

A LIVING COSMOS

The System tells us that every cosmos, from the largest to the smallest is, from its own point of view, a living being, and that all cosmoses are designed and built upon the same principles. The enormous difference in scale of time and space separating different cosmoses shrouds from our view the reality of this essential similarity and allows us to suppose that humanity is the only conscious living entity in a mechanical and inanimate universe.

Last week we saw that human beings have their source and find the extent of their finest aspirations at the level of the Sun. But we are used to thinking of the Sun as a fiery ball; the planets as separate masses of inorganic matter that revolve mechanically around it; and life on Earth, though clearly dependent upon the Sun for physical existence, as something in most ways unrelated to the Solar System as a whole.

The Doctrine of Cosmoses suggests a very different picture. The Sun is represented as a living, conscious being which, like ourselves depends upon three sources of food to sustain its existence. The Sun eats, breathes and receives impressions in a manner directly analogous to a human being, according to a scheme that is similar to the plan of metabolism that we found in the Food Table we looked at last term.

The physical body of the Sun is the least part of it, even though that physical body is actually defined by the extent of its orbit around the centre of the galaxy—just as the human heart pumps blood and life to the furthest extremities of the human body. The Sun itself also possesses a subtle and a causal body, connecting it to even vaster universal scales of immaterial existence. It too has ‘a life’ as well as a lifetime. The orbits of the planets which revolve around it constitute a series of delicate sheaths or films which filter its influence in a way that can suggest the spheres of influence of the endocrine glands that determine the state of our own emotional and physical well-being.

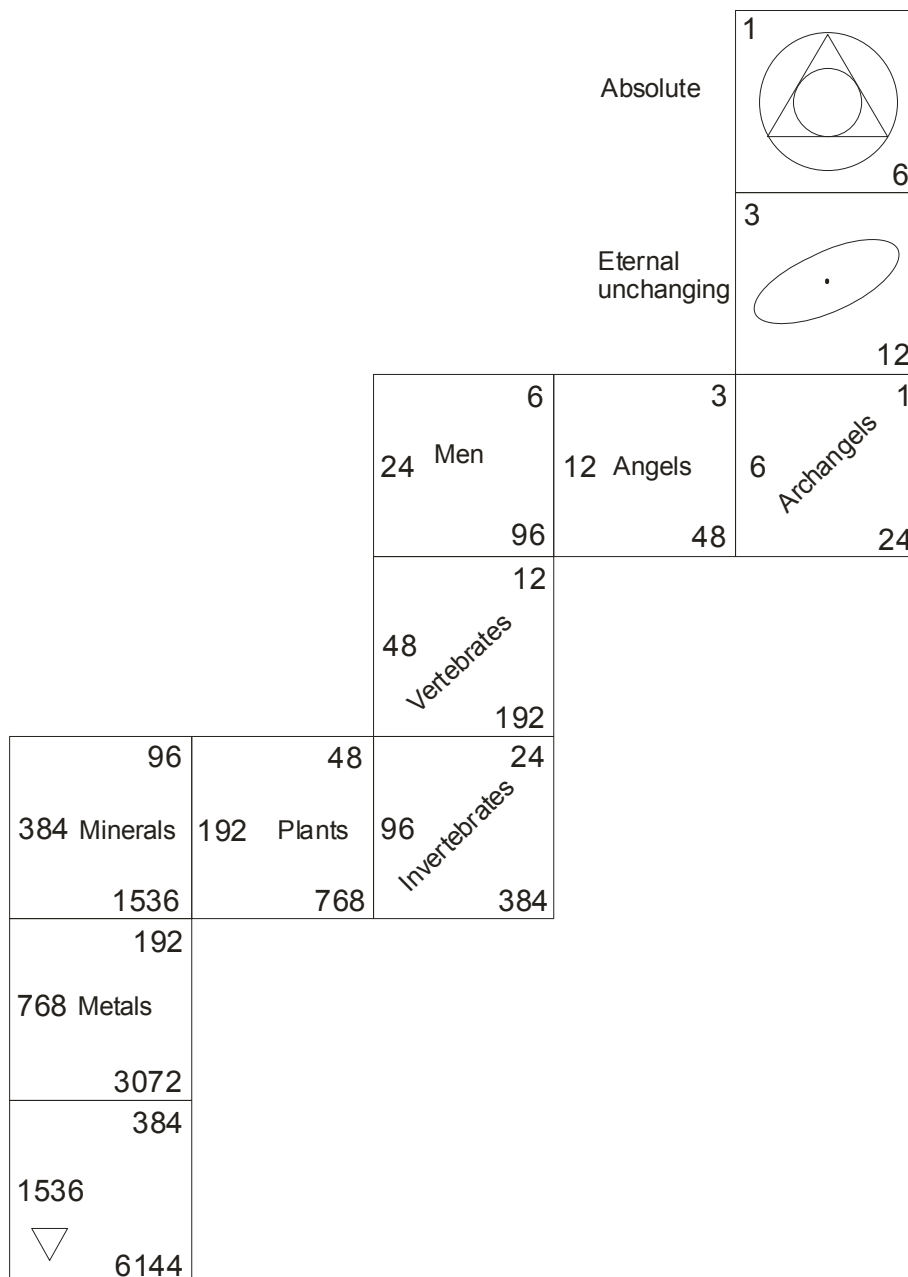
The System uses the diagram of All-Living to describe the relationship of all living beings within the scale of our galaxy, the Milky Way, in terms of what they eat, and what they are eaten by. This is similar to the metabolism of food in a human being but on this much bigger scale so the ‘hydrogen’ numbers must not be confused—the general picture is the same but the numbers are describing much greater magnitudes. Individuals do not exist on this scale, whole orders of beings are the smallest unit. This diagram expresses the idea that ‘nothing dies’. Death is merely a merging into a larger existence.

Because of the form in which it is drawn, it is also called, ‘the Step Diagram’. Each square shows the level of consciousness of a particular order of beings. The figure in the top right of a square denotes what this being is eaten by. The figure at the bottom left shows what this being itself eats. And the central name and number define the being and the average level of its own consciousness.

G. gave very little information about the diagram, and Ouspensky took it to refer to the whole universe, with ‘Angels’ equating to planets and ‘Archangels’ to suns. But another interpretation is that the diagram is really the Food Table of the Sun and it proceeds by the same interplay of triads as the human equivalent. The food cycle of the sun has a period of the order of several thousand million years. During this period, which on our scale corresponds to the human digestive period of twenty-four hours, physical energy is absorbed and condensed into the body of the solar system. This matter, the basic ‘food’ of the Sun, we call ‘metals’.

The next note is defined as ‘minerals’. Plant life (like air in the human metabolism) is in fact the active force of the first triad, allowing minerals to evolve from metals. Plants ‘feed’ on metals, and minerals are the result.

Invertebrates, (like earth-worms), prepare minerals for conversion into plants. Invertebrates ‘feed’ on minerals, and plants come into being.



The breath of the sun corresponds to the birth and death of organic life and its rhythm is of the order of the ice ages—about thirty to fifty thousand years. With the steady breathing of the sun, with the continued coming and going of the ice ages, living creatures evolve and exist by the sun’s influence—plants, invertebrates, vertebrates.

The first three notes of this ‘air’ octave—plants, invertebrates and vertebrates—generate the vital energy, the ‘life’ of the solar system. The coming and going of life, over vast aeons of time, constitutes the breathing of the Sun.

This air octave enables the food octave also to continue. Here, the words ‘plants’, ‘invertebrates’ and ‘vertebrates’ assume another meaning, describing finer states of being on the borderline between matter and energy, like hormones, vitamins and peptides in our own food table.

For the Sun, as for humans, impressions are the crucial factor in the development of consciousness and impressions, for the sun, are concerned with mankind. This diagram shows that humanity is the source of energy on which the psychic life of the solar system depends – every individual exists as an atom of psychic energy, billions of which, over huge reaches of time, make up an impression for the Sun.

‘Vertebrates’, in yet another sense, refers to the mass of ordinary humanity. For the Sun to further develop its own impressions octave requires the evolution of higher levels of being in mankind as a whole. Individuals can exist as ‘worms’, or ‘sheep’ or as self-conscious human beings, ‘men’, and veer about this range of being haphazardly from moment to moment.

All the possible higher qualities that individuals can possess already exist in humanity—but only as potential—and in this unmanifest form they cannot be of use to the Sun. To actualise this potential there have to be, within humanity, individuals with a consciousness greater than normal, ‘angels’ who already possess a higher level of being and can show ordinary mortals how to acquire it. ‘Angels’ are the active force in the first triad of the impressions octave. They ‘feed’ on vertebrates, and as a result ‘man’ evolves. To become more conscious we have to be useful to someone who already is.

The evolution of ‘man’ from ‘vertebrates’ is the first step in the development of consciousness within the solar system. The next step, from ‘man’ to ‘angels’ suggests the existence within humanity of a yet higher level of being—of ‘archangels’. Archangels are the active force in the second triad of the impressions octave. They ‘feed’ on ‘man’; and so ‘angels’ come into being. (As someone said: ‘To be eaten by an archangel you have to be pretty tasty!’, and the idea that ‘man is food for the gods’ takes on a new meaning)

‘Man’ in this sense refers to a human being who has begun to develop and who lives, more or less, in a state of self-remembering; one who has learnt to respond to the first ‘conscious shock’. ‘Angels’ refers to those individuals who have opened themselves sufficiently to receive the ‘second conscious shock’, the direct Conscious knowledge of Truth, which is an attribute of ‘archangels’.

So that angels may evolve into archangels an even higher principle is necessary, the ‘eternal unchanging’ which is rooted in the nebular world beyond the solar system. (This is something like the concept of the Unmanifest Sun referred to in the last paper) The eternal unchanging ‘feeds’ upon angels, and so archangels come into being. Archangels stand for the eternal conscious principle within the creation, the one thing which can never be lost or degraded.

After the third note of the impressions octave there is an interval. To bridge this interval this the highest possible form of energy enters the solar system. Just as in a human being, this highest form of energy is the energy of sex and creativity. At this interval the function of the creative energy of the Sun is to evolve consciousness—for itself and its creation. Just as for human impressions to develop, an active force at the level of sex energy is required in the right place and in the right measure, so for the development of the Sun’s own impressions a similar force is required.

All this suggests that the evolution of mankind as a whole to possess a higher consciousness is in fact a real possibility, that it is allowed for, even vitally necessary in the greater scheme of things. It can also show us that great solar and planetary events may have a purpose and a meaning quite different to our mechanical understanding of them.

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This interpretation of the diagram stresses the need for mankind to complete the cycle of consciousness of the solar system. All the higher human faculties, Love, Mercy, Hope, the quest for Beauty, all the positive emotions and the highest reaches of the intellect and the understanding, all these things are part of this great cosmic evolution of consciousness. So the inner life of human individuals can in fact exist and have significance at a cosmic level—what we feel and think and do has inescapable meaning at the furthest reaches of our universe.

Something similar to this picture has been captured by Teilhard de Chardin. A Jesuit priest and eminent palaeontologist, Teilhard wrote a number of influential works on the evolution of life on earth in

relation to the future of man. All of his writings on this subject were published posthumously as the Vatican suppressed their publication during his lifetime.

Teilhard believed that ‘evolution is an ascent towards consciousness’: geological development made possible the birth of biology, which in turn made possible the birth of mind. In his terms ‘We saw geogenesis promoted to biogenesis, which turned out in the end to be nothing else than psychogenesis’ (*The Phenomenon of Man*, 1959). Psychogenesis led on to further development of mind—‘noogenesis’ was the term he coined for this—and the formation of the ‘noosphere’, the mental counterpart of the biosphere.

He thought there was a final destination for consciousness: ‘it should culminate forwards in some sort of supreme consciousness’. He called this the Omega point: he referred to the process of reaching in Christian terms as ‘christogenesis’. In our terms, what would it be?

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