

BODIES

The construction of the human cosmos outlined last week begins to reveal the upside down view we have of ourselves. Our everyday sensations produce a compelling picture of a body which is separate from the rest of the universe. In this body somewhere there exists a mind; and in the mind, in some dim and secret recess, lurks the soul.

This view of ourselves is perhaps the single biggest obstacle that separates us from reality.

The System proposes a quite different perspective: the body is our least important possession but because of our lack of higher energies, the mind and the soul only tick over at a low level of energy, just enough to support the body.

Self-remembering, and all the practices which surround it, are aimed at increasing the ability of the human being to work with a vastly greater output of energetic material. If this is achieved, individual consciousness expands into hitherto unknown dimensions.

The System suggests that three further bodies can be acquired or activated by this increase in energy. The figure below illustrates this idea with the various names by which the different bodies are referred to in Christian and Theosophical language: (from ISM p. 41)

Carnal Body	Natural or 'Planetary' Body	Spiritual Body	Divine Body
CARRIAGE	HORSE	DRIVER (mind)	MASTER (real 'I' – Will)
Physical Body	Astral Body	Mental Body	Causal Body

These four components are each connected by different mechanisms. The carriage to the horse by shafts, the driver to the horse by reins, and the Master to the driver by his voice. To begin with, the horse represents the emotions which always pull the body along with them. Thus 'work' begins with the driver, ('discrimination'), who is usually asleep and must learn first of all to 'wake up' and acquire some control over the emotions. Only then will the driver be able, being now of some use, to hear the voice of the Master if and when he speaks.

The astral body is related to the 'higher emotional centre' and the mental body to the 'higher intellectual centre'.

It has been a source of discussion for many years as to whether these bodies have actually to be created or if their latent possession will simply be revealed by a process of purification.

Ouspensky puts the reality of our situation like this:

"In our condition we have a carriage rusty and creaking from disuse, with even nuts and bolts missing; a horse which is either lazy and weak or 'temperamental'

and disobedient; a driver who knows neither the mechanism of his carriage nor condition of roads, nor how to drive, and who has no control over the horse; and a 'Master' anxious to continue His Way, but imprisoned in the carriage and unable to communicate with the stupid driver.

And moreover, the shafts are broken, the reins are made of string, and communication between Master and driver hopeless. Sometimes something from without hits the horse and off he gallops; driver wakes up, holds on terrified not to fall off his box, but horse running wildly soon lands the carriage in a ditch, broken, and driver bruised, rolls in mud. Only then can he listen to Master, so gets busy, but as soon as he is all right, he continues to read his newspaper which he buys with the horse's forage money, dresses up in his fur coat and top hat, and full of importance mounts his box and sits there as if he were Lord of the equipage, until another accident occurs and the horse begins to bolt. Meanwhile the Master is imprisoned in carriage, full of Great Sorrow, for he cannot continue his Way."

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The Advaita teaching has a simpler, yet more radical, picture. For most purposes we can just consider three bodies: the physical body, the subtle body and the causal body¹.

The physical body contains both the body *per se* and also the machinery of the brain. The subtle body is the mind, the world of psychology. The causal body is the spiritual realm.

In the 'creation story' in Advaita, the coarser is manifested from the finer; so it is supposed that the causal body creates the subtle body and the subtle body creates the physical body.

HH Shantanand Saraswati described the relation between the bodies as follows:

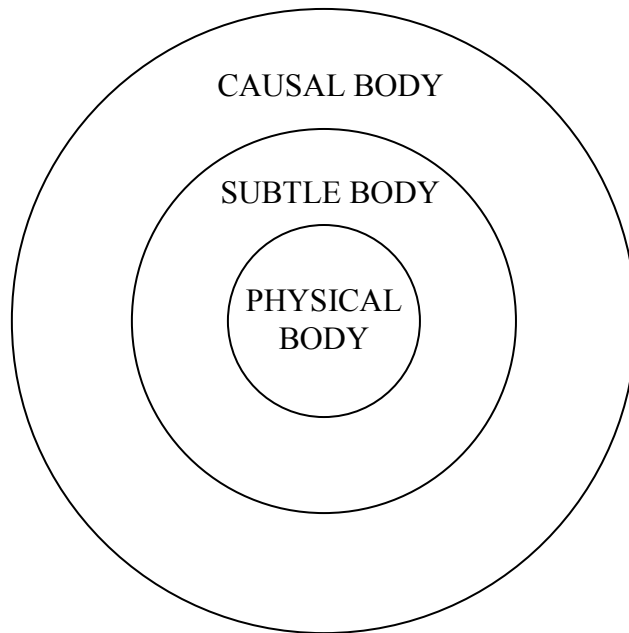
The general concept of the coarse world and the subtle world which is known to common people is that the coarse [physical] body is the biggest body, inside which is the subtle body, and smaller than the subtle body is the causal body, and within that small causal body is the Atman hiding in a remote corner.

But the Reality is quite different on individual and universal level — both. The coarse [physical] world is the smallest of all and surrounded by an extensive subtle world which again is merged into an extensive sphere of the causal world. And then everything is covered by the Atman which has limits and no division.

Moreover, the causal body is seen as containing the subtle body, and the subtle body containing the physical body. The causal body is bigger than the subtle body and the subtle body bigger than the physical body. [*Record* 18.9.68]

¹ There is a fourth body, the divine body. But for us as we are we can only know about it theoretically.

So the three bodies might be drawn as a set of Russian dolls or to simplify matters as concentric circles:



One can get a feeling for this radically different point of view by considering the limitations on the different bodies: the physical body is clearly very limited in what it can do, where it can go, but the mind can 'go' anywhere.

Consider also what really determines the form of the physical body.

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The home of the Atman, the real self, is the causal body; the ordinary self lives in the subtle body. Why is it that the ordinary self cannot perceive the real self; or, why is it, if the real self is already at home in us, that it does not make itself known? Why is it that we do not see ourselves as shown in the diagram?

There is a whole teaching that attempts to answer these questions and to suggest ways in which we can start to see the world the right way up instead of upside down. This is the Advaita teaching on the Antahkaran (broadly speaking the 'soul') and we hope to study this in the next few weeks.

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