. However, conversion was required in order to achieve this promised transformation.

The conversion process takes place on what Jemsek calls a "persuasion continuum." Calcification is the first tipping point on this continuum, where theories turn into certainties, and belief overrides direct personal experience. The door to open-mindedness slams shut. The second tipping point is when the ideology is wholeheartedly embraced. Then the third tipping point is the descent into fundamentalism, absolute certainty, a prohibition of dissent, and the acceptance of rules to explain every aspect of existence. Critical thinking is completely closed off.

While recognizing that ideologies contain valuable lessons, the author says that their dark side is their insistence that everyone must subscribe to the ideology or else be doomed. Jemsek wonders whether some sort of psychological dynamic was present in U.S. society that fueled the high

conversion rate of so many people to both eastern religions and to fundamentalist Christian groups. He saw that this wholesale buying into a religious ideology in the 1970s was similar to the rebirth of materialism in the 1980s, which is still with us today. The pursuit of self-knowledge turned into the pursuit of prosperity.

Jemsek explains that ideologies must spring from meta-narratives—grand persuasive story lines embedded in a society's self-identity, the assumptions they cherish—because persuasion is easier when people have taken certain ideas for granted all their lives. We buy into particular beliefs from the moment we are born into a specific cultural milieu. Through repetition, meta-narratives eventually lead to unconscious acceptance. Events are interpreted in such a way that they seem to confirm these ideas. Ideologies pick up on these belief systems and use them to persuade others of their authenticity.

The author gives as an example the Protestant Reformation and Puritanism. Puritanism, along with its religious descendants of today, was so successful in imposing its interpretation of the Reformation meta-narrative on U.S. society because people were (and continue to be) capable of accepting the idea of surrendering their personal sovereignty in exchange for the abstract promise of salvation. Another example in U.S. society is the frontier meta-narrative with its ideas of limitless possibilities, individualism, and the self-made man.

From this discussion of meta-narratives and their influence on humanity's willingness to accept ideologies, the author next discusses themes that are relevant to the individual process of seeking meaning. Jemsek admits that he conflated the experience of intense transcendent moments with the idea of transformation. Eventually, he realized they are two separate things, and that what he really needed was transformation rather than rediscovering that transcendent golden world of his youth. Transformation, he says, requires having the strength to act upon the human knowing each person already possesses. It also requires resisting the temptation of ideological visions of the world, especially when these visions are associated with intense or uplifting moments or compelling meta-narratives.

To accomplish transformation, ideologies would have us believe that we need to give up the personality and adopt an identity that is in accord with the ideology's belief system. To counter this assertion, he cites Ken Wilber's "pre-trans fallacy," which is the belief that we have to ditch the personality before it has even had a chance to establish and get to know itself, thus avoiding the difficult work of learning to be fully in the world, warts and all, no matter that identity is ultimately illusory.

The discovery of one's personal identity is a necessary first step to transformation, according to Jemsek, and it must be done in a mindful way, in ordinary everyday environments, under ordinary circumstances. He admits that ordinary living is much grittier than the pursuit of transcendent experiences, and people usually prefer to look for an easier, more interesting path. Nevertheless, coming to terms with limits is how a person moves from a malfunctioning narcissism to a healthy self-confidence. And one must also develop self-compassion and give up puritanical notions of needing to be perfect.

To develop an authentic identity, all ideas need to be weighed against something reliable in oneself. Jemsek asserts that sustaining a mindful presence provides all the self-knowledge a person needs. Beliefs give us focus and conviction, the author says, but they constrict our perspective of the wider world, and although a narrow focus may be necessary to get anything done, sometimes the shortsightedness causes one to do the opposite of what was intended.

Jemsek asks if there is a way to be empowered by belief without being a slave to it, and his answer is that it is impossible within an ideological

system. What's important, he says, is to be able to embrace uncertainty, believe in the uncertainty of life, and allow identity to emerge rather than adopting it to cover up the cleavages in our persona. His signposts to healthy empowerment and transformation are: building a solid identity, relating to others authentically, being willing to meet the world in the present moment.

Jemsek states that we must be mindfully present to pursue self-knowledge. Accessing the detached witness begins through exercising the personal will and having enough confidence in the solidity of one's identity to be willing to create a distance from it so that it can be perceived. We access broader levels of awareness through the witness, he says, and sustaining that awareness broadens and deepens our experience of the world.

According to the author, authentic relationships are based on a willingness to be vulnerable, a curiosity about others and the courage to disagree. We interrupt the gradual descent into ideological thinking by witnessing one's life with greater mindfulness. With this work, we can become a force in the world to expose the danger of ideology. This is important work in a world where, as Jemsek points out, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain trustworthy, in-depth dialog in public arenas.

The Quiet Horizon, Jemsek says, is the present moment, and he invites readers to take the necessary steps to wake up from their personal conversion swoon.

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