

BODY, MIND, SOUL & SPIRIT

It was pointed out last week that there are many maps of the mind—of the range and functions of human psychology—and as individuals we find some more useful than others. Most of these maps suggest human attributes and possibilities outside the range of normal experience, but attempts to define the unknown in terms of the known are bound to be approximate and concepts such as ‘Real I’, Soul, Atman, etc. only come to life through individual experience. So it is up to us to select a map which most accords with our own experience and then actually use it to explore the unknown territory within ourselves that we seek to discover.

The Western system presents this unknown human potential in the context of the Ray of Creation, a progression of consciousness manifesting into increasingly complex materiality, from Absolute All to Absolute Nothing. FCR describes this as follows; (75/19)

“So far we have described the organism in two dimensions—concentric circles on a flat surface. For “plane beings” there is no “higher” or “lower” only “inner or “outer”. Things become clearer if we can introduce a third dimension by (as it were) pulling the centre of the circles up at right angles to the plane of the paper or screen (see Figure overleaf):

Between ‘Absolute’ (All) and Absolute (Nothing), there must be many attitudes about himself a man could have, many degrees of consciousness more or less subjective, and many ways of calling himself ‘I’. In the figure we depict a solid opaque or “physical” body below; this “body of flesh and bones” has no way of thinking of its whole self as “I”, being divided into myriads of little separate consciousnesses all governed by some “life principle” which disappears when the body dies.

The feeling of “I” we have appears on the ‘psychological’ level, and we must realize that permeating the opaque body there is a subtle or transparent body. This has been envisaged to some extent by physiologists like Sir Charles Sherrington (*Man on his Nature*) who described molecular forms shaping the physical tissues.

But this subtle world (as ordinarily experienced) is a dream world where changes take place at high speed and where there is nothing solid to take hold of. So if we want to progress towards the realization of our full potential, we must begin to recognize the presence of a luminous or causal body, the home of the Atman or individual Consciousness which is of the same Nature as the Super-Consciousness of the Universe.

If we interpret this picture as a spindle set spinning by the Pure Consciousness of the Absolute, we can see why human thought has never quite forsaken the idea of Destiny of Fate. To Homer (9th century B.C.), Destiny was a single Being presiding over all the warring Gods on Olympus who, in turn, controlled the destinies of men. To Hesiod, a little later, there were three Fates whom he called the “daughters of night”—Clotho, who winds the yarn on the spindle, Lachesis, who weaves the pattern of individual destiny, and Atropos, who cuts the thread at death.

This is like the picture the Shankaracharya presents to us of Param-Atman and the three Gunas. But whereas in primitive thought destiny was blind Chance; in our Teaching it is Conscious — and benevolent Man can read his own fate through Meditation and Knowledge of the Absolute, turning the laws of Nature to his own advantage—as in the words of Sri Krishna:

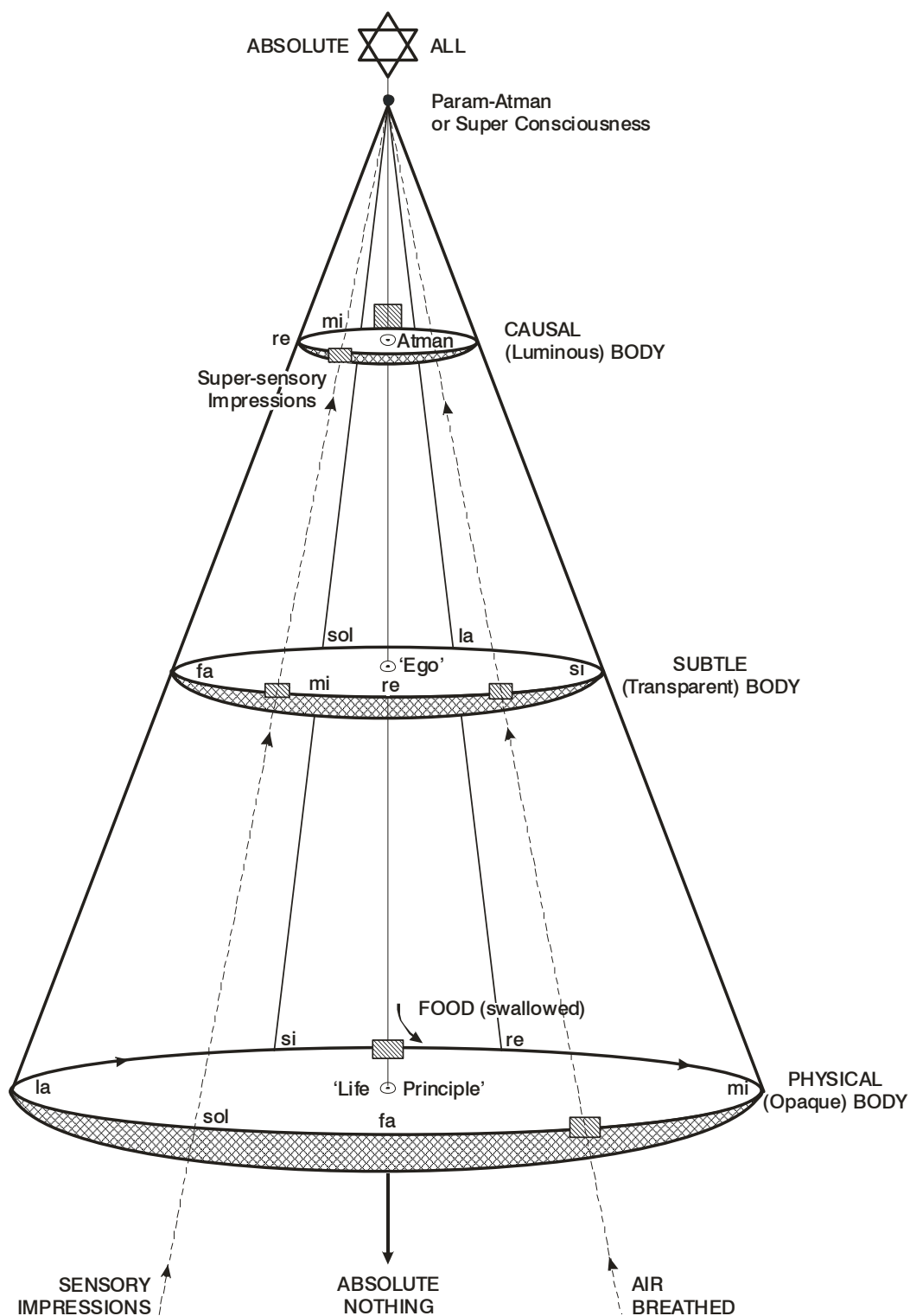
‘He who loves Me and only Me with unfaltering devotion, shall rise above the Gunas to merge with my Being. For I am the refuge of the Spirit, the Eternal and Unchanging, the Source of right action and of infinite Joy.’

For the movement of the spindle is the illusion of Maya, and if man’s consciousness can be still, all his possibilities are seen to lie in eternal liberation from the iron law of Destiny. When at

our Movements to Music we do the Spinning or weave the Carpet, or when the Dervishes spin the pattern of the Mukabeleh, we should keep this picture at the back of our minds, and then we will connect what we are doing with the spindle of the universe.”

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All the components and limitations of consciousness we have recently been exploring can be located within this picture but the key to real experience, the development of our potential, lies in the practice of entertaining a state of stillness — the first tiny manifestation of a ‘super-sensory’ impression, one end of Ariadne’s thread which leads to the centre of the labyrinth.



The practice of being aware of ourselves as we receive ordinary impressions is the ‘first conscious shock’ which if practiced with sufficient regularity and intensity will not only allow those ordinary impressions to develop to a more energetic state, allowing our perception of ourselves and the world around us to become more vibrant and meaningful, but also provide the energy for the Air octave to develop much further. This prepares the way for the ‘second conscious shock’ in which the state of still self-awareness becomes suffused with a ‘higher’ emotional presence which emanates from ‘Real I’ on the Causal level.

The practice of stillness and self-awareness allows the consciousness of Ego to rise up the spindle at the centre of the diagram instead of being constantly flung out to the periphery to become identified with whatever delights or horrors exist at all the different levels.

Different states of individual consciousness are manifested at each level— with the rise and fall of consciousness along the spindle at the centre — and it is important to remember that this is not a process in time, but a progression in the depth of awareness of the moment ‘now’. The further down our individual consciousness slides, the heavier we feel, and it is primarily by a ‘lightening of the heart’ that we can rise to the higher levels.

H.H. In happiness the Prana (life-force) rises upwards and in pain and strain it is pressed down. At its lowest level it is activated in the pelvis below the navel and at its highest it moves up from navel, to solar plexus, to larynx, to forehead, and the top of the head. Here at the top it swings on the waves of bliss. The pain and strain are heavier substances and they press it down to the bottom where it feels weak, limited, powerless and sick and becomes very coarse and heavy. Due to meditation this prana is stilled, and in stillness and happiness it becomes lighter and rises higher according to stillness and bliss. (22.8.1964)

We are told that ‘Real I’, the Atman, lives unknown within the dark body of the soul and we all find from experience that we cannot know it simply by wanting to. In terms of the Western system two intervals need to be crossed in the octave of ‘self-realisation’— of return to the source. Dr Roles said, near the end of his life:

“The only practical thing we can do is to encourage the growth of the triad of refinement, discernment or discrimination which will lead to regulation of inner attitudes and increase of valuation as well as improving our supply of Sattva.”

(22.12.1980)

This triad takes on many different forms at different levels but its hallmarks are stillness, clarity and a lightness of heart which engenders a particular confidence — a confidence in the immanent presence of Real ‘I’— which allows a state of unshakeable contentment in the face of any eventuality.¹

In allegorical terms the progress of this octave can be likened to polishing and focusing a mirror—the polishing requires action and the focusing depends upon stillness. The image of ‘the mirror of the soul’ relates to the causal level as a luminous body, and for the light of the inner Self to shine out and become focused in this mirror requires the little ego first to learn to abandon itself to the initial darkness, ‘giving up all thinking and willing’, without thought of reward.

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In the Shankaracharya tradition too, the causal body is described as a dark state of 'not-knowing':

H.H. Causal body is not at all remote. It is immanent and present all the time with the individual and is subject to both purification and contamination (pollution). It is also said to be the body of 'non-knowing'. Just as one has an experience of body in waking state, another experience of body in dream state, so one has a third type of experience in dreamless sleep. This third is very much related to the Causal. It is like a deep darkness in which all things are present but can't be seen, and yet there is the memory, or fragrance of the self. There is no knowledge beside that, which is why it is called the 'body of non-knowing'.

This causal body is experienced in two ways: In deep sleep it is full of Tamas where everything is covered with darkness and ignorance and remains dormant. But when the Light of Consciousness falls on this region, then one experiences the full glory of the Self in the light of Sattva. This does not mean that one could know all that is in the Causal body. One will only experience Light and Bliss and this will charge the Causal body in such a way that purification will take place and can then be known through the efficient, attentive, conscious, perfect work produced by the individual in any walk of life.

Because it can't be known, one should not make the mistake of taking it as remote; for it is immanent, and is subject to purification or modification through meditation and knowledge of Truth. (2.2.1971)

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¹ PDO wrote, after four years of work:

“This is not self-confidence in the ordinary sense . . . quite the contrary, rather is it a confidence in the unimportance and the insignificance of self, that self which we usually know. But what I am confident about is that if something terrible happened to me like things that have happened to many of my friends during the past year, then it would be not I who would meet it, not this ordinary I, but another I within me who would be equal to the occasion. Two years ago G. asked me whether I felt a new I inside me and I had to answer that I felt no change whatever. Now I can speak otherwise. And I can explain how the change takes place. It does not take place at once, I mean that the change does not embrace every moment of life. All the ordinary life goes on in the ordinary way, all those very ordinary stupid small I's, excepting perhaps a few which have already become impossible. But if something big were to happen, something which would require the training of every nerve, then I know that this big thing would be met not by the ordinary small I, which is now speaking, and which can be made afraid, nor by anything like it—but by another, a big I, which nothing can frighten and which would be equal to everything that happened. I cannot describe it better. But for me it is a fact. And this fact is definitely connected for me with this work. You know my life and you know that I was not afraid of many things, both inward and outward, that people are often afraid of.

But this is something different, a different taste. Therefore I know, for myself, that this new confidence has not come simply as a result of a great experience of life. It is the result of that work on myself which I began four years ago.” (ISM p.380)