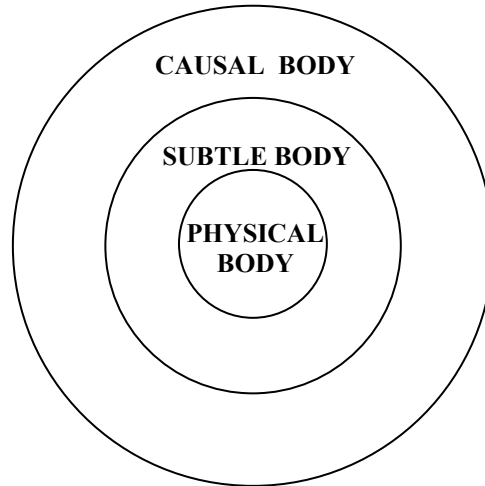


THE SOUL

In the Advaita teaching, we are told that we have everything upside down, (and back to front) and the three 'bodies' we possess exist in an opposite proportion to the way we normally perceive them: so the largest is the Causal Body, and this contains the Subtle Body, which in turn contains the Physical Body.

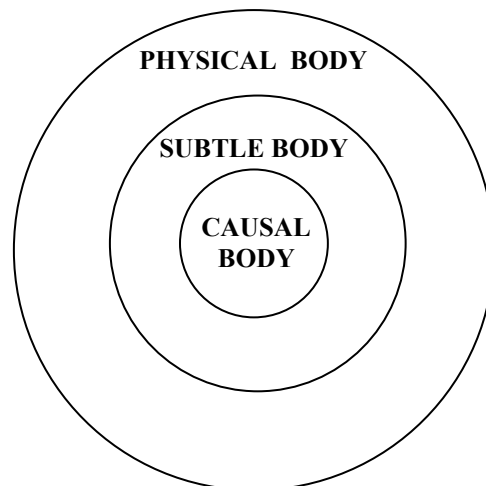


It is also stated that the physical body (passive force) is animated only by the subtle body (active force) whose activities are in turn derived from the Causal body (neutralising force).

There are many descriptions by people who, transiently or permanently, see the world from this point of view. The man who led our group for the last 20 years died recently and in his funeral eulogy it was remembered that:

His work under Ouspensky's guidance produced an extraordinary experience. Once, while travelling on the underground during the War, he recalled, "everything I saw outside me was united in me and through me in the most astonishing way. I was everything."

It was this experience, he said in later life, that sustained him through many vicissitudes and proved his trust in Ouspensky's vision and to whom he remained always faithful. However, we have to start from where we are, so it is often simpler to go along with the fiction of a mind within the body and the "soul" within the mind.

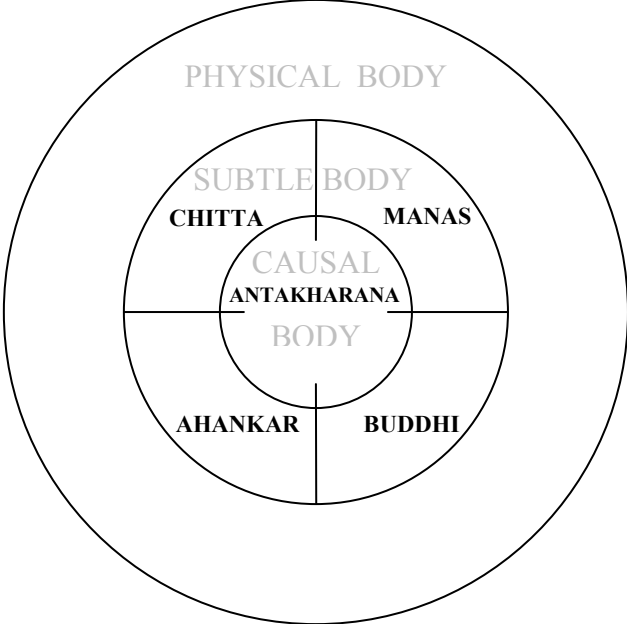


Advaita has some interesting views on the reasons why we are stuck with this viewpoint. But first we need to learn a bit more detail about how in this teaching the mind is constructed. There is no universal agreement about what constitutes the soul, but in Advaita it is described as the 'Inner Organ' (Antakharana). The Antakharana originates in the Causal Body but it is manifested in the Subtle Body:

What is commonly called 'mind' is all contained in Antahkarana (Inner Organ) which on the causal level is all one, but on the subtle level is divided into four different functions: Manas is that part of mind which thinks of this thing, that thing - I will do this, I will do that. That is Manas. Buddhi is something like wisdom which tell us what is right and wrong, and Chitta is that which thinks, 'Yes, I will do this, I will do that.' Ahankar is that which is something like Ego - 'This is my mind, this is my intellect', - my this, to everything, that is Ahankar.

There are some echoes of the System idea of 'many I's' here, but it is more the idea that the mind 'stuff' has four functions. It is not clear whether it is the same mind that is sometimes acting in one way, say engaged in turning thoughts, sometimes in another way, say experiencing a moment of being present, or whether the functions are separate modules between which we fluctuate. For the sake of argument we will take it that there are the four separate module-functions and that our ordinary consciousness flits from one to the other—like the light of a torch passing over the objects in a darkened room. All the objects are there and functioning to some extent all the time, but we are only aware of them to the degree that our limited consciousness allows.

As suggested in the next diagram, these functions are separate only at the subtle



level: in the Causal Body the four are 'syncromeshed'.

Note that these are parts of the mind, not the brain. There must also be physical parts of the brain that underlie their function. Moreover there is a connection with Chakras: Chitta and Manas are said to be felt in the heart, Buddhi and Ahankar in the head.

*

Suppose one wants to change one's viewpoint:

Before one can transform Prakriti, (Prakriti means our essential 'nature' how we are made up) it is essential to understand what Prakriti is. Prakriti is the combination of all these four functions which are known as Ahankara, Chitta, Buddhi and Manas.

Ahankara is that which gives the feeling of 'I', based on any relationship of Self and non-self; Chitta is that which holds all the knowledge (and memory) of the individual and cherishes certain thoughts; Buddhi is that which discriminates between useful and not useful; and Manas is that through which one has desires and counter-desires.

If the Prakriti is good and pure, then all these four functions will also be good and pure, because Prakriti is the force which works through these four. When the force is good the instruments function properly. In this way the Ahankara will stand for Atman, the True Self and not other things like body or mind; this will be pure Ahankar which will be universal. The Chitta will have good Knowledge in store and cherish good ideas. Buddhi will be pure and would rightly decide what is good for the Atman and refuse other considerations; and Manas will have good desires for one's development only.

If Prakriti is wrong or bad then all these functions will be reversed and result in poverty. In such cases the Ahankara will not be for the Self, but only for one's body, strength, mind, intelligence beauty and wisdom which one claims to have, and one would say, "I am the wise, the beautiful, and so on". Chitta will cherish distorted pictures and bad knowledge only will be in store. Buddhi will always take wrong as right and leave the right and good, considering them useless. Manas will always have desires of sensual things, more and more of them.

One need only look at oneself, at what one desires, decides, cherishes and claims for the Atman, and one would find out what one's Prakriti is; and then through the help of true Knowledge, good company, Scriptures, discussions, Realised Man, one should try to turn away and work with attention so that one always desires good, decides for good, cherishes goodness, and only stands for the Atman which is everywhere. This particular work is only done by the aspirant himself and for himself. The inner help comes from the Atman Himself.

Exactly what change is needed? In Advaita, it is supposed that part of the problem is that the Real Self (Param Atman, or often just Atman) becomes screened from view by 'sheaths' that we unconsciously construct in our minds as we grow up—but more of that in the next paper.

*

For this coming week, let's try to observe what our minds are doing and see if our observations agree with Advaita's fourfold division of mind. Also, where do we feel different aspects of the mind?

It might be helpful to have a summary of the four functions:

Manas. The body-mind, the desiring, moving mind, thinking, turning thoughts.

Buddhi. The discriminating mind, considering, conscience.

Ahankar. The feeling of 'I', the ego.

Chitta. Memory, remembering, one's 'store' of consciousness.

* * *

In everyone's life one does experience unity with the Atman but one does not know it. During deep sleep the self merges with the Universal self. This happens in ignorance but is a natural phenomenon. If during active life or meditation one does not feel this merging, it is because of a sheath. This sheath is natural too. The unity which is experienced is the light thrown by the Atman on this sheath, and recognised by the Antahkarana.

These sheaths are described in the *Crest Jewel of Wisdom*:

The Self wrapped up in the 5 sheaths ... does not shine forth, just as the water in the pond is covered by a veil of green scum. When the scum is removed, immediately the water shines pure, taking away thirst and heat, and straightway becoming a source of great joy to man.

1. ANNAMAYA. The food formed sheath is this body, which lives by food and perishes without food - regarding the body and its powers as 'I'.
2. PRANAMAYA. The breath formed sheath is formed by the life-breath determined by the five powers of action, ... coming and going like the wind" can in no wise discern between right and wrong, between oneself and another, but is ever dependent.
3. MANOMAYA. The mind formed sheath is formed of the powers of perception and the mind; it is the cause of distinction between 'mine' and 'I'; it is active in distinguishing names and numbers.
4. VIJNANAMAYA. The intelligence formed sheath, whose distinguishing character is adaptability and acting, possesses wisdom and creative power yet views itself as separate from the Self.
5. ANANDAMAYA. The bliss formed sheath is a form lit up by a reflection of the Eternal bliss, but not yet completely free from darkness, but subject to limitation, an effect of righteous deeds.

Manomaya is a sheath around Manas. Vijnamaya is a sheath around Buddhi.

*