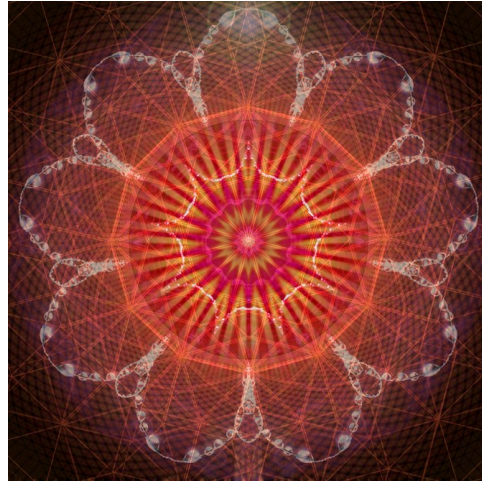


Fall 2017, Volume 13, Number 2



# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

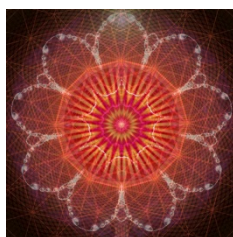
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**Esoteric philosophy and its applications  
to individual and group service and  
the expansion of human consciousness.**



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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](mailto:editor@esotericquarterly.com).

## Editorial

# Spiritual Psychology, Spiritual Allegory, and the Principle of Gender

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Spiritual Psychology is an existential approach to the study of consciousness that deals with the relationship between the personality and the spiritual and transcendent aspects of the human experience. As such, it is concerned with accessing deeper and higher levels of consciousness in order to help humanity realize its utmost potential. Spiritual psychology can be distinguished from the purely mental and emotional psychology in that “it makes clear the nature of the Soul and its systemic and cosmic relationships.”

The method of allegory has also been used as a means of defining the psychological and metaphysical aspects of the spiritual journey leading to the upliftment of the Soul and the emergence of the “spiritual man.” The authors of many a Holy Writ employed this approach in order to prompt deeper thinking, convey obscure meanings, and prohibit premature entry into the inner sanctuary of truth.

Similarly, the esoteric or spiritual approach can be employed to illuminate the principle of Gender and help us understand that, according to the Great Hermetic Principles, Polarity and Gender are manifest in everything. Yet the esoteric approach is also designed to help us move beyond the confusion and divisions that can result from a focus on, or identification with, differentiated forms.

Our first article is a presentation from Kenneth Sørensen on the seven fundamental features of Psychosynthesis. The article offers a general overview of the Psychosynthesis model, which can be described as an inclusive approach to human growth and development based on the integration of the separate elements of the psyche into a harmoniously functioning whole. Sørensen then provides a more detailed account of Psychosynthesis’ unique qualities and their application, which form “the backbone of a modern yogic path of Self-

realization from pre-personal to transpersonal consciousness and beyond.” The article serves as a concise introduction “to the most important therapeutic, educational, and relational approaches in the modern world,” or to what is often referred to as the *Psychology of the Soul*.

The next article, from Zachary Lansdowne, also deals with the theme of spiritual psychology, but this time in relation to Chapter 17 of the *Book of Revelation* concerning the Dweller on the Threshold—the Great Whore—or personal lower self. Lansdowne takes an allegorical approach based on the teachings of Alice A. Bailey and the Course in Miracles to show that every symbol in this mysterious text represents some aspect of the aspirant on the spiritual path. His verse-by-verse analysis is intended to assist the reader “in gaining self-knowledge of the purpose and design of the ego, which is the beginning of transformation and regeneration and the expression of our true nature” or Self.

John Nash contributes the final full-length-article in this issue. His article is the first in a two part series that examines the spiritual/esoteric aspects of “Gender.” Part One explores the complex meaning and significance of gender at human, intermediate and higher levels of reality. The article explores gender in relationship to the personality, the Soul, the Monad and the Planetary Hierarchy. An analysis of the archetypal gender characteristics as they relate to the Seven Rays is included. The article is designed to challenge the classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine. It concludes that: “some form of gender—or “horizontal” polarity with mutually attractive, creative potential—exists at all levels, short of the unmanifest Godhead.”



In addition to the full-length articles in this issue, we have included a short paper on Kahlil Gibran, the Lebanese artist, journalist and poet. The paper provides an outline of Gibran's personal life, his symbolist inspired artwork, and the many lyrical prose poems, which express his deeply religious and metaphysical nature. The paper also touches upon the strong social message of justice, freedom, brotherhood and spiritual independence in Gibran's essays and other works.

This issue also includes a review for a new book from Kenneth Sørensen. The book, *Integral Meditation: The Seven Ways to Self-Realisation*, aligns Djwhal Khul's teachings on the Seven Rays, Assagioli's Psychosynthesis model, Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and Ken Wilber's Integral Theory with meditation practices that provide the reader with an integral perspective on spiritual development.

Our *Poems of the Quarter* are from the poet, author and spiritual activist, Charles Upton. A prolific writer, who has published numerous books on Sufism, the Perennial Philosophy and other topics, Upton styles himself as "more of a metaphysician than a poet. He believes that poetry should be a sacred art, dedicated to Memory or the Muses, and Theurgy, which calls upon the Powers resident in the Great Chain of Being. The excerpted poems included here are from Upton's magnum opus—*The Wars of Love and Other Poems*—which the poet himself describes as the story of a "soul's entry into and emergence from a . . . Neo-Pagan worldview, . . . and its debarkation on the shores of a traditional sacred worldview and a living spiritual Path." This book and his other works are available through Amazon, or from: <http://charlesupton.com/works/poetry-meta-physics-and-mythopeia/>.

The Iranian-German artist, Kirsten Roya Azal contributes our *Pictures of the Quarter*. The art and science of Islamic thought, especially Sufism, is an unlimited source of inspiration and revelation for Roya. Her work strives "to get beyond varying cultural surfaces and bring to public attention the treasures within Islam and its artistic and aesthetical heritage." The three stunningly beautiful images featured here—"Atoms are Dancing"—based on a

poem from Rumi, "Thunderflower," and "Two Blue Peonies" are an exploration of color, light and form through the visual language of Islamic mystical art and thought. For information on the artist visit: <http://www.royaazal.net/>. Roya also writes a fascinating blog on Islamic healing at: <http://www.theartofislamichealing.com/>.

Donna M. Brown  
Editor-in-Chief

### **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 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."

## Letter to the Editor

---

Dear Editor

I have read John Nash's article on the Tarot and subsequent letters to the editor, and may be able to shed some light on the meaning and purpose of the 22 major arcana. From the evidence that I have seen, I believe that these arcana are highly symbolic of the evolution of the human Soul.

What may not be widely known is that the 22 major arcana of the Tarot correspond to the 22 chapters of the Bible's *Book of Revelation*. An analysis comparing the cards to the chapters can be found at: <http://www.progressions.info/8chap.pdf>. Some historical evidence, including Blavatsky's reference, suggests that the esoteric Tarot preceded *Revelation*, and that they both specify in highly symbolic form the Soul's journey from its time of entry into the human kingdom till its ascension to the spiritual kingdom. A key to understanding the meaning of *Revelation* was first (to my knowledge) revealed by Edgar Cayce, and is based on the seven chakra stages of human development portrayed in three successive stages, though seen beyond time by *Revelation's* author. These seven stages of human development are indeed the levels of spiritual development understood by the Sufis. They are detailed in the above web reference, which also requires some knowledge of the seven rays. Once the esoteric symbolism of *Revelation* is understood, then the correspondence of each of the esoteric Tarot's major arcana to each of the chapters of *Revelation* can be analyzed effectively. For easy reference, a short version of the esoteric analysis of *Revelation* can be found at:

<http://www.progressions.info/Book%20of%20Revelation.pdf>.

It may be useful to read what Alice Bailey's source said about the *Book of Revelation*. Although its author is given formally as St. John, according to Djwhal Khul, *Revelation* was written in around 80AD by the Master Hilarion, who was also Paul of Tarsus (See for example: Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary*, p.58; *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, p.163; *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p.59). *Revelation* was apparently the story of the Jesus Soul's journey through the human kingdom, in archetypal symbolism, dictated to Hilarion. That the symbolism of *Revelation* is found in many earlier myths and legends suggests that the very similar symbolism in the Tarot can be based on an ancient understanding of the human journey. This would presumably have been given out by the high spiritual beings or Masters that existed on Earth in ancient times. It is quite remarkable that this epic story of the human Soul's evolution through the human kingdom can be summarized in 22 Tarot cards. However, when the esoteric significance of *Revelation* is understood, then the magnificence of each of its chapters being symbolized by an image on a card can leave one in total amazement. The esoteric major arcana of the Tarot are truly a secret doctrine of the purpose of human life, as pictorial talismans to awaken intuitive knowledge.

Gordon Herbert  
Canberra, Australia

## Poems of the Quarter by Charles Upton

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### *from The Wars of Love*

He who sings is a plucked string vibrating  
Bound between two posts:  
This perishing world  
And the high walled garden of the King.

Only That One knows his real name,  
And recalls it every day,  
And in the canyons of the night  
Breathes him as he swims,  
Fighting upstream to the source of his  
hunger,  
A flashing salmon in the black river  
of dreams.

Searching earth and fire for your Name,  
Beloved,  
For your breast rising and falling in sleep  
He follows the wake of your Word  
On the face of your Ocean:  
She whose waves  
Have never stopped moving him  
In the paths of this house of dust.



My name is Light, answered the Alien God: my word, an unbreakable  
cipher,  
Sine-wave of white fire on black basalt,  
An accurate graph of my structure.  
The carved statues of all things,  
All I forced into existence to make room for my guarded solitude  
Hang there like shields, like arms of my warriors,  
Seeded in my blind and  
Ringing fire.  
None can come to me, no one can find me out  
In the house where I live  
Because I live in the house of Swiftmess.  
Nothing that breathes has eye to see or ear to follow  
The count of that fixed velocity, that nailed emblem  
Of absolute duration; only by my sovereign Number can they determine  
That I am who I am: the rational integer  
That burns down all who face me  
To worship and white ashes.  
I am the incandescent Limit, light in light of which each one sees

Only his own puny shadow thrown against the world  
    (Each eye broken  
        In the eye of the Other),  
Voice in thunder of which no man's word has power  
    Beyond the wall of his own tongue—  
Because wherever my eye chooses to dawn, all speech is war:  
    I draw every numbered man  
    Into the ranks of my book.



When I was a man, I had no Self but God;  
Now I am the Self of every woman and every man,  
    One with all who walk the path of Nothing.  
All those who have become Nothing before they die  
    Have no Self but I. I am the road the stars travel  
Before the face of their Lord. I am a ladder seen in a dream;  
    Angels ascend and descend upon me;  
    My flesh is a highway of living intelligence.  
    When the seven seas rise like sap  
Through the bark of the olive, changed into liquid light,  
    There I will stand, in neither the east nor the west.  
When God summons the four winds back to His chamber,  
    Calling them each by its name,  
    I will be the body of that vast, returning sigh.  
  
To visit God is to spend the night inside the Sun,  
    The Sun who hears and sees, without sleep.  
    So shed the world, and open the gates of dawn:  
    The Sun is about to rise for the last time,  
Climbing the green balconies of Axis Mundi, the luminous steps,  
    Gathering in the fruit of what has been,  
    Storing away the seeds of what shall be,  
Till it stands on the floor of high eternity, the Temple Mount  
    And prostrates itself before the throne  
    Of the Light which does not set.

## Pictures of the Quarter by Kirsten Roya Azal

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Atoms are Dancing | by Kirsten Roya Azal | 2016





Blue Poppies | by Kirsten Roya Azal | 2016





Thunderflower | by Kirsten Roya Azal | 2016



## Quotes of the Quarter

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The mind is brought into harmony with the spirit and includes the body, achieving an organic, harmonious unity of all aspects of the person's being, what we might call "bio-psychosynthesis." This is true spiritual alchemy.

Roberto Assagioli, *Transpersonal Development: The Dimension Beyond Psychosynthesis* (London: Thorson's Publishing, 1991), 94).

Perhaps the term "psycho-synthesis" can be thought to denote the process of synthesis or union based upon a relationship to Self, with no necessary implication of specific psychological or social unification at all. Again, it is the personal I-Self relationship here which is forefront. One may tread the way of disintegration or wholeness at different times in Self-realization—it all depends on whether the relationship leads.

We may think of psychosynthesis then, as the process by which we develop an ongoing relationship and at times communion with Self. This relationship with Self may in turn at times allow the experience of union or connection with all things—whether or not we and those things are fragmented or whole, in harmony or conflict.

Thus, this union is not a far-off goal at the end of an evolutionary process which will establish a harmonious planetary or cosmic synthesis. This is a type of union which exists now, right in the midst of current personal and world crises.

John Firman, *I and Self: Re-Visioning Psychosynthesis*. (Palo Alto: CA, 1991), 95-96.

Psychosynthesis is a method of psychological development and self realization for those who refuse to remain the slave of their own inner phantasms or of external influences, who refuse to submit passively to the play of psychological forces which is going

on within them, and who are determined to become the master of their own lives.

Roberto Assagioli, *Dynamic Psychology and Psychosynthesis*,  
<http://synthesiscenter.org/articles/0101.pdf>.

The conquering of self is truly greater than were one to conquer many worlds.

Edgar Cayce, 115-1, as quoted from *Edgar Cayce's Secrets of Astrology*, by Kirk Nelson (Kirk Nelson, 1999).

The Prostitute of Babylon symbolizes humanity's desire lust for riches and gratification of the flesh. The beast it rides on are man-made ideas stemming from self-gratification. It is explained to John that these forces have taken control of the seven spiritual centers of the human body, thereby becoming possessed and ruled. However, as the highest forces of evolving humanity overcome the forces of self, even the ten basic urges of the body, symbolized by the ten horns, will in time fulfill the divine pattern.

Edgar Cayce, as quoted from *The Eleventh Hour Before Midnight*, by Hermaneli Torrevillas (Bloomington, IL: Xlibris, 2012), 280.

The harlot of Babylon ... is described as a woman seated upon a scarlet-colored beast having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet and bedecked with gold, precious stones, and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations. This figure may be an effort (probably interpolated) to vilify Cybele, or Artemis, the Great Mother goddess of antiquity. Because the pagans venerated the Mater Deorum through symbols appropriate to the feminine generative principle they were accused by the early Christians of worshiping a courtesan. As nearly all the ancient Mysteries included a test of the neophyte's moral character, the

temptress (the animal soul) is here portrayed as a pagan goddess.

Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Los Angeles, The Philosophical Research Society, Inc., 1989), 185.

**B**abylon [from Babel] is interpreted confusion, Jerusalem vision of peace. . . . They are mingled, and from the very beginning of mankind mingled they run on unto the end of the world . . . . Two loves make up these two cities: love of God makes Jerusalem, love of the world makes Babylon.

St Augustine, *CHURCH FATHERS*: Exposition on Psalm 65, [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org).

**M**an, ... makes himself free from what is generic. For the generic features of the human race, when rightly understood, do not restrict man's freedom, and should not artificially be made to do so. What is generic in him serves only as a medium in which to express his own individual being.

The tendency to judge according to the genus is at its most stubborn where we are concerned with differences of sex. Almost invariably, man sees in woman, and woman in man, too much of the general character of the other sex and too little of what is individual.

Determining the individual according to the laws of his genus (race, people, nation, and sex) ceases where the sphere of freedom (in thinking and acting) begins.

Rudolf Steiner, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path: A Philosophy of Freedom* (Great Barrington MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1995), 226.

**I**t is a fact that the images of "masculinity" and "femininity" we have in our consciousness are deeply influenced by cultural traditions that have developed over long periods of time. And the influence of these traditions thoroughly pervades every aspect of the social ethos, including language, religion, systems of organization, education and scholarship. Therefore, it seems to me that the important thing is not that society come up

with a particular model for how men and women ought to behave, but that people first and foremost make tenacious effort to live as decent human beings, and allow others to do the same.

Daisaku Ikeda, *Gender Equality in Buddhism*, Soka Gakkai International.

**T**he attraction between man and woman is placed within the context of universal harmony, becoming a path to perfection. Sexual love becomes a means of approximating the androgynous state of the primal man, and, since his fall into evil is identified with his entrance into the material and bisexual world, a return to the union of male and female becomes a means of perceiving the prelapsarian, primordial bliss of unity as well as of intuiting the divine state.

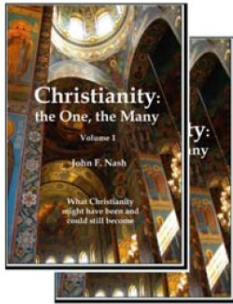
Cathy Jrade, *Ruben Dario and the Romantic Search for Unity: The Modernist Recourse to Esoteric Tradition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 15.

**A**true spirituality is one that affirms men and women at the level of their deepest identity, their true selves in God, an objective and ontological ground—actually much deeper than mere gender, which is always in cultural flux. Ironically and paradoxically, this non-gendered and theological foundation is what most deeply affirms them precisely as males or females in the long run. The questions in the second half of life are much more metaphysical, philosophical and cosmological: Gender issues fade into the background, while we ourselves become more androgynous.

Fr. Richard Rohr, *Gender, God and Spirituality*, [www.huffingtonpost.com/](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/).

**G**ender, power, religion and spirituality are all troubled categories in constant change and it is difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins.

*Gender and Power in Contemporary Spirituality: Ethnographic Approaches*. Anna Fedele and Kim Knibbe eds (London: Routledge, 2013), 16.



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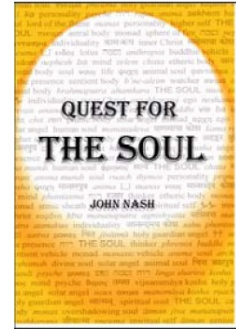
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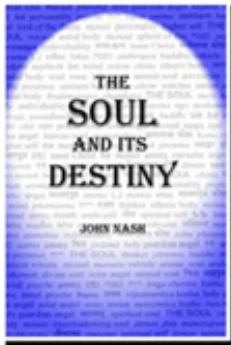
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# The Seven Core Concepts –The Soul of Psychosynthesis

Kenneth Sørensen

Even if Psychosynthesis is presented as a synthesis of different therapeutic and educational approaches it is important to remember that it has its own original and central essence.

(Roberto Assagioli)<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Shortly before his death at 85 in 1974, Dr. Roberto Assagioli, one of the founding fathers of transpersonal psychology, described what he regarded as the essence of Psychosynthesis. It was, for him, a psychology which had the soul as a spiritual Being at its center. It is no surprise that Psychosynthesis has since been seen as a “Psychology with a Soul.”

This article presents the essence of Psychosynthesis through the Seven Core Concepts that Assagioli defined as the foundation of his work, and which some today see as his “Last Will,” his final statement about these ideas and their practical application. The article will enable the reader to discover the wisdom in the Seven Core Concepts and realize that:

Disidentification—is a way to Freedom. The self—is a way to Presence. The will—is a way to Power. The ideal model—is a way to Focus. Synthesis—is a way to Flow. The Superconscious—is a way to Abundance, and The Transpersonal Self—is a way to Love.

The article is based on chapter one from the book: *The Soul of Psychosynthesis*, but adapted to this journal by tracing the Seven Core Concepts to esoteric teaching where possible. It is intended to serve as a concise introduction and practical guide to the fundamental ideas of one of the most important therapeutic, educational, and relational approaches in the modern world.

## Introduction

Psychosynthesis is known as “a Psychology with a Soul.” The etymological meaning of “Psychology” is “the study of the Soul,” but

where mainstream psychology largely denies the existence of a soul as a spiritual core, Psychosynthesis places the soul at its center. I have chosen the title because my aim is to identify what is the core, the essence or the soul in Psychosynthesis.

Psychosynthesis presents such a broad and inclusive view of humanity and of our spiritual journey that we can easily lose sight of its central ideas. In *Psychosynthesis – A Collection of Basic Writings*, Assagioli’s first book, he uses a wide range of ideas and psychotherapeutic techniques from many different sources. This can easily confuse a reader and give the impression that more or less everything can be included under the Psychosynthesis umbrella.

Interviewing Assagioli shortly before his death in 1974, Sam Keen, an editor from *Psychology Today*, asked: “What are the limits with Psychosynthesis?” Assagioli answered: “The limit of Psychosynthesis is that it has no limits. It is too extensive, too comprehensive. Its weakness is that it accepts too much. It sees too many sides at the same time and that is a draw-

## About the Author

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back.”<sup>2</sup> This is a positive admission, and is true exactly because Psychosynthesis *is* so integrative. It is an attempt to fuse the deep wisdom of the self, coming from the East, with modern western psychology and its insight into the unconscious.

## **The Central Ideas of Psychosynthesis**

Nevertheless certain core ideas underpin all of Assagioli’s writings and connect all the disparate parts. These are: synthesis; the evolution of consciousness; energy psychology; and the manifestation of spirit. These themes can also be found in Evolutionary Panentheism, the metaphysical philosophy on which Assagioli seems to have based his work.

This is a concept that Ken Wilber and the co-founder of Esalen Institute, Michael Murphy, use to define their philosophy. In his article on Evolutionary Panentheism, Murphy shows how some of history’s greatest intellectual giants have arrived at this concept. They have used different names, but enough common features recur to link them.<sup>3</sup>

Evolutionary means that God (Brahman, the Spirit, the One) permeates *and* transcends the universe. God’s presence in creation is both transcendent *and* immanent. God is in everything, but is greater than the created universe. It is through evolution—and therefore humanity and nature—that God’s inherent potential unfolds. According to this theory the human soul, and all other beings, “emanate” from God or “Pleroma” (psychologically the Great Self within) The word emanation comes from the Latin “emanare” which means, “flowing from,” in this case, God’s abundance. All creatures have emanated from the same divine Source and have journeyed down through the various levels of consciousness into the physical world. Here man “forgets” his origins. The unconscious / conscious yearning for his lost original unity creates the desire in man to return to the Source, and this urge drives evolution. The purpose of our being is to awaken to the divine potential we are here to unfold and manifest.

In connection with the publication of my book I have compiled a series of quotations from

Assagioli’s books and articles for readers who want to verify the background of my thoughts. These clearly show that Assagioli based Psychosynthesis on Evolutionary Panentheism.<sup>4</sup>

To understand these themes we must look at the big picture. In Psychosynthesis the many techniques and theoretical elements can be seen as parts of an overarching process.

In *Psychosynthesis* Assagioli describes this perspective:

From a still wider and more comprehensive point of view, universal life itself appears to us as a struggle between multiplicity and unity - a labor and an aspiration towards union. We seem to sense that - whether we conceive it as a divine Being or as a cosmic energy - the Spirit working upon and within all creation is shaping it into order, harmony, and beauty, uniting all beings (some willing but the majority as yet blind and rebellious) with each other through links of love, achieving - slowly and silently, but powerfully and irresistibly - the Supreme Synthesis.<sup>5</sup>

This quote seems to be a direct interpretation of the great law of synthesis, such an important aspect of esotericism.

### **Synthesis**

Synthesis is hence a law of nature. It is the aim of life, a developmental process which governs all living beings. Its intention is to unite all living beings with their divine source through the energy of Love and Will.<sup>6</sup> Assagioli relates this law to the scientific principle of “syntropy,” referring to the mathematician Luigi Fantappiè as well as to Buckminster Fuller and Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Evolution of Consciousness**

Assagioli presupposes the existence of a creative divine intelligence driving the unfolding of life, expressing itself in us as a longing for a greater and all-embracing love. This inner power directs our evolution through certain universal stages of development, from body, psyche, and soul to spiritual consciousness. It is the evolution of consciousness from Ego-centric to Cosmic-centric love. Not only humans evolve, all of creation does too. For As-



saggioli our development moves through “various levels of reality” or “energy fields,” from the physical to the psychological, and then to the spiritual and transcendental. According to Assagioli these energy fields are an “essential aspect of Psychosynthesis.”<sup>8</sup>

Assagioli says:

that the great evolutionary process culminated in the mineral kingdom, as far as we know, and then started the reverse movement or process of evolution. Slightly optimistic we can say that we are half way. We have passed through mineral, plant, animal and partially the human kingdom. So we have to continue this evolutionary work towards the “One,” but it is still far away.<sup>9</sup>

In the compilation of quotes by Assagioli: *Psychosynthesis and Evolutionary Panentheism*, he refers to the evolution of consciousness in several places,<sup>10</sup> and he describes this evolution in individual as well as in social terms.

The psychological life of a nation corresponds to a great extent to that which is *unconscious* in individuals. Modern investigation of unconscious psychological activities has ascertained that these are chiefly instinctive, emotional and imaginative.... The conscious part of an individual corresponds, in a people, to a minority constituted by its thinkers (philosophers, historians, psychologists, sociologists and other scientists), who endeavour to develop the self-consciousness of the nation, to interpret its past, to assess its present conditions and to point to the future. ... It happens also at times that these great individuals become inspired not only from their own Selves, but also from the soul of their nation, which uses them as its instruments and representatives, in order to reveal itself and achieve its group purpose.<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned, in this respect Assagioli's psychology is closely related to that of Ken Wilber and the contemporary research Wilber draws on, as I have been demonstrating in my Master of Arts dissertation on *Integral Psychosynthesis*.<sup>12</sup>

Psychosynthesis, then, is a psychology that deliberately seeks to cooperate with evolution. Humanity is the first species on this planet to have become conscious of the evolutionary process. Psychosynthesis recognizes this process of evolution through its psychological approach to Harmony and Unity. Synthesis is a gradual process. It begins in our inner world, first unconsciously then consciously when we embark on our own personal and transpersonal Psychosynthesis. Its goal is the harmonization and reconciliation of the conflicts and divisions we experience within ourselves as well as with others and the planet as a whole.

### ***Energy Psychology***

Psychosynthesis is an Energy Psychology. Assagioli saw the need for “a science of the self, of its energies, its manifestations, of how these energies can be released, how they can be contacted, how they can be utilized for constructive and therapeutic work.”<sup>13</sup> Assagioli admits that “hard” empirical evidence for such a “science” may still be lacking; yet contemporary research on consciousness and its effects on the brain related to the scientific study of “Mindfulness”—which Assagioli was unaware of—gives clear indications of a Mind-Body connection.

Through Psychosynthesis we gain extensive phenomenological access to the world of energies. We can experience these worlds directly through introspection, and through Psychosynthesis techniques learn how to direct our physical, psychological and spiritual forces. To work with and within energies, is a prerequisite in the work of Psychosynthesis.

### ***The Manifestation of Spirit.***

Finally, I want to highlight that Psychosynthesis is not necessarily about having a “mystical experience.” Its aim is not to withdraw from the world, to “transcend” it and reach some other “divine world.” For Assagioli, Psychosynthesis is about being *in this* world fully. It is about making use of all the creative resources we have at our disposal. In this way we can contribute to the evolution of life.<sup>14</sup> For Assagioli, Synthesis is a union that includes

the body because it is through the body that spiritual energies can manifest in the world. The grand vision is of the manifestation of spirit on earth; it is a vision Assagioli shares with many contemporary evolutionists, especially the Integral Yoga of the Eastern mystic Sri Aurobindo.

### **Assagioli's "Last Will"**

From this general overview of Psychosynthesis, let's move to a more detailed account of its unique qualities, particularly those relevant for Psychosynthesis training and education. We begin with an important document Assagioli wrote shortly before his death.

In his announcement to Psychosynthesis institutes around the world, Assagioli said that Psychosynthesis has "its own original and central essence." According to John Firman and Ann Gila,<sup>15</sup> a few months before his death Assagioli left behind a document outlining the essentials for Psychosynthesis training. Firman and Gila report that it is understood by some as his "last will."

In this document or testament, Assagioli maintained that Psychosynthesis is an experiential approach to the "facts" on which Psychosynthesis rests. Anyone can experiment with these facts in the laboratory of consciousness, and it is essential for the understanding of Psychosynthesis to undertake such experiments. As Assagioli writes:

While Psychosynthesis is offered as a synthesis of various therapies and educational approaches, it is well to keep in mind that it possesses its own original and central essence. This is so as not to present a watered-down and distorted version, or one over-coloured by the concepts and tendencies of the various contemporary schools. Certain fundamental facts exist, and their relative conceptual elaboration, deep experience and understanding are central, and constitute the sine qua non of Psychosynthesis training.<sup>16</sup>

These experiences are:

Dis-identification, the personal self, the Will: good, strong, skillful will, the Ideal Model, Synthesis (in its various aspects), the Superconscious, the Transpersonal Self

(in the majority of cases it is not possible to have a complete experience of this self, but it's good to have a theoretical knowledge of the characteristics and experience of its guidance).<sup>17</sup>

These are the seven "facts" and fundamental features of Psychosynthesis that must be part of Psychosynthesis training and its education syllabus. These core concepts are what we can call "the soul of Psychosynthesis."

As understood by Assagioli, any authentic practice and training in Psychosynthesis must involve a direct experience of these areas. This doesn't mean that Psychosynthesis can't or won't develop. Naturally it must and will, otherwise it would not be psychosynthetic. Yet the Seven Core Concepts form the cornerstone of Psychosynthesis and represent the foundation and starting point for the training.

In the same document Assagioli defines five relevant areas for the application of Psychosynthesis:

The therapeutic (psychotherapy; doctor-patient relations); personal integration and actualization (realization of one's own potentialities); the educational (psychosynthesis by parents and by educators in schools of all degrees); the interpersonal (marriage, couples, etc.); the social (right social relations within groups and between groups).<sup>18</sup>

The above must be based on Personal Psychosynthesis and later on Transpersonal Psychosynthesis, the first-person experience of integrating the Seven Core Concepts into one's life. Psychosynthesis is oriented toward experience; it is a practical approach to personal and spiritual development, and can only be understood and communicated through one's own experiences. What comes out of the practice of these core concepts is interesting. What, for example, are the direct benefits of practicing dis-identification and developing the self and the Will, etc.?

I believe that each core concept reveals a developmental path or way to seven different dimensions of consciousness, to freedom, presence, power, focus, flow, abundance and love. The aim of this article is to show how this is so, by applying it to the field of individ-

ual psycho-spiritual development, so the readers can see the principles and transfer it to the other areas mentioned above.

There are two broad developments in psychosynthesis, where the Seven Core Concepts are applied—personal and transpersonal psychosynthesis. The former is the foundation of the spiritual work and is about integration of all the personal energies (1+2 in Figure 1) around the personal self. Maslow calls this development self-actualization and it relates to the integration of the personality in the esoteric language. Transpersonal or Spiritual Psychosynthesis is related to the Soul-infused personality and beyond, and to the integration of all the Superconscious energies (level 3 in the Egg) around the Transpersonal Self and expressed in service.



Figure 1: Assagioli's Egg Diagram<sup>19</sup>

## The Seven Core Concepts in Psychosynthesis

Before discussing these concepts, I would like to briefly outline how I understand Assagioli's Seven Core Concepts, based on quotes from Assagioli and my personal experiences and reflection. I will also link them to similar concepts in DK's philosophy. In order to really support our understanding of how the

Seven Core Concepts are applied in real life, I have included Figure 1. This is an illustration of Roberto Assagioli's Egg-Diagram. It gives a good perspective of how the self (5) and Soul (8) interacts through the bridge of consciousness (7). The self moves from birth to spiritual maturity up through different levels of consciousness—from the lower unconscious (1) to the superconscious (3). This version of the egg must be considered transparent so there is an inflow and outflow between all levels and the collective unconscious.

### Assagioli's Egg Diagram

1. Lower Unconscious
2. Middle Unconscious
3. Higher Unconscious
4. Collective unconscious
5. The self/Observer
6. Field of Consciousness
7. The Bridge of Consciousness
8. The soul/the Transpersonal Self

Figure 2: Assagioli's Egg Diagram

Let us now proceed to the central topic of this article.

### *Dis-identification – The Way to Freedom*

The mother of all the other Psychosynthesis techniques is dis-identification; this is acquired through the Self-Identification exercise. Assagioli advised using the Self-Identification exercise “as early as possible” because it gives the practitioner the skills needed to use the other psychotherapeutic techniques.<sup>20</sup>

The aim of the dis-identification exercise is to discover the Self. Assagioli defines our identity, the Self or the conscious “I,” as “a point of pure self-consciousness.”<sup>21</sup> Our sense of identity is often conditioned by our social roles (parental, professional, gender) or by different thoughts, feelings and sensations. Consequently we do not recognize who we really are. Assagioli points out that our true identity is not

found in any of these roles; it is the observer which is *aware of the content of consciousness*, and which is experiencing and expressing itself through these roles.

Our roles and the content of consciousness constantly change, while consciousness itself and the “observer” is a permanent, unchanging center.

To experience this permanent, unchanging center of consciousness we have to dis-identify from our roles and the passing content of our consciousness. We have to mentally step back and experience thoughts, feelings and sensation as objects that can be observed. This is difficult. Our unconscious and semi-conscious identifications are hard to abandon, and this is still only the first step. Fundamentally, we want to identify with consciousness *itself*, the subject and the observer, and no longer lose ourselves in its various contents.

Why is this important? Because, Assagioli says, “We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we dis-identify ourselves.”<sup>22</sup> In other words it is a question of becoming *free* enough to master everything that is contained within us.

Assagioli was inspired by the Eastern practice of *Vipassana*.<sup>23</sup> In *Vipassana* we dis-identify from the objects of consciousness in order to reach a direct experience of the Self as pure consciousness. Psychosynthesis, then, can be seen as a radical psycho-spiritual practice, similar to some yogic practices, and it offers techniques to achieve this level of consciousness.<sup>24</sup>

To awaken to and recognize ourselves as pure self-awareness is a process and a journey. Although the self / subject is always potentially present, it is usually hidden behind multiple layers of identifications, with thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. These layers must first be recognized and detached before our identity as pure self-awareness can emerge.

In order to reach this level Assagioli developed the Self-Identification exercise.<sup>25</sup> Disidentifying with the body, emotions and thoughts enables us to identify with consciousness it-

self. By noticing the body, feelings, and thoughts we recognize that these identifications are not who we are, rather we come to realize that we are the “observer.” This leads to greater freedom. Instead of mechanically following certain roles we can now choose whatever we wish to identify with. It is a way of awakening to the pure consciousness of the self. It is a technique to achieve freedom because the self is open and without content.

Assagioli, as previously mentioned, was influenced by Vipassana or insight yoga, Raja yoga, and perhaps by what is known as “the *neti neti* exercise.” This Sanskrit expression means “not this, nor that.” Through it one comes to understand the nature of Brahman, by understanding what he is not. That is, the distinction between consciousness itself and its contents.

I haven’t been studying his esoteric papers in the archive at his institute in Florence, so I cannot draw any clear conclusions about the esoteric origin of his seven principles, but I can come up with my own qualified suggestion based on my many years of studying and practicing esotericism as well as Psychosynthesis. The Tibetan (Djwhal Khul) who worked through Alice A. Bailey, does not use the term dis-identification in his books, but it seems to me that Assagioli was inspired by the Tibetan’s “three D’s”—detachment, dispassion and discrimination—when writing about dis-identification.

Psychosynthesis is about self-initiated growth and individual effort to achieve personal and transpersonal Psychosynthesis, and the method the Tibetan suggests is: “using the technique of detachment, of dispassion and of discrimination which the Buddha taught.”<sup>26</sup>

It is my suggestion that the practice of dis-identification actually develops or makes possible detachment, dispassion and discrimination between the self and not-self.

Dis-identification is a prerequisite for identification with the self as pure self-awareness. This takes us to Assagioli’s second core concept: the self.

### ***The Self – The Way to the Presence***

Assagioli describes “the self” in different ways. He speaks of the personal self, the conscious “I” and even the ego.<sup>27</sup> Assagioli’s use of the word ego is something very different from other psychological disciplines, and this can create confusion.

Here, I will refer to the personal self as the self or the observer, and we should remember that self, as defined by Assagioli, always means “a center of pure self-awareness and will.”<sup>28</sup> This self is not a thought, a feeling or sensation, but a dynamic consciousness that can observe and learn how to master its content. The ego in traditional psychology is always some kind of mental formation, so it is something quite different from what Assagioli points to.

Focusing on the self as pure self-awareness, let us see why, compared to other Western psychologies, the psychosynthetic approach is unique. Experiencing the self as pure self-awareness usually does not happen spontaneously. It requires introspection and the ability to dis-identify from the “stream of consciousness.” Most of the time we identify with everything that passes through the field of consciousness, and so we completely ignore consciousness itself. This is a point to which Assagioli often refers<sup>29</sup> Why, then, is pure self-awareness so important?

The goal of dis-identification is to find a center, around which we can integrate the resources available to the personality. Psychosynthesis is precisely the process by which we recognize, develop and unfold all our psychological resources. This includes the superconscious or higher spiritual potentialities. The self is such a center. It is through the presence of the self that we awake as the observer—presence as focused self-awareness. Through this faculty we can achieve a harmonious and liberated life.

Identifying as the observer gives us a vantage point from which we can recognize all that our

consciousness contains. We have found the source of light, which illuminates and clarifies. To be truly free we must be able to make choices based on a conscious awareness of our resources, needs and values. Otherwise, we are driven by unconscious desires, fears and emotions, which may indeed not come from ourselves, but from the collective unconscious. When we discover the self as the observer, we have the opportunity to evaluate our actions. This should not inhibit spontaneous self-expression, but ensures that we act out of our deepest values and authentic needs.

*Psychosynthesis is known as a “Psychology with a Soul.” The etymological meaning of “Psychology” is “the study of the Soul,” but where mainstream psychology largely denies the existence of the soul as a spiritual core, Psychosynthesis places the soul at its center.*

Self-awareness is “presence”: the ability to be awake and aware here and now in a non-attached manner. It is a loving presence that contains, observes and interacts with the contents of consciousness.

The development of the self is therefore a development towards greater presence: the ability to be completely grounded in one’s self and one’s awakened being. The development I am speaking of is a gradual *awakening* to the self; this implies a process and a development, an uncovering through dis-identification.

The path of awakening to pure consciousness, by observing consciousness itself through awareness meditation, is emphasized in Djwal Khul’s teaching. Bailey says:

“The true meditation is something that requires the most intense application of the mind, the utmost control of thought, and an attitude which is neither negative nor positive, but an equal balance between the two.”<sup>30</sup>

Assagioli concurs, suggesting introspection through his dis-identification technique and creative meditation.

The Tibetan is surely emphasizing the attitude of the observer or the onlooker in his teaching and encourage his students to develop it:

You have two things to do which—if successfully accomplished—would very much increase your output in service and reorganise both your inner and your outer life. You have to work conscientiously with the time factor and you have to make out of life a fuller expression of work well done. You have also to cultivate more definitely than you do the habit of mind, the trained attitude of the Observer of life, of people and of yourself. You must develop the attentiveness of the One who looks on at life and at the life struggle of others. It is necessary for you to learn that when you can avoid identifying yourself so closely with people, refraining from suffering so consciously with them, you can be of greater service to them and a finer friend and helper. Therefore, for you, detachment is an outstanding requirement and a quality to be cultivated.<sup>31</sup>

From this perspective, Assagioli's objective and that of the Tibetan's is all about discovering the self, as the observer; so we might guess that Assagioli also found inspiration here in respect to the second principle.

### ***The Will – The Way to Power***

Assagioli's third core concept is the will. Of all the great psychological pioneers, none have written so extensively on the will as Assagioli. That Assagioli connects the will directly to the self makes it clear that it is one of the key features of Psychosynthesis.

As mentioned, Assagioli describes the self as "a center of pure self-awareness and will." The experience of the will, is according to Assagioli, an inner existential fact, and involves a three-stage process. You first recognize the existence of the will. Then you discover that you *have a will*. The third stage is complete when you realize yourself *as being a will*.<sup>32</sup> It is during this last stage, according to Assagioli, that we can affirm: "I AM A WILL; I AM A CONSCIOUS, POTENT, DYNAMIC WILL,"<sup>33</sup> which is the central aim of self-realization. Before this process begins we can feel that we have no will and that life develops as a result of chance events and unconscious impulses.

When the will is so closely linked to our identity it is obvious why it is first and foremost connected with the will-to-be-self. The will-to-be-self is our urge and our longing for authenticity and the need to be a unique individual. When we connect the will *directly to our identity*, as the will-to-be-self, the reality of the will becomes existential much sooner, that is, it is felt as a direct inner experience.

When our will is the will of the conscious personal self, it becomes a dynamic power through which we express ourselves. When Assagioli speaks of the will, he means something quite different than the "Victorian will" and the repression of our desires and sexual drives. Assagioli believes that if sufficiently developed, the will can become a central force directing and regulating desire (and all the aspects of our personality) according to the self's authentic self-image.

The will is not desire. More times than not our desires run counter to our will. For example, when we don't want to do something—because we know it will be humiliating—but we do it anyway because of the power of desire. The will is associated with conscious choice and consent, the observer's consent. The will is basically the will-to-be-self. But we are not always able to express this will, because we have come to rely on—or are even addicted to—a behavior that is not consistent with our authentic self-image.

If we want to be ourselves, we must develop our connection to our will. Self-awareness (the observer) is an indispensable prerequisite for individuality, because it creates awareness. The will is equally important because it provides us with the strength and freedom to be ourselves. The will opens up a developmental path towards an exponentially greater power, because there is no greater power than being a unique self.

The will is often the last aspect of our nature we discover. It can be frightening to become who we are because we have to learn how to stand alone. Freedom comes with a price. We must deliberately reject the herd instinct and its dependency on social roles, conformity and



“normality.” The will gives us the courage to step away from herd mentality into self-awareness and individual expression. It is not enough to recognize our uniqueness; we must *express* it in our choices. True identity is not something we just *have*; it is something we must manifest via our choices and expressions. We need the will as the power to assemble, integrate and express the many resources at our disposal. It is through the will-to-be-a-self that we create a consistent direction in our lives and start acting as an independent and free human being. Assagioli refers to this achievement as “Personal Psychosynthesis” and when under the direction of the altruistic transpersonal will, he refers to it as “Transpersonal Psychosynthesis.”

Assagioli’s views of the will were highly influenced by the Tibetan’s writing. There are few, if any traditions, that offer such an elaborate philosophy about the will, as the so-called “Bailey books.” It seems possible, that Assagioli, as the disciple “FCD” in volumes I and II of *Discipleship In the New Age*, actually obtained the incentive to write about the will from the Tibetan:

I would like you to write an article upon the Power of the Dedicated Will. It is the use of the will aspect that second ray disciples have to acquire and this, for you, is an immediate problem. The will of persistence you have. The dynamic will which breaks down barriers and carries all before it is your next achievement and unfoldment.<sup>34</sup>

In a letter from 1935, the Tibetan writes to Assagioli:

You could write a book which would be a synthesis of these new psychological ideas, subordinated to a central theme which would dominate them as the head dominates the activities of the body . . . opportunity will come to you to reach the world with ideas that are relatively new . . . you must work for a year at the organization of your thought and material so that you can reach the thinkers of the world with the new ideas in the field of that oncoming major science, that newer field of service – the field of psychology.<sup>35</sup>

This theme could be either synthesis or the will, because we know that 30 years later, Assagioli published his book: *Psychosynthesis – A Manual of Principles and Techniques*, and 8 years later *The Act of Will*.

As I am in possession of a comprehensive compilation on the will, created by Roberto Assagioli, and found in his archive, I am convinced of the deep influence from the Tibetan.

### ***The Ideal Model – the Way to Focus***

The fourth core concept Assagioli mentions in his “Statement on Training” is the Ideal Model. As with the self-identification exercise, the Ideal Model is an important tool in the work of creating a harmonious and integrated personality. It is a visualization technique in which one creates an image of what one can be. One then focuses his or her resources to realize, or manifest, this image. The overall objective is synthesis, the gathering and coordination of all our inner powers towards a single unity. It aims at developing a liberated, vibrant and spontaneous ability to actualize all our creative resources.

The Ideal Model presents a realistic image of what one may be, when one focuses the will and enthusiasm on becoming the model or ideal. An Ideal Model is an authentic self-image guiding one’s imagination and patterns of behavior. It is a technique that combines self-awareness, will, imagination and passion with the aim to become the best version of you.

This technique makes use of nature’s own design, in the sense that we already contain a number of self-images and self-perceptions that we have consciously and unconsciously “recorded” during the course of our lives. These inner self-images control our lives because they make us act according to their content. Assagioli refers to psychological research that supports this notion and the following psychological law: “Images, mental pictures and ideas tend to produce the physical conditions and external acts that correspond to them.”<sup>36</sup> He is referring to several psychological laws, but with respect to the Ideal Model this is the most important.



Marketing and advertising are well aware of this principle and frequently use it to manipulate consumers.

Assagioli mentions six categories of false self-images<sup>37</sup> including self-concepts that either underestimate or overestimate one's sense of self. These are often rooted in the need to adjust to one's environment. Psychosynthesis aims to expose these false self-images and to redefine and create a new ideal model, "the image of himself that he can and will eventually reach when Psychosynthesis is completed."<sup>38</sup>

The Ideal Model uses the imagination, one of the seven psychological functions Assagioli includes in his Psychosynthesis. Creative visualization is a powerful technique because it can synthesize all the other psychological functions.<sup>39</sup> When we visualize an image of what we realistically may be, we develop concentration and will. We awaken feelings and desires that motivate us to actualize the image. This strengthens the image, which in turn increases our desire. We create a new personality around the Ideal Model, based on our knowledge of available psychological resources and what is meaningful to us. This work strengthens our focus on becoming an authentic self, and working with the Ideal Models is in itself a path to greater focus. Being an authentic self is the most important goal we can have, because it implies that we express this creative self in joy and for the benefit of ourselves and others.

Assagioli recommends that we should start with the Ideal Model in order to develop certain psychological qualities. The Ideal Model is useful when we work with the inferior aspects of our nature, helping to achieve more peace, will, empathy or whatever the individual needs.

I also see an especially close relation between Assagioli's Ideal Model technique and the Tibetan's teachings in *Letters on Occult Meditation*, where he says:

In the second method the student pictures himself as the ideal man. He visualises himself as the exponent of all the virtues,

and he attempts in his daily life to make himself what he visualises himself to be.<sup>40</sup>

This quote from Djwhal Khul is the essential point in respect to the work we apply with the Ideal Model.

### ***Synthesis – The Way to Flow***

Clearly, synthesis has a central focus in Psychosynthesis. As described earlier, it is one of the laws of nature and is expressed as the movement toward harmony, wholeness and unity. We can see this everywhere. It is the energy behind the evolution of consciousness.

Historically, humanity has organized itself into exponentially larger groups. One effect of this is what we today call globalization. This has both good and bad consequences. This movement towards wholeness begins in the individual when the need to "know oneself" emerges. Because of this the resources available to the personality gather around certain goals and values. It seems clear that this need for personal development and self-realization has never been greater.

When opposing forces collide, whether in oneself or between people, groups or different nations, life turns into conflict, war and struggle. Duality seems inescapable; it appears at all levels of existence: physically, psychologically and spiritually. It is precisely this tension that creates the possibility of harmony through conflict.

We are all familiar with the psychological dualities at play in ourselves and our lives, pleasure-pain, confidence-fear, attraction-repulsion, and so on. Psychosynthesis offers the possibility of harmonizing and managing these conflicts. The guiding rule is that a conflict cannot be solved at the level of consciousness at which it began, but only at a higher level. It is precisely here that the recognition of the observer and our ability to dis-identify becomes crucial. When we dis-identify from our conflicting poles, a higher level of consciousness (the observer) emerges, through which the recognition, acceptance and creative techniques can be used to reconcile the opposing forces.

For example, when we take on a new challenge, we may find that we react with both excitement and fear. The solution is not to repress the fear, but to address the part of us that is afraid with insight and love. Our fear, when it is transformed, can then cooperate with our excitement and these opposite poles can be synthesized. This does not mean a bland balance between opposing forces but something entirely new, a synthesis, and subsequently a sensible engagement is possible.

The result of synthesis is flow: the spontaneous ability to freely express oneself in the particular area. Working with synthesis is a developmental path that increases “flow” in many areas of our lives.

Anyone familiar with the Tibetan’s teaching will know that synthesis plays a crucial role in his teaching. A search on synthesis, synthesize, etc. generates 1250 hits. One of the essential laws in the universe is the “Law of Synthesis.” Assagioli writes eloquently about the Supreme Synthesis in the quote above, so it seems reasonable to suggest a close inspiration here too.

### ***The Superconscious***

Psychosynthesis is also a transpersonal psychology. It speaks of so-called “peak experiences,” which involve the mystical and transcendental levels of consciousness. Throughout history people have had inspirational experiences, which in some instances have changed the world. These experiences may be felt as a union with an all-embracing love or as deep insights into existential laws. Although rare, these extraordinary experiences are, nevertheless, as “natural” as more common experiences, such as hunger, aggression and sexuality.

The Superconscious is Assagioli’s sixth core concept in Psychosynthesis. It relates to his focus on the exploration and development of

transpersonal states. The Superconscious is an upper floor in our inner house (personality), which contains energies, values and modes that involve holistic and universal experiences.

Here we come to understand and directly experience the world as a unified network of energies with which we all are connected.

The Superconscious is the higher aspect of the personality.<sup>41</sup> We can say that the different levels of consciousness outside ordinary awareness consist of various types of interconnected energy. The Superconscious consists of energies

with a higher frequency than that of our “normal” consciousness.<sup>42</sup>

It expresses itself through our enlightened poets, politicians, artists, educators, scientists, mystics and creators. These individuals share a universal ethic, and display a genius and depth of insight that has often shaped our civilization and culture. Although these individuals may be unaware of it, they are expressions of the spirit of synthesis. They show us the higher spiritual possibilities we all can acquire.

Psychosynthesis has developed methods of tapping into the higher levels of the Superconscious in order for the experiences of beauty, love and power to creatively manifest. Just as the forces from the Lower Unconscious must be purified, transformed and integrated, so too must we integrate our spiritual energies in order for us to actualize all of our human potential. The Superconscious is the soul’s inner treasure chamber, where we can find and express an abundance of creative potential. We can say that the techniques connecting us to the Superconscious represent a developmental path towards greater abundance. Instead of filling empty lives, we *create* an abundant life, which we share with the world. Assagioli describes this goal as Transpersonal Psychosynthesis.

***Through Psychosynthesis we gain extensive phenomenological access to the world of energies. We can experience these worlds directly through introspection and through Psychosynthesis techniques learn how to direct our physical, psychological and spiritual forces. To work with and within energies, is a prerequisite in the work of Psychosynthesis.***

The Superconscious is also a familiar concept in the Tibetan's esoteric philosophy, and even the three major stages used in Psychosynthesis are mentioned:

It will be found that between each of the different stages of consciousness (from the subconscious through the self-conscious to the superconscious) there is a period of linking, of building, and of bridging ...<sup>43</sup>

This is a very precise description of the goals related to personal and transpersonal psychosynthesis. This brings us to the last core concept.

### ***The Transpersonal Self – the Way to Love***

Our focus has been to explore the essential elements of Psychosynthesis and this brings us to the further step of fostering the full experience of the Transpersonal Self. While such a step is difficult, as Assagioli admits, it is useful to have a theoretical understanding of the Transpersonal Self, since it serves as an important guide when using the technique of speaking with the inner wise teacher. Assagioli sometimes called the Transpersonal Self the Higher Self, or simply the Self (with a capital S) or the soul. I call it the Transpersonal Self or soul.

Many people have experienced the soul and Assagioli writes: "In any case, thousands of individuals, millions perhaps, have had the experience of the Self and have given testimony to it. In India, it is traditionally called the 'Atman.' Some of the Christian mystics have been aware of it and have called it variously, the 'divine spark' of the person, the 'apex,' the 'base,' the 'center' and the 'innermost essence.'"<sup>44</sup>

But we do not *have* a Transpersonal Self; we *are* this Self. When Assagioli distinguishes between the Personal self and the Transpersonal Self, he does not assume two "selves." The Personal self is a pale reflection or emanation of its source, the Transpersonal Self. It is a phenomenological difference, one of experience, between the self of the world of the personality—experienced through the filters of our mind—and the soul in its own transcendental world. The Self is always the center of

pure self-awareness and will, no matter what. Assagioli explains the difference:

The real distinguishing factor between the little self and the higher Self is that the little self is acutely aware of itself as a distinct separate individual, and a sense of solitude or of separation sometimes comes in the existential experience. In contrast, the experience of the spiritual Self is a sense of freedom, of expansion, of communication with other Selves and with reality, and the sense of Universality. It feels itself at the same time individual and universal.<sup>45</sup>

The Transpersonal Self creates the Superconscious<sup>46</sup> with all its creative processes of light, beauty and love. The soul is a static centre of pure being and self-awareness whose energies radiate, in the same way as the Sun's do, a comparison Assagioli makes often. We see the sun's rays but not its stable core.<sup>47</sup>

For Assagioli, the soul is a divine living being, and we experience its essence as a quiet intimate connection with all living beings and the cosmos. In the center of the soul, we discover ourselves as a calm, observing and dynamic presence, a universal and unchanging awareness and consciousness, permanently present in the background. The soul is witness to all our levels of consciousness and processes, which themselves come into being through the soul's emanation and its will-to-be. The soul is individual. It has a unique purpose: to manifest the universal consciousness through a concrete physical expression. The soul and its emanation represent the relationship between being and becoming. The soul is never anything else but "I am-ness," but where our personal self is constricted by the body, emotions and thoughts, the "Self is above and beyond the personality and untouched by the mind stream and bodily conditions."<sup>48</sup> "The Self is outside time and above it. It exists and lives in the dimension of the Eternal."<sup>49</sup>

The soul is limitless. What we identify with in the world of personality is like a drop of water in an ocean of endless possibilities and resources. The Transpersonal Self can never be fully "explained." It transcends factual language, and we can only refer to the quality of

the experience. One quality more than anything else describes the soul, and that is love. This love can be called “unity consciousness”; through it the soul experiences a deep connection with all living beings. The soul experiences no separation because it realizes its essential unity with all living beings as an existential fact. Contact with the Transpersonal Self hence opens up a developmental path towards limitless love, whose description is beyond the scope of this article.

In the above text, we see how Assagioli discriminates between the Transpersonal Self, and the Superconscious. The Transpersonal Self *creates* the Superconscious and in respect to esotericism, we can say that the Transpersonal Self—the star at the top of the egg-diagram—is the Jewel in the Lotus, the monadic point—Atman—and the Superconscious represents the energies and qualities emerging from the 12 petals.

This is also in alignment with DK’s teaching, and a wonderful article, *The Superconscious and the Self*, based on an interview with Assagioli that shows this distinction clearly.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

Roberto Assagioli’s “Psychosynthesis” is a far-reaching synthetic expression of the Eastern Wisdom Traditions and the western scientific approach into the subconscious, conscious and superconscious worlds of man. He was a true frontrunner and an explorer into the depths and heights of man. His true legacy will be his endeavor to introduce by example and in literature the Eastern concept of Atman or the Higher Self into mainstream psychology. Roberto Assagioli accomplished this decades before Abraham Maslow in the sixties initiated the fourth force of transpersonal psychology. His seven core concepts and the application of them in practice form the backbone of a modern yogic path of Self-realization from prepersonal to transpersonal consciousness and beyond.

Readers interested in exploring further the application of the seven core concepts to spiritual psychotherapy may well consider reading the printed/e-copy version *The Soul of Psychosynthesis* by this author.

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- 2 Sam Keen, *The Golden Mean of Roberto Assagioli*, Psychology Today Interview, 1974.
- 3 Michael Murphy, 2012, “The Emergence of Evolutionary Panentheism”: <http://www.itp-international.org/library/print/emergence-evolutionary-panentheism>.
- 4 Kenneth Sørensen, 2015, “Psychosynthesis and Evolutionary Panentheism,” <https://kennethsorensen.dk/en/psychosynthesis-and-evolutionary-panentheism/>.
- 5 Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis* (Winnipeg, MB: CAN, Turnstone Press, 1975), 31.
- 6 Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will* (Winnipeg, MB: CAN, Turnstone Press, 1974), ch. 9-10.
- 7 Ibid., 32.
- 8 Roberto Assagioli, Undated 2, *Talks on the Self*, (Handed out from The Psychosynthesis and Education Trust, London).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 There are many references about evolution in the collection of quotes *Psychosynthesis and Evolutionary Panentheism*, see the compilation of quotes at: <https://kennethsorensen.dk/en/psychosynthesis-and-evolutionary-panentheism/>
- 11 Roberto Assagioli, Undated 4, 1965. *From the couple to the community*, (unknown source).
- 12 Kenneth Sørensen, MA-dissertation: *Integral Psychosynthesis*, a comparison of Ken Wilber and Roberto Assagioli: <http://www.integralworld.net/sorensen1.html>.
- 13 Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 194.
- 14 Ibid., 207.
- 15 John Firman & Ann Gila, *Assagioli’s Seven Core Concepts for Psychosynthesis Training*, 2007.
- 16 “Training – A statement by Roberto Assagioli,” Florence: Istituto di Psicosintesi, 1974.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Writings*, The Synthesis Center, 2000.
- 20 Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 119.
- 21 Ibid., 18.
- 22 Ibid., 111.
- 23 Keen, *The Golden Mean of Roberto Assagioli*, <http://synthesiscenter.org/articles/0303.pdf>.
- 24 Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 19.

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- 25 Ibid., 11.
- 26 Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, Vol. 1 (reprint 1972; New York: Lucis Trust, 1944), 3.
- 27 Ibid., 7-18.
- 28 Roberto Assagioli, *The Act of Will* (Winnipeg, MB: CAN, Turnstone Press, 1974), 216.
- 29 Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 112.
- 30 Alice A. Bailey, *The Consciousness of the Atom* (reprint 1989; New York: Lucis Trust, 1961), 111.
- 31 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, 130.
- 32 Assagioli, *The Act of Will*, 7.
- 33 Ibid., 176.
- 34 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, 141.
- 35 Ibid., 146.
- 36 Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, 51.
- 37 Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 167.
- 38 Ibid., 164.
- 39 Ibid., 144.
- 40 Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (reprint 1978; New York: Lucis Trust, 1950), 146.
- 41 Ibid., 89.
- 42 Ibid., 198.
- 43 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (reprint 1979; Lucis Trust. 1951), 643.
- 44 From and interview with Roberto Assagioli.
- 45 Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 87.
- 46 Assagioli, *Training—A statement*.
- 47 Assagioli, *Undated 2*.
- 48 Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis*, 19.
- 49 Roberto Assagioli, *The Conflict between the Generations and the Psychosynthesis of the Human Ages*, *Psychosynthesis Research Foundation*, 1973, Issue No. 31.
- 50 Roberto Assagioli, *The Superconscious and the Self*, <http://www.psykosyntese.dk/a-172/>.

# The Great Whore of *Revelation*: The Personal Lower Self

Zachary F. Lansdowne

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## Abstract

The *Revelation of St. John*, sometimes called the *Book of Revelation* or the *Apocalypse*, is the last book of the Bible. It has been a mystery ever since it first appeared about 2000 years ago, because of its obscure and extravagant visions and symbols. Chapter 17 is considered to be one of the most difficult chapters to understand in this enigmatic work, and it features a seductive prostitute described as “the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” Many commentators interpret Chapter 17 as depicting people or events that occur in the external world at definite times. This article, however, uses an allegorical approach that takes every symbol as representing some aspect of an aspirant who is on the spiritual journey. As a result, the seductive prostitute is seen as signifying the self-seeking aspect of our being, which Alice Bailey calls the “Dweller on the Threshold” or “personal lower self,” the apostle Paul calls the “old man,” and many other authors call the “ego.”

## Traditional Method of Interpretation

The *Revelation of St. John* gets its title from its first verse: “THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.” Stephen Hunter describes the difficulty of interpreting this book:

The Revelation is the most difficult book to interpret of any in the New Testament canon. Its meaning is often involved in much obscurity, and the interpretation of eminent scholars has differed so widely in the past that we cannot always be sure, especially in the more difficult portions,

that the particular view which appears to us the more satisfactory or convincing is certainly the correct one. This divergence of opinion has had the unfortunate effect of disparaging the worth of the Apocalypse as a part of the Word of God in the mind of many earnest students, who have come to regard its meaning as so obscure, and hidden in such hopeless perplexity, that any further attempt to interpret it is entirely fruitless.<sup>1</sup>

This article is concerned only with Chapter 17, which William Barclay characterizes as being one of the most difficult in *Revelation*:

Chapter 17 is one of the most difficult in Revelation. The best way in which to study it is first to read it as a whole; then to make certain general identifications and so to see the general line of thought in it; and finally to study it in some detail.<sup>2</sup>

How can the symbolic language in Chapter 17 of *Revelation* be understood? The traditional interpretative approach could be called “external-temporal,” because it construes the characters and episodes as representing people or events that occur in the external world at definite times. Let us review how the traditional approach has been used to interpret the “great whore,” who is featured in this chapter. Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland note, “The

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## About the Author

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identification of the Whore with ancient Rome has come to dominate the approach to this chapter in modern historical scholarship.”<sup>3</sup> Marion Carson reports, “the whore has been interpreted variously as corrupt Jerusalem, the papacy, Roman Catholicism, London and faulty religion in general.”<sup>4</sup> Finally, John Wiertzema asserts, “Islam is the only religion that perfectly fits the symbolism of the Bible concerning the *great whore*.”<sup>5</sup> Thus the traditional approach has yielded a multitude of interpretations.

### Allegorical Method of Interpretation

Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), founder of the Theosophical Society, makes a key distinction: “Every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric (outward public) worship.”<sup>6</sup> Blavatsky also says, “All esoteric truths were given out to the public by the Initiates of the temples *under the guise of allegories*.”<sup>7</sup> James Pryse (1859–1942), a theosophist and colleague of Blavatsky, says that *Revelation* is an esoteric doctrine of early Christianity given out under the guise of allegories:

Incomprehensible as the book may seem to the exoteric scholar, however great his intellectual attainments, keen his mental acumen, and vast his store of erudition, to the mere tyro in the sacred science the general meaning of the *Apocalypse* is perfectly clear. It is unintelligible to the conventional scholar simply because its subject-matter, veiled in symbolical language, relates to the Mysteries of the early Christian Society, the esoteric teachings which it was not lawful to reveal.<sup>8</sup>

If *Revelation* were an esoteric teaching given out under the guise of allegories, then deciphering the allegories would reveal the hidden teaching. Roy Zuck, in *Basic Bible Interpretation*, describes the interpretative method of allegorizing scripture:

Allegorizing is searching for a hidden or secret meaning underlying but remote from

and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of a text. In other words the literal reading is a sort of code, which needs to be deciphered to determine the more significant and hidden meaning. In this approach the literal is superficial, the allegorical is the true meaning.<sup>9</sup>

Several commentators provide hints regarding the allegorical meaning of *Revelation*:

Blavatsky states: “The fact is ... the whole *Revelation*, is simply an allegorical narrative of the Mysteries and initiation therein of a candidate, who is John himself.”<sup>10</sup>

Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), a mystic noted for answering questions while in a trance, characterizes *Revelation* in this way: “For the visions, the experiences, the names, the churches, the places, the dragons, the cities, all are but emblems of those forces that may war within the individual in its journey through the material, or from the entering into the material manifestation to the entering into the glory, or the awakening in the spirit.”<sup>11</sup>

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, writes: “Certainly in the Revelation of St. John we are led by means of metaphor into the profound insights of the yoga science in which Jesus initiated his advanced disciple John, and others, whose consciousness thereby ascended to the exalted Self-realized state of the kingdom of God within.”<sup>12</sup>

Let us convert these hints into corresponding principles of interpretation. First, according to Blavatsky’s quotation, *Revelation* portrays the experiences of an aspirant on the spiritual journey. Second, according to Cayce’s quotation, every object in *Revelation* symbolizes an aspect of an aspirant’s inner life. Third, according to Yogananda’s quotation, *Revelation* contains metaphors that signify the insights of yoga science, which is the science behind the yoga practices that originated in ancient India. Blavatsky, Cayce, and Yogananda, however, interpreted only a



few symbols in *Revelation*, and none of them attempted a verse-by-verse analysis of any chapter.

This article attempts to decipher the allegorical meaning of the eighteen verses of Chapter 17, denoted as Revelation 17:1-18, while adhering to the three foregoing principles of interpretation and using clues found principally in three sources:

*Earlier Sacred Scriptures.* Gerhard Krodel, a Bible scholar, reports that the 404 verses of *Revelation* allude 518 times to earlier sacred scriptures.<sup>13</sup> These earlier scriptures include books of the New Testament, Old Testament, and Pseudepigrapha. The latter books are biblical in character but are not considered canonical.

*Alice Bailey* (1880–1949), a member of the Theosophical Society before leaving it to pursue her own activities, shows high regard for *Revelation*: “In the *New Testament*, John, the beloved disciple, was privileged to gain a cosmic picture and a true prophetic vision which he embodied in the *Apocalypse*.”<sup>14</sup>

*A Course in Miracles (ACIM)*, a modern system of spiritual psychology, describes the meaning of *Revelation* in this way: “The first step toward freedom involves a sorting out of the false from the true. This is a process of separation in the constructive sense, and reflects the true meaning of the *Apocalypse*. Everyone will ultimately look upon his own creations and choose to preserve only what is good, just as God Himself looked upon what He had created and knew that it was good.”<sup>15</sup>

### Revelation 17:1-18

The biblical quotations in this article come from the King James Version (KJV) unless explicitly stated otherwise.<sup>16</sup> Revelation 17:1-18 is as follows:

1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9. And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.

15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

18. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

## The Vision

Verses 1 through 6 describe a vision of a prostitute and scarlet beast. Each verse is considered separately and is repeated in bold print.

***1. And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:***

In verse 1, “one of the seven angels which had the seven vials” comes as a visitor. In Theology, an *angel* signifies “a typically benevolent celestial being,”<sup>17</sup> and “a divine messenger from God.”<sup>18</sup> Here, the word *celestial* indicates that an angel is at a higher level than a human being, and the word *messenger* indicates the role of an intercessor. A vial of oil was used in anointing Saul (1 Samuel 10:1) and Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-3) as kings, so a vial is a symbol of

initiation. Thus this visitor appears to be an intercessor from a higher realm with the power to initiate human beings into that realm.

Blavatsky may have been the first person to introduce to the West the concept of the Masters of the Wisdom.<sup>19</sup> These Masters are reputed to be enlightened beings and are sometimes referred to as Adepts, Mahatmas, or Elder Brothers of the Human Race. 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,”<sup>20</sup> so such a Master is an intercessor with the power of initiation. Accordingly, “one of the seven angels which had the seven vials” is taken to be a Master of the Wisdom.

The first principle of interpretation, which was described earlier, regards *Revelation* as portraying the experiences of an aspirant who is on the spiritual journey. According to this principle, the pronoun *me* in verse 1 denotes such an aspirant, so the verse depicts the instruction and assistance that a Master gives to a typical aspirant.

The Master tells the aspirant to “Come hither,” but what does that mean? Bailey gives this account:

As you have frequently been told, the attention of a Master is attracted to a man by the brilliance of the indwelling light ... What is it that a Master has to do with a pupil? ... He has to accustom the pupil to raise his rate of vibration till he can continuously carry a high one, and then assist him until that high vibration becomes the stable measure of the pupil’s bodies.<sup>21</sup>

Thus “Come hither” seems to mean: Raise the rate of vibration of your consciousness.

What is the “great whore that sitteth upon many waters”? According to the second principle of interpretation, which was also described earlier, the whore symbolizes some aspect of an aspirant’s inner life. John Van Auken, in his book based on Cayce’s material, identifies the whore as “the selfish, self-centered, self-seeking aspect of our being.”<sup>22</sup> Van Auken’s identification is consistent with the definition of *whore* as an intransitive verb:

“to pursue a faithless, unworthy, or idolatrous desire.”<sup>23</sup> We agree with Van Auken’s identification, because this article shows that it yields verse significances that are consistent across the entire chapter.

*Ego* is the Latin word for “I,” so it refers to the “I” or self of any person. Philosophers and psychologists sometimes distinguish between different kinds of self, perhaps saying that a human being consists of both a lower and higher self, so they may use the term *ego* in varying ways, perhaps to denote the lower self, or perhaps to denote the higher self.<sup>24</sup> Many books, such as *ACIM*, use the term *ego* to denote the self-seeking aspect of our being, which could be regarded as the lower self. In accordance with such usage, this article employs *ego* to denote the referent that the whore symbolizes.

Let us consider other terms that have been used to denote the self-seeking aspect of our being, because they may help to illuminate this aspect. The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4:22, refers to this aspect with the phrase “old man”: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Bailey writes, “The Dweller on the Threshold summarises in itself the evil tendencies, the accumulated limitations and the sum total of the selfish habits and desires which are characteristic of the material nature of the disciple,”<sup>25</sup> and “the Dweller on the Threshold ... is only another name for the personal lower self,”<sup>26</sup> so the phrases “Dweller on the Threshold” and “personal lower self” seem to be her terms for the self-seeking aspect of our being. Additional terms that have been used to denote this aspect include “false self,” “illusory self,” and “imposter self.”<sup>27</sup>

In verse 1, the word “great” modifies the whore. This adjective is a translation of the Greek word (*megas*) that is sometimes used to denote people holding positions of authority (Mark 10:42). Accordingly, the ego is a controlling sense of identity.

The “waters” symbolize emotional reactions, as in Psalm 69:2: “I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep

waters, where the floods overflow me.” Bailey also says, “Water is the symbol of the emotional nature.”<sup>28</sup> To *support* means, “to aid the cause, policy, or interests of.”<sup>29</sup> Verse 1 describes the whore as sitting on many waters, which suggests that the ego is supported by many emotional reactions.

*ACIM* observes, “You ... have spent days, hours and even years in chaining your brothers to your ego in an attempt to support it and uphold its weakness.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, you have forced your companions to interact with you in such a way that you elicit emotional reactions that support your ego. This quotation illustrates the notion that the ego is supported by emotional reactions, and it also illustrates the preceding notion that the ego is a controlling sense of identity.

In summary, verse 1 is given the following meaning: *A Master from a higher realm, who has the power to initiate human beings into that realm, comes to the aspirant and says, “Raise the rate of vibration of your consciousness, and I will show you the truth about your ego, or personal lower self, which is a controlling sense of identity supported by your many emotional reactions.”*

## ***2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.***

Wikipedia states, “Earth is one of the four classical elements in ancient Greek philosophy and science. It was commonly associated with qualities of heaviness, matter and the terrestrial world.”<sup>31</sup> Bailey sometimes uses the term “matter aspect” as a synonym for the personality,<sup>32</sup> which is the threefold lower self consisting of the mental body, emotional body, and physical body,<sup>33</sup> so “earth” in verse 2 appears to denote the personality.

Bailey writes, “I begin with the mental body as it is for the student of meditation the one that is the centre of his effort and the one that controls the two lower bodies.”<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, “the kings of the earth” are interpreted as thoughts, because thoughts rule the rest of the personality.

The Bible sometimes uses a reference to fornication as a metaphor for idolatry,<sup>35</sup> so the word “fornication” in verse 2 suggests that the ego is idolatrous. In fact, *ACIM* makes an even stronger statement: “The ego is idolatry.”<sup>36</sup> Here, idolatry is construed in a broad sense to mean giving power to external circumstances, including any kind of physical possession. *ACIM* provides this explanation:

The world believes in idols. No one comes unless he worshipped them, and still attempts to seek for one that yet might offer him a gift reality does not contain. Each worshipper of idols harbors hope his special deities will give him more than other men possess. It must be more. It does not really matter more of what; more beauty, more intelligence, more wealth, or even more affliction and more pain. But more of something is an idol for. And when one fails another takes its place, with hope of finding more of something else. Be not deceived by forms the “something” takes. An idol is a means for getting more.<sup>37</sup>

The final sentence in the above quotation, “An idol is a means for getting more,” indicates that idolatrous thoughts are comparative in nature and assign value to accumulations of things. Given the preceding significances, the initial part of verse 2, “With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication,” has this meaning: Your thoughts have become idolatrous through being connected to your ego.

In the final part of verse 2, the “inhabitants of the earth” are taken as feelings and motives, because they are the subordinate elements of the personality. These elements are portrayed as being drunk, but what does that mean? *The New Church Messenger* gives this explanation:

The Bible frequently speaks of drunkenness to denote a state of spiritual pride. Ariel is said by the prophet Isaiah to be drunk. He says [Isaiah 29:9]: “They are drunken but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.” Again he says [Isaiah 28:3]: “The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden down.”<sup>38</sup>

Sophocles (495–406 B.C.), a Greek tragic poet, also uses drunkenness as a metaphor for pride: “The tyrant is a child of Pride who drinks from his great sickening cup recklessness and vanity, until from his high crest headlong he plummets to the dust of hope.”<sup>39</sup> These quotations from the Bible and Sophocles show that the ancient world considered drunkenness to be like pride. The drunkenness in verse 2 is interpreted as pride, because that is what an idol offers.

In the final part of verse 2, “the wine of her fornication” seems to be the idolatrous thoughts mentioned in the initial part, so the entire verse appears to have this meaning: *Your thoughts have become idolatrous through being connected to your ego, and your feelings and motives have been made prideful with these thoughts.*

**3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.**

As before, the pronoun *he* denotes the Master, and the pronoun *me* denotes the aspirant, so the initial part of verse 3 describes the Master as carrying the aspirant into the “wilderness.” The Bible often considers the *wilderness* to be a place of refuge and communion with God, as in Hosea 2:14: “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.” Let us assume that the “wilderness” in verse 3 satisfies the second principle of interpretation, so it symbolizes an inner place of refuge and communion.

Bailey says, “the main technique of the Hierarchy [of Masters] is that of conveying inspiration,”<sup>40</sup> and describes the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration: “only allowing the ‘apex of the mind’ (if I may use so unusual a term) to be receptive and open to transmission ... all the rest of the consciousness should be so polarised that outer interference will not be possible.”<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the inner “wilderness,” in verse 3, is the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration.

The next part of the verse mentions a woman who sits upon “a scarlet coloured beast.” Given that this woman is the whore of verse 1, the beast in verse 3 must be an emotional reaction, because verse 1 says that its rider “sitteth upon many waters” and waters represent emotional reactions. The scarlet color could be inferred as a symbol of guilt, as shown in Isaiah 1:18, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” so the beast could also be inferred as signifying guilt.

As an additional clue, verse 8 says that the scarlet beast “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.” The bottomless pit, or the abyss, is mentioned in Luke 8:31 and Romans 10:7. *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation*, which was written by a study group based on Cayce’s messages, considers the bottomless pit to be the “subconscious mind” or “area of repression.”<sup>42</sup> Bailey uses a similar image to depict the subconscious realm: “The subconscious nature is like a deep pool from which a man can draw almost anything from his past experience, if he so desires, and which can be stirred up until it becomes a boiling cauldron, causing much distress.”<sup>43</sup> For these reasons, the bottomless pit is taken to be the subconscious realm, so the scarlet beast denotes an emotion that can ascend out of this realm. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), founder of psychoanalysis, describes the emergence of “an unconscious sense of guilt” into “a conscious sense of guilt,”<sup>44</sup> thereby indicating that guilt can ascend out of the subconscious realm. Thus verse 8 corroborates the inference that the scarlet beast signifies guilt.

What is the significance of the word *name*, which appears often in *Revelation*? John McKenzie says, “It is a widespread cultural

phenomenon that the name is considered to be more than an artificial tag which distinguishes one person from another ... but it is thought to tell something of the kind of person he is.”<sup>45</sup> For example, 1 Samuel 25:25 says: “for as his name *is*, so *is* he.” The Bible uses a change in the personal name to indicate a change in the

person, such as the change from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5). Consistent with such usage, *A Commentary on the Book of the Revelation* interprets name as “nature.”<sup>46</sup>

Verse 3 says that the scarlet beast is “full of names of blasphemy.” *Blasphemy* is a translation of the Greek word (*blasphemia*) that means slander or evil speaking. Although the English word denotes any utterance that insults God, the original Greek word is not necessarily concerned with

God. For example, the Greek word can be used for strong insults thrown at other people (Ephesians 4:31). Given that *name* signifies nature, “the names of blasphemy” tells us that the nature of the scarlet beast is slander and evil speaking, which provides further corroboration that this beast symbolizes guilt.

To *maintain* means, “to keep in existence.”<sup>47</sup> The verse describes a woman sitting on only the scarlet beast, which suggests that the ego is maintained by guilt. Given that the ego *is* disordered thought, *ACIM* makes a similar statement: “Every disordered thought is attended by guilt at its inception, and maintained by guilt in its continuance.”<sup>48</sup> Robert Perry, who is a commentator on *ACIM*, explicitly says, “Guilt maintains the ego’s existence.”<sup>49</sup>

Verse 3 portrays the ego as being *maintained* by guilt, but verse 1 portrays the ego as being *supported* by many emotional reactions. In this context, what is the difference between being

***... the great whore of Revelation symbolizes the ego.... The ego is the self-seeking aspect of our being. During each day of our lives—indeed, during each moment—we face the following choice: to express our true nature, or be seduced by our ego. It is our fate, as human beings, to be repeatedly seduced by our ego until, through pain and suffering we eventually learn to express continually our true nature.***

maintained and being supported? *ACIM* states, “The ego tells you all is black with guilt within you, and bids you not to look. Instead, it bids you look upon your brothers, and see the guilt in them.”<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, your belief that you have hidden guilt maintains your ego’s existence, because it inhibits you from looking within yourself; and your many emotional reactions support your ego, because they carry out your ego’s bidding to see guilt in other people.

What is the significance of “the seven heads” that belong to the beast? Our attempt to allegorize this phrase is based on both the second principle of interpretation, according to which the seven heads symbolize seven aspects of the aspirant’s inner life, and the third principle of interpretation, according to which some metaphors signify the insights of yoga science.

In yoga science, the physical body of a human being has both dense and subtle portions. The *dense physical body* contains the muscles, bones, and glands. The *subtle physical body* is called the etheric or vital body in Theosophy;<sup>51</sup> “golden bowl” in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 12:6);<sup>52</sup> and *prana mayakosha*, a Sanskrit name, in Hinduism.<sup>53</sup>

The word *chakra* means “wheel” in Sanskrit. In yoga science, a chakra refers to a subtle wheel of energy in the subtle physical body that governs a portion of the dense physical body. Yoga science describes seven principal chakras that 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.<sup>54</sup>

The “seven heads” are taken as the seven chakras, because the numbers match and because a head has the shape of a wheel and is a center of

authority. Thus the seven heads on the beast indicate that guilt operates through the seven chakras.

What are the “ten horns” that also belong to the beast? Ten Patriarchs are mentioned before the Flood (Genesis 5), the Egyptians were visited with ten plagues (Exodus 7-12), there are Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28), there are ten powers that cannot separate one from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39), and there are ten sins that can exclude one from the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The *New Bible Dictionary* concludes: “The number 10, therefore, also signifies completeness.”<sup>55</sup> *Horns* are symbols of power and dominion, since they are the chief means of attack and defense for animals endowed with them (Deuteronomy 33:17). The verse’s horns are taken as desires for outer things, because they are the emotional forces that empower the personality to attack others and defend itself in the external world, so the ten horns on the beast indicate that guilt operates through all desires for outer things.

In summary, verse 3 is given this meaning: *The Master helps the aspirant to achieve the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration. Then the aspirant sees that the ego is maintained by guilt, which has the nature of slander and evil speaking, and which operates through the seven chakras and all desires for outer things.*

**4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.**

In verse 4, *purple* is a symbol of royalty or high status. For example, the kings of Midian wore purple clothes (Judges 8:26), Solomon’s palanquin seat was purple (Song of Solomon 3:10), and, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man wore purple clothes (Luke 16:19). The meaning of *scarlet* seems to be different in verse 4 than in verse 3. The Biblical Studies Press, which publishes the NET (New English Translation) Bible, reports, “Clothing of *scarlet* was expensive and beyond the financial reach of most people,”<sup>56</sup> so *scar-*



*let* is a symbol of prosperity. For example, 2 Samuel 1:24 states, “Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.”

The initial part of the verse states, “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls.” This part shows that the ego offers self-inflation through high status, prosperity, and valuable things. *ACIM* makes a similar point: “Self-inflation is the only offering it [the ego] can make.”<sup>57</sup>

The final part of the verse states: “having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.” *ACIM* asks, “Does the ego really have gifts to give, being itself an illusion and offering only the illusion of gifts?”<sup>58</sup> In the final part, the “golden cup” signifies the illusion of favorable gifts, but the “abominations and filthiness” signifies that the actual gifts are unfavorable.

The Bible often uses the word *abominations* to denote the results of idolatry (2 Kings 23:13). Given that fornication signifies idolatry, “filthiness of her fornication” also denotes the results of idolatry. Accordingly, this repetition of meaning in the phrase “abominations and filthiness of her fornication” signifies that idolatry has *many* unfavorable results. *ACIM* lists some of these results:

No sadness and no suffering proclaim a message other than an idol found that represents a parody of life which, in its lifelessness, is really death, conceived as real and given living form. Yet each must fail and crumble and decay, because a form of death cannot be life, and what is sacrificed cannot be whole. All idols of this world were made to keep the truth within from being known to you, and to maintain allegiance to the dream that you must find what is outside yourself to be complete and happy.<sup>59</sup>

Based on the preceding remarks, verse 4 has this meaning: *The ego offers self-inflation through high status, prosperity, and valuable things. It offers, however, only the illusion of*

*favorable gifts, because its actual offerings are sadness, suffering, ignorance of inner truth, and allegiance to the false hope that completion and happiness can be found in outer things.*

**5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

In verse 5, “forehead” is a symbol of mind or consciousness, as in Jeremiah 3:3: “thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.” The whore has a long name consisting of four parts. As discussed previously, this name signifies the ego’s nature, so that nature consists of four characteristic qualities. Let us consider each quality in the given order.

The word “MYSTERY” is a translation of the Greek word (*mysterion*) that sometimes means “a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will,”<sup>60</sup> as in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.” Yogananda states, “Though the ego in most barbaric ways conspires to enslave him, man is not a body confined to a point in space but is essentially the omnipresent soul.”<sup>61</sup> *ACIM* states: “The ego wishes no one well. Yet its survival depends on your belief that you are exempt from its evil intentions.”<sup>62</sup> These two quotations speak of the ego as though it has its own consciousness with a hidden evil purpose. Accordingly, “MYSTERY” is taken to be this hidden purpose.

The Hebrew word *Babel* signifies confusion, as shown by Genesis 11:9: “Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth.” In verse 5, “BABYLON” is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Babel*. Consequently, Charles Fillmore (1854–1948), founder of the Unity School of Christianity, concludes, “Babylon signifies confusion.”<sup>63</sup>

A harlot is associated with temptation, as shown by Proverbs 7:10–23:

And, behold, there met him a woman  
With the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart ...

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield,  
With the flattering of her lips she forced him.  
He goeth after her straightway,  
As an ox goeth to the slaughter,  
Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;  
Till a dart strike through his liver;  
As a bird hasteth to the snare,  
And knoweth not that it *is* for his life.

Thus the name “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” signifies that the ego is the source of many kinds of temptation. *ACIM* provides related instruction: “Watch your mind for the temptations of the ego, and do not be deceived by it. It offers you nothing.”<sup>64</sup>

As discussed earlier, abominations denote the results of idolatry, and the earth denotes the personality. Consequently, “ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” refer to the idolatrous experiences of the personality.

In summary, verse 5 is interpreted in this way: *The ego’s consciousness has the hidden purpose of enslaving the aspirant through great confusion, many kinds of temptation, and idolatrous experiences of the personality.*

**6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.**

The drunkenness in verse 2 is interpreted as pride. The drunkenness in verse 6 is also interpreted as pride, because that is what the ego offers in verse 4. Verse 6 refers to two kinds of blood—“the blood of the saints” and “the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”—but what do they signify? Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1772), in *The Apocalypse Explained*, gives this explanation:

In the natural sense these words mean that Babylon shed the blood of the saints, and the blood of those who bore witness to the Lord; while in the spiritual sense these words mean that Babylon did violence to Divine truths, and also to testification concerning the Lord.<sup>65</sup>

In this quotation, the “natural sense” refers to the traditional, or literal, method of interpretation; but the “spiritual sense” is comparable to the allegorical method used in this article. Thus, in Swedenborg’s application of the spiritual sense, “the blood of the saints” signifies violence done to Divine truths, and “the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” signifies violence done to testification concerning the Lord. The verse shows that the Lord is Jesus, so testification concerning the Lord is the act of giving evidence of homage to Jesus.<sup>66</sup> 1 Peter 2:21 tells us to give this evidence by following Jesus’ example. Accordingly, the initial part of verse 6 has this meaning: The aspirant sees that the ego takes pride in acquiring divine Truths and in following Jesus’ example.

Chögyam Trungpa (1939 – 1987), a prominent teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, defines *spiritual materialism*:

Walking the spiritual path properly is a very subtle process; it is not something to jump into naively. There are numerous sidetracks which lead to a distorted, ego-centered version of spirituality; we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are developing spiritually when instead we are strengthening our egocentricity through spiritual techniques. This fundamental distortion may be referred to as *spiritual materialism*.<sup>67</sup>

The meaning given for the initial part of verse 6 illustrates Trungpa’s notion of spiritual materialism. In the final part of the verse, the aspirant finds the insight portrayed in the initial part to be especially astonishing. Trungpa gives this explanation:

Ego is able to convert everything to its own use, even spirituality ... Thus ego tries to examine and imitate the practice of meditation and the meditative way of life. When we have learned all the tricks and answers of the spiritual game, we automatically try to imitate spirituality, since real involvement would require the complete elimination of ego, and actually the last thing we want to do is to give up the ego completely. However, we cannot experience that which we are trying to imitate; we can only find

some area within the bounds of ego that seems to be the same thing.<sup>68</sup>

Thus verse 6 seems to have this meaning: *The aspirant sees that the ego takes pride in acquiring divine Truths and following Jesus' example. Upon having this insight, the aspirant is amazed at how the ego can convert even spirituality to its own use.*

## The Vision Explained

Verses 7 through 18 explain the earlier vision of a prostitute and scarlet beast. Each verse is considered separately and is repeated in bold print.

**7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.**

Bailey writes, "the task of the Master is ... to suggest or throw into the disciple's mind the type of question which warrants his thought."<sup>69</sup> In the initial part of verse 7, the Master asks, "Wherefore didst thou marvel?" This question has the purpose of inducing the aspirant to recognize his or her own ignorance about the ego. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), a member of the Theosophical Society before leaving it to pursue his own activities, explains the pedagogic value of such recognition: "To learn there must be a freshness; there must be a mind that says, 'I do not know, but I am willing to learn. Show me.'"<sup>70</sup>

As before, "mystery" is the translation of a Greek word (*mysterion*) that has several meanings. In the final part of the verse, it means "a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding."<sup>71</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:2 uses this word in a similar way: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries ... and have not charity, I am nothing."

Based on the earlier symbolic meanings, verse 7 has the following significance: *The Master says to the aspirant, "Why are you amazed? I will tell you the hidden things about the ego, including its relationship to guilt, chakras, and desires."*

**8. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.**

As discussed in the commentary for verse 3, the "beast" signifies guilt. The initial part of verse 8 characterizes this beast as something that "was, and is not," but what does that mean? *ACIM* says, "guilt, being unreal, cannot be justified."<sup>72</sup> Brent Haskell, who is a commentator on *ACIM*, makes a similar point: "Guilt is simply that which you have imagined, And as such, should not, and cannot, exist."<sup>73</sup> If "was" were an abbreviation of *was imagined*, and if "is not" were an abbreviation of *is not real*, then the initial part of verse 8 would have this meaning: The guilt that you saw in yourself was imagined by you and is not real.

The second part of verse 8 says that guilt "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." As also discussed in the commentary for verse 3, the "bottomless pit" signifies the subconscious realm. Although the KJV uses the word "perdition," most modern translations instead use the word "destruction,"<sup>74</sup> so the verse indicates that the ascension of guilt leads to its destruction. Krishnamurti provides this explanation:

All the implications of guilt, all the implications of its subtlety, where it hides, is like a flower blooming. And if you let it bloom, not act, not say, "I must do or must not do", then it begins to wither away and die. Please understand this ... If you discover it, you see that it is so, then psychologically it is an enormous factor that frees you from all the past and present struggles and effort.<sup>75</sup>

The final part of verse 8 mentions the "book of life," but what does that signify? In the Old Testament, the *book of life* is used as the roster of people who are physically alive (Psalm 69:28), but in the New Testament it is used as the roster of Christians (Philippians 4:3). Neither of these meanings satisfies the second

principle of interpretation. Bailey, however, assigns a third meaning when she says, "There is ... the Book of Life, read and eventually mastered by initiates of all degrees."<sup>76</sup>

Before considering a definition of the book of life that is compatible with Bailey's meaning, let us introduce some additional terminology. According to Theosophy, the planetary life consists of seven worlds that are often called "planes" and have the following names: 1) lo-gic; 2) monadic; 3) spiritual; 4) intuitional; 5) mental; 6) emotional; and 7) physical.<sup>77</sup> These planes are regarded as being arranged metaphorically in an inner and outer manner. For example, the mental, emotional, and physical planes, which are spoken of as "the three worlds of human endeavor,"<sup>78</sup> are regarded as the three outermost planes.

Bailey says, "the concepts and the ideas which give birth to a thought-form ... exist on the archetypal plane which (for the aspirant) is the plane of the intuition."<sup>79</sup> An ordinary book has thought-forms. The plane of the intuition could be regarded as an archetypal book, because it has the concepts and ideas that give birth to ordinary books. Bailey also says, "no one idea belongs to anyone but, coming as ideas do, from the plane of the intuition, they are a universal gift and possession, and the property of no one mind,"<sup>80</sup> so various people can read the plane of the intuition in the sense of receiving its ideas.

Just as the concepts in an ordinary book are grasped progressively and sequentially, Bailey describes how the ideas from the plane of the intuition are grasped in a similar manner:

Through the intuition, progressive understanding of the ways of God in the world and on behalf of humanity are revealed; through the intuition, the transcendence and the immanence of God is sequentially grasped and man can enter into that pure knowledge, that inspired reason, which will enable him to comprehend not only the processes of nature in its fivefold divine expression but also the underlying causes of these processes.<sup>81</sup>

For these reasons, the plane of the intuition is like a book. The final part of verse 8 provides

an additional clue by saying that the "book of life" is "from the foundation of the world," but what does that mean? Bailey writes,

The basic approach for all who endeavour to grasp esotericism, or to teach esoteric students, is to lay the emphasis upon the world of energies and to recognise that behind all happenings in the world of phenomena (and by that I mean the three worlds of human evolution) exists the world of energies; these are of the greatest diversity and complexity, but all of them move and work under the Law of Cause and Effect.<sup>82</sup>

The above quotation contrasts the world of phenomena, which consists of the mental, emotional, and physical planes, with the world of energies, which consists of the four innermost planes. The world of energies could be regarded as the foundation of the world of phenomena, because, in the words of the quotation, "behind all happenings in the world of phenomena ... exists the world of energies." If the book of life were the plane of the intuition, these definitions would be consistent with verse 8's phrase, "the book of life from the foundation of the world."

Moreover, if the book of life were the plane of the intuition, it would satisfy Bailey's earlier meaning for the book of life, because it would be, in her words, "read and eventually mastered by initiates of all degrees"; and it would also satisfy the second principle of interpretation, because it would symbolize an aspect of an aspirant's inner life. For these reasons, let us take the book of life to be the plane of the intuition.

As before, earth signifies the personality, so "they that dwell upon the earth" are thoughts that are identified with the personality. Name signifies nature, so the name of a person's thought signifies what Bailey calls "the nature of his thought."<sup>83</sup>

The verb *wonder* appears in the final part of verse 8. To *wonder* if one's guilty emotion is true means that one asks oneself whether it is true. If one were to answer this question by using thoughts identified with one's personality, one's answer would take the form of defen-

sive reasoning that tries to prove that the emotion is not true. Consequently, guilty people generally do not allow their guilt to bloom in their awareness, but instead use defensive reasoning to defend against it.

*ACIM* asks, “Who would defend himself unless he thought he were attacked, that the attack were real, and that his own defense could save himself? And herein lies the folly of defense; it gives illusions full reality, and then attempts to handle them as real.”<sup>84</sup> In particular, defensive reasoning gives guilt full reality, and then attempts to handle it as though it were real. Consequently, as Bailey observes, no amount of defensive reasoning seems able to quiet guilt:

Ancient suffering, dire memories, haunting miseries, deep-seated in the subconscious rise to the surface frequently and cause a condition of fear and of distress which no amount of reasoning seems able to quiet.<sup>85</sup>

The final words of verse 8 are: “the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” As before, “the beast that was, and is not” has this meaning: guilt was imagined, and is not real. How should “and yet is” be construed? The sentence connector, *yet*, means “in spite of that,”<sup>86</sup> so “and yet is” must refer to an attribute of guilt that seems to contradict the preceding ones. The referenced attribute appears to be this: guilt is powerful enough to defeat any defensive reasoning used against it.

Based on the foregoing significances, verse 8 is given this meaning: *The guilt that you saw in yourself was imagined by you and is not real. If a guilty emotion were to ascend out of the subconscious realm and allowed to bloom without any defense, it would disappear. Nevertheless, thoughts identified with the personality, which are thoughts whose nature is inconsistent with the plane of the intuition, will defend against this emotion that was imagined, and is not real, and yet is powerful enough to defeat such a defense.*

**9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.**

In verse 9, the Master continues to teach the aspirant. The New International Version (NIV) renders the initial part of verse 9 in a clear way: “This calls for a mind with wisdom.” Thus the Master seems to acknowledge the following: this teaching is merely a hint that can be understood only by a mind with spiritual wisdom. But why would the Master teach the aspirant in such a veiled manner? Bailey gives this answer:

It is through the medium of a hint that the Master in any particular group conveys to a disciple His desire for the disciple ... A hint is in reality and when properly considered, *the seed or germ of an intended revelation*. The Master knows well what is the next revelation which will be in order for the disciple in training; through hints He sows the seed of revelation, but it remains for the disciple to discover that which the hint is intended to produce, and to nurture the seed until it flowers forth in the beauty of revelation.<sup>87</sup>

The final part of verse 9 mentions “seven mountains,” but what do they represent? The verse equates the seven heads, which belong to the beast, to the seven mountains. To the question, “Do the seven heads and mountains have any reference to the spiritual centers of the body, Rev. 17:9?” Cayce provides this answer: “These have reference to the spiritual centers.”<sup>88</sup> Thus Cayce corroborates the earlier interpretation, given for verse 3, that the seven heads symbolize the seven chakras, and indicates that the seven mountains also symbolize the seven chakras. Pryse comes to the same conclusion: “the seven mountains are the seven chakras.”<sup>89</sup>

Why does verse 9 introduce mountains, instead of continuing with the earlier symbol of heads? Perhaps mountains have associations that are the basis of the verse’s allegorical meaning. Seven mountains are explicitly mentioned, but these mountains imply surrounding plains from which they rise. What do plains represent? *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* reports, “In Palestine, a land of geographical contrasts, a plain takes on special significance. Fertility, possibilities of trade and conquest, and ease of

travel are particular characteristics associated with broad valleys and tablelands.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, in the Bible, a plain has the special significance of being a place of major activity. In a related manner, Bailey writes, “I descend in thought unto the plains whereon men walk, and there I work,”<sup>91</sup> and “Choose for your good companions those who live a life of arduous labour upon the plains of earth,”<sup>92</sup> so she uses *plains* as a symbol that denotes places of major activity.

Let us consider the meaning of *plain* in Luke 6:12–17, which describes Jesus’ early ministry:

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples ... And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases.

Here, *plain* might denote a literal level area of land; or it might be a symbol that denotes a place of major activity. Traditional scholars use the literal meaning to narrate historical events that took place in an ancient world. Bailey, however, employs the symbolic meaning of the word to show how the entire scriptural passage can be applied in a pragmatic way in the current world:

After each expansion of consciousness and each unfoldment of a deepened awareness we return, as Christ did, to the plains of every-day life, and there subject our knowledge to the test, discover its reality and truth, and find out also wherein lies for us our next point of expansion.<sup>93</sup>

Bailey’s analysis is similar to our own, because we are employing the symbolic meaning of words to show how the entire Chapter 17 of *Revelation* can be applied in a pragmatic way in the current world.

The final part of verse 9 portrays the woman as sitting on the seven mountains that rise above

the plains. Given that the woman, mountains, and plains signify the ego, seven chakras, and places of major activity, respectively, the imagery indicates that the ego operates through the medium of the seven chakras to galvanize the dense physical body into activity. Bailey describes the same sequence:

Man, as you know, is the expression of energies. These energies galvanise the physical man into activity through the medium of certain force centres in the etheric body.<sup>94</sup>

Thus the verse is given the following meaning: *This teaching is merely a hint that can be understood only by a mind with spiritual wisdom. The seven chakras are the medium through which the ego galvanizes the dense physical body into activity.*

**10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.**

In the initial part of verse 10, most modern translations use “they” instead of “there,”<sup>95</sup> making it clear that the seven mountains mentioned in verse 9 are the same as the seven kings mentioned in verse 10. The seven mountains in verse 9 symbolize the seven chakras, so the seven kings in verse 10 must have the same significance. Indeed, each chakra is like a king because it exercises dominion, as Bailey explains: “Each of the seven major centres governs or conditions ... the area of the physical body in which it is found.”<sup>96</sup>

Verse 10 portrays practical instruction regarding the chakras. Bailey characterizes the solar plexus chakra as “the organ of self-conscious personal desire,”<sup>97</sup> and says, “It is from the great centre of the personality life, the solar plexus, that the life is usually ruled and government administered.”<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, the phrase, “five are fallen, and one is,” has this meaning: the aspirant is at the stage in which the energies of five chakras are usually ruled by the energy of the solar plexus chakra. In particular, the ego’s desires, which proceed from the solar plexus chakra, usually rule the thoughts of the throat chakra,<sup>99</sup> motivations of the sacral chakra,<sup>100</sup> material forces of the



chakra at base of spine,<sup>101</sup> and, as shown by verse 6, even the divine Truths of the head chakra<sup>102</sup> and spiritual practices of the ajna chakra.<sup>103</sup>

The phrase, “the other is not yet come,” means that the remaining center, which is the heart chakra, is not yet awakened. The word *yet* suggests that the aspirant will eventually awaken this center by making further progress, as Bailey explains: “The keynote of the aspirant’s progress will be *love of humanity*; this will indicate the awakening of the heart centre.”<sup>104</sup>

The phrase, “when he cometh,” refers to when the heart chakra is being energized, for which Bailey gives this description:

Then the heart awakens into activity and the life of the solar plexus centre becomes subordinated to that of the heart. This is brought about by the development of group interests, by the cultivation of inclusiveness and the steady loss of interest in the personality, and in things separative and selfish.<sup>105</sup>

The final part of verse 10, “he must continue a short space,” suggests that the heart chakra must continue as the center of attention for only a relatively short amount of time. Bailey gives this explanation:

The first centre which the aspirant seeks consciously to energise and on which he concentrates during the early stages of his novitiate, is the heart centre. He has to learn to be group conscious, to be sensitive to group ideals, and to be inclusive in his plans and concepts; he has to learn to love collectively and purely, and not be actuated by personality attraction, and the motive of reward. Until there is this awakening in the heart, he cannot be trusted to wield the creative powers of the throat centre, for they would be subordinated to self-aggrandisement and ambitions of various kinds.<sup>106</sup>

Thus verse 10 is interpreted in this way: *Each chakra governs a portion of the dense physical body. Your ego’s desires, which proceed from the solar plexus chakra, usually rule the energies of five other chakras: namely, the head, ajna, throat, sacral, and base chakras. The*

*first center for you to seek consciously to energize is the heart chakra, and it is not yet awakened. When you are energizing the heart chakra, you must work with it until it awakens before seeking to energize another chakra.*

**11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.**

A chakra is basically a governing center of energy. As discussed earlier, yoga science acknowledges the existence of seven principal governing centers of energy. In verse 11, as before, “the beast that was, and is not” signifies guilt, because it was imagined and is not real. According to *ACIM*, “guilt is ... the sole cause of pain in any form,”<sup>107</sup> so guilt acts like a chakra, because it governs the presence of pain in any form. Consequently, guilt can be regarded as the eighth governing center of energy, which is the meaning of verse 11’s phrase, “even he is the eighth.”

Why do we feel guilty? Perhaps we violated various religious, civil, and moral codes of conduct, and accepted the concept that being good entails adhering to those codes. For example, perhaps we made selfish decisions, and accepted the concept that being good entails considering the feelings of everyone. Or perhaps we made commitments that we broke, and accepted the concept that being good entails keeping commitments. For many such reasons, our judgments about our past behavior prevent us from seeing ourselves as being good people, so we believe that we are guilty and consequently feel guilty.

According to Bailey’s quotations in the commentary for verse 10, the awakening of the heart chakra evokes, or calls forth, “love of humanity,” which signifies the ability “to love collectively and purely.” Moreover, *ACIM* says, “There is no difference between love and joy,”<sup>108</sup> and “Joy characterizes peace,”<sup>109</sup> so the awakening of the heart chakra evokes love, joy, and peace. These qualities are not emotions in the usual sense but indicate that the heart chakra is aligned with the higher self,<sup>110</sup> and they replace any lingering guilt because, in Bailey’s words, “The moment that *the hearts of men* are active, that moment sees the termi-

nation of emotional, solar plexus activity.”<sup>111</sup> Hebrews 10:22 (NIV) seems to describe this aligning and cleansing process: “let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” Consequently, guilt can occur only when the heart chakra is not awakened or, equivalently, when it is not aligned with the higher self.

Verse 10 portrays the awakening of the heart chakra as the initial step in the correct use of the seven chakras, so these chakras could be regarded as being misused if this awakening is not present. Consequently, guilt actually arises from the misuse of the seven chakras, which is the meaning of verse 11’s phrase, “and is of the seven.” As mentioned previously, “perdition” in the KJV is rendered as “destruction” in most modern translations, so verse 11’s final phrase, “and goeth into perdition,” has this meaning: guilt will disappear through the awakening of the heart chakra.

Thus verse 11 is given this overall meaning: *Guilt, which was imagined and is not real, could be considered to be the eighth governing center of energy, because it is the sole cause of pain in any form. Nevertheless, guilt arises from the misuse of the seven chakras, and it will disappear through the awakening of the heart chakra.*

**12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.**

In verse 12, as before, the “ten horns” signify all desires for outer things, and the “beast” signifies guilt. These horns are portrayed as “ten kings,” because they govern outer activities. Saying that they “have received no kingdom as yet” signifies that these desires do not have any real power to bring happiness. Saying that these desires “receive power as kings one hour with the beast” indicates that these desires receive a momentary illusion of power from guilt.

Alfred Adler (1870 – 1937), founder of the school of individual psychology, provides an insight related to verse 12:

It is the feeling of inferiority, inadequacy, insecurity, which determines the goal of an individual’s existence. The tendency to push into the limelight, to compel the attention of parents, makes itself felt in the first days of life. Here are found the first indications of the awakening desire for recognition developing itself under the concomitant influence of the sense of inferiority, with its purpose the attainment of a goal in which the individual is seemingly superior to his environment.<sup>112</sup>

In other words, the striving for superiority, which is brought about by desire, is a compensation for the sense of inferiority, which is brought about by guilt. *ACIM* makes a similar statement:

It is not easy to realize that prayers for things, for status, for human love, for external “gifts” of any kind, are always made to set up jailers and to hide from guilt. These things are used for goals that substitute for God, and therefore distort the purpose of prayer. The desire for them *is* the prayer.<sup>113</sup>

In this quotation, the last sentence equates “desire” and “prayer,” so substituting “desire” for “prayers” in the first sentence yields this result: “desire” “for things, for status, for human love, for external ‘gifts’ of any kind, are always made to ... hide from guilt.”

Thus verse 12 seems to have this meaning: *The desires that you saw in yourself, which govern your outer activities, do not have any real power to bring happiness; but they have a momentary illusion of power as long as guilt seems to have power, because the attainment of a desire brings a momentary feeling of superiority that compensates for the sense of inferiority that guilt imposes.*

**13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.**

In verse 13, the pronoun “These” refers back to the “ten horns” in verse 12, so it denotes the

ego's desires for outer things. In verse 13, "mind" is the translation of a Greek word (*gnome*) that can be rendered in differing ways. Both the NIV and New American Standard Bible (NASB) render this word as "purpose," thereby indicating that the ego's desires have only one purpose.

Verse 5 was interpreted in part to mean, "The ego's consciousness has the hidden purpose of enslaving the aspirant," so verse 5's purpose seems to be the same as verse 13's purpose. Thus the initial part of verse 13 is construed in this way: These desires promote the hidden purpose of the ego.

The final part of verse 13, "and shall give their power and strength unto the beast," suggests that the ego's desires reinforce the power and strength of guilt. *ACIM* clarifies this suggestion:

It is not will for life but wish for death that is the motivation for this world. Its only purpose is to prove guilt real. No worldly thought or act or feeling has a motivation other than this one. These are the witnesses that are called forth to be believed, and lend conviction to the system they speak for and represent.<sup>114</sup>

Thus verse 13 is given this meaning: *These desires promote the hidden purpose of the ego, and they reinforce the power and strength of guilt.*

***14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.***

In verse 14, the pronoun "These" refers back to the "ten horns" in verse 12, so it denotes the ego's desires. In his commentary on *Revelation*, Cayce interprets "the Lamb" as "the mind, spiritual" and as "the Christ-Consciousness,"<sup>115</sup> both of which appear to be

synonyms for the inner divine voice. This article uses the term *soul* to denote the inner divine voice, because that is Bailey's term for such a voice.<sup>116</sup>

Bailey speaks of "the process whereby the emotional nature (with its outstanding quality of desire) is brought under soul control, and the desire of the personal lower self has been transmuted into love."<sup>117</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the "personal lower self" is Bailey's term for what this article calls the ego. Accordingly, the preceding quotation describes the conflict between the ego's desires and the soul, so the initial phrase in verse 14, "These shall make war with the Lamb," is interpreted as having the same meaning: The ego's desires will conflict with the soul.

The quotation also describes the soul as gaining control over the ego's desires, so the second phrase in the verse, "and the Lamb shall overcome them," is interpreted as having the same meaning: The soul will eventually overcome them.

The phrase, "Lord of lords, and King of kings," is similar to several passages in the Old Testament.<sup>118</sup> In verse 14, this phrase suggests that the soul is more powerful than the ego's desires. Bailey corroborates this suggestion by saying, "the soul is omnipotent."<sup>119</sup>

The soul, which is regarded as the higher self,<sup>120</sup> and the personality, which is regarded as the lower self,<sup>121</sup> can work together in what is called the "soul-infused personality."<sup>122</sup> In verse 14, "him" denotes the soul, so "they that are with him" seems to be the three-fold personality, consisting of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies. Therefore, after the soul overcomes the desires of the personality, the verse indicates that the personality remains but has become "called, and chosen, and faithful," which seems to mean receptive, consecrated, and obedient to the soul.

Bailey corroborates this account by describing the situation when the desires have been eliminated:

The personality remains; it still exists but is seen no more as of old. The light of the Angel envelops it; the burning ground has done its work and the personality is now nothing more or less than the purified shell or form through which the light, the radiance, the quality and the characteristics of the Angel can shine ... When this "occult obliteration" has taken place, what then is the destiny of the disciple? It is complete control by the soul.<sup>123</sup>

Here, "Angel" is a synonym for soul.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, after the soul overcomes the desires of the personality, the preceding quotation says that the personality will be a "purified shell or form" that transmits the light of the soul, which seems equivalent to verse 14's description of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies as being "called, and chosen, and faithful."

Based on these remarks, verse 14 has the following meaning: *The ego's desires will conflict with the soul. The soul will eventually overcome them, because the soul is more powerful. When that victory finally comes, the mental, emotional, and physical bodies will be receptive, consecrated, and obedient to the soul.*

**15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.**

A *figure of speech* is "a word or phrase that has a meaning other than the literal meaning."<sup>125</sup> Ethelbert Bullinger, in *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, shows that the Bible contains more than 200 distinct categories of figures of speech.<sup>126</sup> Let us analyze verse 15 with the aid of two such categories.

A *synecdoche* is "a figure of speech in which a part is substituted for a whole or a whole for a part."<sup>127</sup> Zuck, in *Basic Bible Interpretation*, shows how this category of figure of speech is used in the Bible:

Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of "all the world" (Luke 2:1). He was speaking of the whole, but he meant only the part, namely, the Roman world. Proverbs 1:16 (NIV), "their feet rush into sin," obviously does not mean that only their feet run. Their feet, the part, represent the whole, namely, themselves.<sup>128</sup>

Kay Arthur, in *How to Study Your Bible*, writes, "A synecdoche can also be a singular for a plural or a plural for a singular," and gives this example: "In Jeremiah 25:29 (NASB) God says He is going to summon 'a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth.' The singular sword represents many swords."<sup>129</sup>

A *metonymy*, another figure of speech, is "the substitution of a word referring to an attribute for the thing that is meant, as for example the use of *the crown* to refer to a monarch."<sup>130</sup>

Zuck also shows how this category is used in the Bible:

In Paul's words, "you cannot drink the cup of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 10:21, NIV), he was referring to the contents in the cup, not the drinking of the cup itself. When the Lord said to Hosea that "the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord" (Hosea 1:2, NIV), his reference to land means the people living on the land. The words "Jerusalem was going out to Him" (Matthew 3:5, NASB) point to the fact that the people of Jerusalem were going to Him; the place was substituted for the residents themselves.<sup>131</sup>

Verse 1 portrays the whore, who signifies the aspirant's ego, as sitting on many waters, which signify the aspirant's many emotional reactions. Verse 15, however, adds more information to verse 1's portrayal by identifying the waters as "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." This identification would make sense if the four listed quantities depicted four sources of the aspirant's emotional reactions.

In her corresponding account, Bailey uses the term *glamour* to denote an emotional reaction:

“*Glamour*, in its turn, veils and hides the truth behind the fogs and mists of feeling and emotional reaction.”<sup>132</sup> She also lists four sources of a person’s glamour, using the term “astral” as a synonym for emotional:

Each human being stands in an environing world of glamour which is the result of:

a. His own past, with its wrong thinking, selfish desires, and misinterpretation of the purposes of life. There is, or has been, no comprehension of the intended life purpose as visioned by the soul and there cannot be until there is some definite organisation of the mental body.

b. His family “desire life,” both past and present. This becomes increasingly potent as evolution proceeds and the desire life of the family unit becomes marked and emphasised, constituting then inherited and demonstrated psychological tendencies and characteristics.

c. National glamour, which is the sum total of the desire life, plus the illusions, of any nation. These we term national characteristics and they are so persistent and marked that they are usually recognised as embodying national psychological traits.

d. An extension of the above idea into what we call racial glamour, using the word race to mean the human race. This constitutes a very ancient glamour or almost a series of glammers, of entrenched desires, potent aspirations of some kind and definitely human-made forms which—fluidic, enveloping and pulsating with dynamic life—seek to hold the consciousness of humanity upon the astral plane.<sup>133</sup>

Bailey says that her four sources of glamour, “when understood, will serve to clear and lighten, and therefore straighten your way.”<sup>134</sup>

Through the aid of the two preceding categories of figures of speech, the four quantities listed in verse 15 can be construed as symbolizing Bailey’s four sources of glamour:

1 Peter 1:14 (NIV) acknowledges that every person has had selfish desires in the past: “As obedient children, do not conform to

the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.” If “peoples” in verse 15 were viewed as a synecdoche, it could represent the aspirant (a plural for a singular), who in turn could represent his or her own past desires (a whole for a part).

Luke 14:26 describes Jesus as telling his listeners to reject their family’s values, which is their family’s desire life: “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” Although the English word *multitude* means “a large gathering of people,”<sup>135</sup> the original Greek word (*ochlos*) can mean “a gathering of any size,”<sup>136</sup> so it could refer to a family of any size. If “multitudes” in verse 15 were viewed as a synecdoche, it could represent the aspirant’s family (a plural for a singular), which in turn could represent that family’s desire life (a whole for a part).

Haggai 2:7 mentions, “the desire of all nations.” If “nations” in verse 15 were viewed as a synecdoche, it could represent the aspirant’s nation (a plural for a singular), which in turn could represent that nation’s desire life (a whole for a part).

Proverbs 21:6 mentions, “The getting of treasures by a lying tongue,” showing that a person uses the speech of the tongue to get what he or she desires. If a tongue were viewed as a metonymy, it could represent a person’s desire life (an attribute for the thing that is meant). Accordingly, “tongues” in verse 15, when viewed as the summation over all persons, could symbolize the desire life of the human race.

The preceding symbolic analysis is corroborated by two observations:

First, each quantity in verse 15’s ordered list is construed as symbolizing the corresponding entry in Bailey’s ordered list. Thus the preceding analysis is consistent with the supposition that verse 15’s quantities are listed in a logical order, because the meanings given to these four quantities progress from the personal to the racial.

Second, verse 15's four quantities are construed as representing various kinds of desire, which share the emphasis on desire that is displayed more clearly in nearby verses, namely, verses 12, 13, 14, 16, and 17. Thus the preceding analysis is consistent with the supposition that Chapter 17 is written in a methodical manner: the meaning given to verse 15 enables verses 12 through 17 to be a cluster of verses on desire, just as verses 9 through 11 were shown to be a cluster of verses on chakras.

Based on the preceding analysis, verse 15 has this meaning: *The Master also says to the aspirant, "The emotional reactions that you saw in yourself, which support your ego, are the result of: your own past desires, the desire life of your family, the desire life of your nation, and the desire life of the human race."*

The preceding meaning has two important implications. First, one's effort to free oneself from one's own glamour is impeded by glamour belonging to one's family, one's nation, and the entire human race; and second, one's success in freeing oneself aids one's family, one's nation, and the entire human race. Consequently, one's effort to free oneself from glamour is an important service to the world.

**16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.**

In verse 16, as before, the "ten horns," "beast," and "whore" signify desires for outer things, guilt, and ego, respectively. The initial phrase, "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast," is construed as referring back to verse 12, so it means that the desires compensate for guilt.

In its next phrase, verse 16 says that the desires shall "hate" the ego. To *hate* something can mean to be hostile to it.<sup>137</sup> Bailey writes, "The cause of all human suffering is desire and personal selfishness."<sup>138</sup> The notion that desire is the root of all suffering is the second of the "four noble truths" of Buddhism.<sup>139</sup> Desires are hostile in that they cause suffering, so the statement, "the ten horns ... shall hate the

whore," seems to have this meaning: the desires shall bring suffering to the ego.

The verse then says that the desires shall make the ego "desolate." The word *desolation* signifies ruin and destruction.<sup>140</sup> 1 Timothy 6:9 (NIV) has a similar message, because it describes desires as bringing ruin and destruction: "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction."

The verse also says that the desires shall make the ego "naked," but what does nakedness signify? Exodus 32:25 uses the same symbol: "And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked." John Ritenbaugh provides this explanation:

Here the word "naked" does not mean that they were without clothing, but rather that their spiritual condition had been exposed. It is very similar to "naked" as it is used in Revelation 3 in reference to a Laodicean. "They're wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."<sup>141</sup>

Given that nakedness signifies the exposure of an inner condition, what condition of the ego might the desires expose? *ACIM* says, "Poverty is of the ego,"<sup>142</sup> referring to inner poverty. Krishnamurti explicates the ego's inner poverty: "Apart from its name, attributes, idiosyncrasies, possessions, what *is* the self? Is there the 'I,' the self, when its qualities are taken away? It is this fear of being nothing that drives the self into activity; but it *is* nothing, it is an emptiness."<sup>143</sup>

How do desires for outer things expose the ego's inner poverty? Henry Makow gives this account:

Inner poverty is a spiritual vacuum at the core of our being. Its symptoms are sense of emptiness, meaninglessness and lack of direction ... One way or another, most of us are beggars, feel good junkies, addicted to the world to make us happy. As a result, we feel like beggars.<sup>144</sup>

Consequently, the ego's inner poverty is exposed to us when our desires make us feel like



beggars, so the phrase, “the ten horns ... shall make her ... naked,” is construed in this way: the desires shall expose the inner poverty of the ego.

Verse 16 also says that the desires shall eat “her flesh.” Here, “her flesh” denotes the ego’s flesh, but what is that? *ACIM* give this explanation: “The body is the ego’s home by its own election.”<sup>145</sup> Accordingly, “her flesh” is the physical body, so the phrase “the ten horns ... shall eat her flesh” indicates that one’s desires shall attack the health of one’s own physical body. Bailey provides a supporting account:

As a result of this manipulation of desire, and the wild maneuvering for its satisfaction along material lines, you have such diseases as the gastric and intestinal disorders and the various stomach troubles which devastate civilised humanity—far more than the savage races. Certain brain disorders also are effects, and low vitality.<sup>146</sup>

The verse’s final phrase says that the desires shall burn the ego with “fire.” Bailey says, “Fire is the symbol of the mind,”<sup>147</sup> so the “fire” in the verse must signify thoughts embodied in the desires, but what are these thoughts? Desires for outer things are desires for idols. According to *ACIM*’s quotation in the commentary for verse 2, “An idol is a means for getting more,” so one’s desires for idols are actually wishes to possess more than what other people have. Such desires embody thoughts of attacking, or degrading, other people, so that one can perceive them as being inferior to oneself. Consequently, the phrase, “the ten horns ... shall ... burn her with fire,” indicates that one’s desires shall damage one’s own ego by means of the attack thoughts that are embodied in these desires. In particular, as *ACIM* explains, one’s attack thoughts shall make the ego, which is the false image of oneself, believe that it is vulnerable to attack from others:

Because your attack thoughts will be projected, you will fear attack. And if you fear attack, you must believe that you are not invulnerable. Attack thoughts therefore make you vulnerable in your own mind,

which is where the attack thoughts are. Attack thoughts and invulnerability cannot be accepted together. They contradict each other ... If attack thoughts must entail the belief that you are vulnerable, their effect is to weaken you in your own eyes. Thus they have attacked your perception of yourself. And because you believe in them, you can no longer believe in yourself. A false image of yourself has come to take the place of what you are.<sup>148</sup>

In summary, verse 16 seems to have this meaning: *Your desires for outer things, which compensate for your guilt, shall bring suffering to your ego, as well as ruin, destruction, and exposure of its inner poverty, and shall attack the health of your physical body and make your ego believe that it is vulnerable to attack from others.*

**17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.**

Romans 8:28 states, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” *ACIM* makes an even stronger statement: “All things work together for good. There are no exceptions except in the ego’s judgment.”<sup>149</sup> In particular, verse 17 portrays how even the ego’s desires work together for good.

In verse 17’s initial part, “heart” is the translation of the Greek word (*kardia*) that has a variety of possible meanings. In this context, *to put in the heart* means, “to put into one’s mind the design of doing a thing.”<sup>150</sup> The possessive pronoun “their,” which refers back to the “ten horns” in verse 16, shows that the “hearts” belong to the ego’s desires. Thus the initial part says that God has put into the ego’s desires the design of fulfilling God’s will.<sup>151</sup>

How is God’s will fulfilled? Bailey gives this answer:

There is no evading ... of the fact that we are part of a whole, and that only as Christ enters into recognition by the entire race and is expressed by humanity as a whole,

shall we achieve that for which we have been created—the fulfilling of the will of God, as Christ fulfilled it.<sup>152</sup>

Consequently, verse 17's initial part appears to have this meaning: For God has designed the ego's desires so that humanity as a whole shall fulfill the will of God in the manner that Jesus fulfilled it, as recorded in the New Testament.

The verse's second part, "to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast," seems to refer back to verse 13, which was given this meaning: "Your desires promote the hidden purpose of your ego, and they reinforce the power and strength of your guilt."

An *intuition* is "The ability to understand something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning."<sup>153</sup> Accordingly, Hebrews 4:12 appears to use the phrase "word of God" to denote an intuition: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Bailey uses the phrase "the voice of the inner God" as a synonym for the soul,<sup>154</sup> and mentions "the intuitions which are sent to you from your soul,"<sup>155</sup> so the phrase "words of God" in verse 17 appears to denote intuitions from the soul.

As Bailey explains, suffering has a beneficent role:

A clue also to the significance of pain and of suffering will gradually emerge in the world consciousness ... Suffering is the most effective and most rapid way of evoking world understanding and of burning away the barriers which human beings have set up to the expression of the will-to-good.<sup>156</sup>

Consequently, desires for outer things lead to suffering, which provides the incentive to invoke the soul's intuitions, which in turn convey illumination. Bailey says, "under the inspiration of soul intention which subordinates the mind to its purposes ... the man can then dissolve the last remaining vestiges of all desire by means of *illumination*."<sup>157</sup> In verse 17's final part, "the words of God shall be fulfilled"

when the soul's intuitions eliminate these desires, so these desires continue to provide the incentive to invoke the soul's intuitions "until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

Thus verse 17 is interpreted in this way: *For God has designed the ego's desires so that humanity as a whole shall fulfill the will of God in the manner that Jesus fulfilled it: these desires reinforce each other and reinforce guilt, thereby providing the incentive to invoke intuitions from the soul; the resulting illumination, when complete, will eliminate these desires.*

**18. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.**

In verse 18, "sawest" is a translation of the Greek word (*eido*) that can mean to get knowledge of, or to understand, as in John 21:15 or Romans 8:28. Thus the initial phrase, "And the woman which thou sawest," has this meaning: Your ego, whose maleficent purpose and beneficent design you now understand.

As mentioned previously, the word "great" is a translation of the Greek word that is sometimes used to denote people holding positions of authority. A *city* is a center of commerce and laws for the region that surrounds it (Numbers 21:25, 35:2), so "great city" is taken as an internal center of authority that promulgates values and edicts to the surrounding personality. As before, "the kings of the earth" are thoughts, because thoughts rule the rest of the personality.

Thus verse 18, which is the final verse in Chapter 17, is given this meaning: *Your ego, whose maleficent purpose and beneficent design you now understand, is an internal center of authority that reigns over your thoughts.*

## Conclusions

The *Revelation of St. John* is actually a veiled statement of an esoteric, or hidden, doctrine of early Christians. Let us use the term *ego* to represent the self-seeking aspect of our being, which is sometimes called the "Dweller on the Threshold," "personal lower self," "old man," "false self," "illusory self,"

and “imposter self.” Our commentary shows that the verses in Chapter 17 of *Revelation* can be interpreted allegorically to reveal the purpose and design of the ego:

1. A Master from a higher realm, who has the power to initiate human beings into that realm, comes to the aspirant and says, “Raise the rate of vibration of your consciousness, and I will show you the truth about your ego, or personal lower self, which is a controlling sense of identity supported by your many emotional reactions.
2. Your thoughts have become idolatrous through being connected to your ego, and your feelings and motives have been made prideful with these thoughts.”
3. The Master helps the aspirant to achieve the detached state of mind that is receptive to inspiration. Then the aspirant sees that the ego is maintained by guilt, which has the nature of slander and evil speaking, and which operates through the seven chakras and all desires for outer things.
4. The ego offers self-inflation through high status, prosperity, and valuable things. It offers, however, only the illusion of favorable gifts, because its actual offerings are sadness, suffering, ignorance of inner truth, and allegiance to the false hope that completion and happiness can be found in outer things.
5. The ego’s consciousness has the hidden purpose of enslaving the aspirant through great confusion, many kinds of temptation, and idolatrous experiences of the personality.
6. The aspirant sees that the ego takes pride in acquiring divine Truths and following Jesus’ example. Upon having this insight, the aspirant is amazed at how the ego can convert even spirituality to its own use.
7. The Master says to the aspirant, “Why are you amazed? I will tell you the hidden things about the ego, including its relationship to guilt, chakras, and desires.
8. The guilt that you saw in yourself was imagined by you and is not real. If a guilty

emotion were to ascend out of the subconscious realm and allowed to bloom without any defense, it would disappear. Nevertheless, thoughts identified with the personality, which are thoughts whose nature is inconsistent with the plane of the intuition, will defend against this emotion that was imagined, and is not real, and yet is powerful enough to defeat such a defense.

9. This teaching is merely a hint that can be understood only by a mind with spiritual wisdom. The seven chakras are the medium through which the ego galvanizes the dense physical body into activity.

10. Each chakra governs a portion of the dense physical body. Your ego’s desires, which proceed from the solar plexus chakra, usually rule the energies of five other chakras: namely, the head, ajna, throat, sacral, and base chakras. The first center for you to seek consciously to energize is the heart chakra, and it is not yet awakened. When you are energizing the heart chakra, you must work with it until it awakens before seeking to energize another chakra.

11. Guilt, which was imagined and is not real, could be considered to be the eighth governing center of energy, because it is the sole cause of pain in any form. Nevertheless, guilt arises from the misuse of the seven chakras, and it will disappear through the awakening of the heart chakra.

12. The desires that you saw in yourself, which govern your outer activities, do not have any real power to bring happiness; but they have a momentary illusion of power as long as guilt seems to have power, because the attainment of a desire brings a momentary feeling of superiority that compensates for the sense of inferiority that guilt imposes.

13. These desires promote the hidden purpose of the ego, and they reinforce the power and strength of guilt.

14. The ego’s desires will conflict with the soul. The soul will eventually overcome them, because the soul is more powerful. When that victory finally comes, the men-

tal, emotional, and physical bodies will be receptive, consecrated, and obedient to the soul.”

15. The Master also says to the aspirant, “The emotional reactions that you saw in yourself, which support your ego, are the result of: your own past desires, the desire life of your family, the desire life of your nation, and the desire life of the human race.

16. Your desires for outer things, which compensate for your guilt, shall bring suffering to your ego, as well as ruin, destruction, and exposure of its inner poverty, and shall attack the health of your physical body and make your ego believe that it is vulnerable to attack from others.

17. For God has designed the ego’s desires so that humanity as a whole shall fulfill the will of God in the manner that Jesus fulfilled it: these desires reinforce each other and reinforce guilt, thereby providing the incentive to invoke intuitions from the soul; the resulting illumination, when complete, will eliminate these desires.

18. Your ego, whose maleficent purpose and beneficent design you now understand, is an internal center of authority that reigns over your thoughts.

According to the preceding commentary, the great whore of *Revelation* symbolizes the ego. Why is such a symbol used? The ego is the self-seeking aspect of our being. During each day of our lives—indeed, during each moment—we face the following choice: to express our true nature, or be seduced by our ego. It is our fate, as human beings, to be repeatedly seduced by our ego until, through pain and suffering, we eventually learn to express continually our true nature. Thus the great whore seems to be an apt symbol for portraying the reoccurring temptation that we all encounter.

What is the purpose of Chapter 17 of *Revelation*? Krishnamurti writes, “Self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom, and therefore the beginning of transformation or regeneration.”<sup>158</sup> Correspondingly, the purpose of

Chapter 17 is to assist its readers in gaining self-knowledge about the ego. Merely reading Chapter 17, or even this article, is not enough, however, as Krishnamurti explains:

The understanding of words which is called intellectual comprehension is utterly empty. You say, “I understand intellectually, but I cannot put it into practice,” which means, really, that you do not understand. When you understand, you understand the content; there is no intellectual understanding. Intellectual understanding is merely a verbal understanding. Hearing the words is not the understanding of their content. The word is not the thing. The word is not understanding.<sup>159</sup>

How can you gain an understanding of the content of Chapter 17? Krishnamurti gives the following advice during a public talk, in which he refers to himself as the “speaker”:

Sirs, why do you listen to the speaker? Is it that in listening to the speaker you are listening to yourself? Is that what is taking place? The speaker is only pointing something out, acting as a mirror in which you see yourself, see the actuality of your own consciousness; it is not the description which the speaker is pointing out, which becomes merely an idea if you do no more than follow it. But if through the description, you yourself actually perceive your own state of mind, your own consciousness, then listening to the speaker has a certain importance.<sup>160</sup>

Chapter 17 is like a mirror that portrays various relationships between the ego, guilt, chakras, and desires. If, through this portrayal, you yourself actually came to perceive these relationships by means of your own self-observation, then your study of Chapter 17 would have value, because it would lead to your transformation or regeneration.

Given elsewhere are similar allegorical analyses of other puzzling parts of *Revelation*: Chapter 9, which depicts bizarre creatures called locusts that sting people who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads;<sup>161</sup> and Chapter 13, which depicts an awesome beast

that comes out of the sea and another beast that comes out of the earth.<sup>162</sup>

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- <sup>4</sup> Marion Carson, "The Harlot, the Beast and the Sex Trafficker: Reflections on some Recent Feminist Interpretations of Revelation 17-18," *The Expository Times*, 122:5 (2011), 218-227.
- <sup>5</sup> John Wiertzema, *The Coming Judgment of Islam: An Exposition of Revelation Chapters 17 and 18* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 80.
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- <sup>7</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977), vol. II, 786.
- <sup>8</sup> James M. Pryse, *The Apocalypse Unsealed* (1910; reprint; Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1997), 2-3.
- <sup>9</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2002), 29.
- <sup>10</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. II (1877; reprint; Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1976), 351.
- <sup>11</sup> John Van Auken, *Edgar Cayce on the Revelation* (Virginia Beach, VA: A.R.E. Press, 2000), 158-159.
- <sup>12</sup> Paramahansa Yogananda, *The Second Coming of Christ* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 2004), xxv-xxvi.
- <sup>13</sup> Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 47.
- <sup>14</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 137.

- <sup>15</sup> *A Course in Miracles* (third edition; Mill Valley, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 2007), Text, 34.
- <sup>16</sup> The King James Version (KJV), also known as the "Authorized Version," is still the most widely read biblical text in the English language, even though it is more than four hundred years old. The KJV provides a word-for-word translation of the original Greek text. When the KJV includes additional words that are not found in the Greek text, those additional words are italicized.
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- <sup>18</sup> *Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003).
- <sup>19</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, "The Theosophical Mahatmas," *Collected Writings* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Society in America, 2002), vol. VII, 241-249.
- <sup>20</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (1927; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 57.
- <sup>21</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 274.
- <sup>22</sup> Van Auken, *Edgar Cayce on the Revelation*, 88.
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- <sup>26</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (1937; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1989), 119.
- <sup>27</sup> Gina Lake, *In the World but Not of It* (Sedona, AZ: Endless Satsang Foundation, 2016), 81.

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 34 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 94.  
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 37 *A Course in Miracles*, Text, 621.  
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# A Study of Gender, Part 1: Gender at the Human and Higher Levels

John F. Nash

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**Michelangelo:  
“Moses” (c.1514)**



**Nicholas Roerich:  
“Mother of the World” (1937)**

## Summary

This two-part article examines the esoteric aspects of gender. Part I is a “cross-sectional” study of gender, examining the nature of gender at the present time, along with contributing factors. It explores the meaning and significance of gender in the human context and the legitimacy of applying the term to higher levels of reality, including the divine.

The main conclusions are: Some form of gender—or “horizontal” polarity with mutually attractive, creative potential—exists at all levels, short of the unmanifest Godhead. Gender polarities at the personality level are best considered as archetypes enshrined in the Ageless Wisdom. These polarities correlate strongly with distinctions between the odd- and even-numbered rays, pointing to a way to identify gender at higher levels, including those where the human soul and the Planetary Hierarchy reside.

Part II will present a “longitudinal” study of gender, including its evolution in the human

race. Emphasis will be placed on what seems to be an accelerating fluidity in gender. Tentative predictions will be made as to where this development may take humanity as it continues on its upward path.

## Introduction

God, we learn from *Genesis*, created us male and female. Ever since, humanity has been divided into the two groups. Categorization ostensibly was biological, but it carried with it a host of spoken and unspoken psychological, social, legal and religious implications.

## 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>.

Over the last several decades, academic scientists and healthcare professionals have co-opted the term “gender,” with categories of *masculinity* and *femininity*, to capture the psychological, social, legal and religious attributes in their own right. Opinions differ on whether gender encompasses sex or is distinct from it. This article treats gender as a higher correspondence of sex. In the human context, sex is associated with the physical plane, dense and etheric; and gender with the emotional, mental and higher planes.

Both sex and gender are complex concepts. Notions of binary sex break down because some people do not fit into either category even at birth, and further ambiguity or fluidity can become apparent later in life. Gender is such an amorphous quality that its very definition is controversial, and rigid categorization is almost impossible. Furthermore, gender does not necessarily correlate with sex. Individuals typically exhibit a blend of gender characteristics that may or may not align with those culturally associated with their biological sex.

This article seeks to stimulate discussion on a number of issues. Part I raises the questions: What are sex and gender? and Does gender have meaning at levels of reality above the human personality? Part II will raise the questions: What evidence do we have of evolution in human sex and gender? How rapid is this evolution? What is its significance for the human race? and Is it in conformity with Hierarchical Purpose?

The strategy in Part I is to define sex and gender at the personality level; to examine projections of gender onto levels of reality traditionally considered divine; and finally to inquire whether gender exists in any meaningful sense at levels that include the human soul and the Planetary Hierarchy.

Many esotericists assert that gender is purely a personality-level phenomenon. At higher levels androgyny is the norm; the only polarities are “vertical” ones, like the relationship between soul and monad, or between Christ and the Planetary Logos. The present article suggests that this doctrine may need to be revisited. If gender exists at both the divine and the

personality levels, identifying it in between should be relatively straightforward.

Gender can be viewed as a set of “horizontal” polarities, or pairs of opposites at approximately the same level of reality, interacting creatively with the potential to manifest new forms. Rudimentary horizontal polarities exist in the mineral kingdom in the bonds between subatomic particles, in the valences between atoms that create chemical compounds, and in magnetic and electric fields. More complex polarities are found in the fertilization processes of the vegetable kingdom—processes in which the mineral and animal kingdoms often participate—and the mating, reproductive and parenting behaviors of the animal kingdom. The human kingdom inherited sex from the animal kingdom, but overlaid it with gender, expressed in all its creative potential at least up to the mental level.

Perhaps the progression stops there. But more likely, horizontal polarities express themselves in ever-more impressive ways as we move into the higher kingdoms. The present article seeks to show that this is indeed the case. Polarities, which can meaningfully be termed “gender,” seem to exist at all levels below the unmanifest Godhead, whose only “attribute”—if we could use that word—is self-existence.

The article is written primarily from a western, Judeo-Christian perspective. Occasionally it draws upon concepts from other religions and philosophies, but the article does not comment on the gender norms of other cultures. Authors with more extensive knowledge are encouraged to explore those important issues and to share their insights with the esoteric community.

Shortly after the original version of this article was submitted to *The Esoteric Quarterly*, the September 2017 issue of *Scientific American* was published. It was devoted almost entirely to topics of sex and gender, and reported the most recent research findings in relevant disciplines. These findings provided broad confirmation of the article’s assertions concerning sex and gender at the personality level, and some citations have been incorporated in the final version of the article. Not unexpectedly,



*Scientific American* stopped short of addressing matters above the personality level.

## Sex and Gender at the Personality Level

Sex and gender, as understood in the health sciences, are discussed here as a prelude to, what is for us, the more important exploration of the esoteric aspects of gender. The discussion is brief, simplified—perhaps oversimplified—and uses an intentionally limited vocabulary. Readers seeking an in-depth study of exoteric sex and gender issues are urged to turn to the vast literature of physiology, neuroscience, sexology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, and related disciplines.

The discussion of sex and gender at the personality level is presented without moral judgment. Issues of morality—understood in relation to the evolution of human consciousness—are deferred to Part II.

### *Biological Sex*

Babies are deemed to be male if they have external genitalia and female if they have internal genitalia. At a deeper level, the individual's chromosomes determine sex.<sup>1</sup> A male normally receives an X chromosome from his mother and a Y chromosome from his father. In the approach to adulthood, relatively large secretions of the male hormone, testosterone, enable men to produce sperm, grow beards, and develop low-pitched voices. Their chromosomes and hormonal secretions predispose them to male-pattern baldness; expose them to male-specific pathologies like testicular cancer; and condemn them to a shorter life expectancy.

A female normally receives an X chromosome from her mother and an X chromosome from her father.<sup>2</sup> In puberty, relatively large secretions of the female hormones, estrogen and progesterone, cause women to develop breasts, narrow waists, and wide hips; to retain high-pitched voices; to begin menstruating; and potentially to bear children. Their chromosomes and secretions expose them to pathologies like breast or ovarian cancer, as well as to the issues of menopause. On average women are shorter in stature and have proportionately

smaller brains, though neuroscientists now reject theories of corresponding reduction in cognitive ability.

Again on average, women have less physical strength than men, and sports are segregated by sex, each with its own performance standards. Sports authorities have instituted their own tests, not always satisfactory, to distinguish between men and women; and, if the latter, to determine whether competitors have taken testosterone supplements to gain unfair advantage.

Sex traditionally was determined at, or soon after, birth. It had enormous social, legal and other implications. Men enjoyed asymmetric privileges, like access to positions of leadership in government, the professions, and religious institutions; property and inheritance rights; minimal censure for premarital or extramarital sex; and protection from prosecution for marital rape.

Women were exempt from military service and in most societies were not expected to do heavy manual work. But their participation in society, right to own property, and access to legal remedies were severely limited. Unless she took religious vows, a woman's primary life-function was to bear children—and in the upper classes to provide a male heir to inherit her husband's property and title. Unless she was a widow, a woman was expected to be a virgin when she married and to be faithful to her husband thereafter. She was required to obey her husband and to serve his erotic and other needs, whatever those needs might be.

We now know that not everyone fits into the neat binary categories. One percent of human beings have a body that differs in some way from the standard male/female model.<sup>3</sup> Differences range from chromosome anomalies (like X or XXY), to genital ambiguity, failure to develop secondary anatomical features, and limitations on sexual potency. In place of the binary model, science now recognizes “a much more ambiguous reality of genetic and chemical factors that unfold over time,” adding that “the more we learn about sex and gender the more those attributes appear to exist on a spectrum.”<sup>4</sup>

One or two infants in every 1,000 undergo(es) surgery to reduce or eliminate sexual abnormalities.<sup>5</sup> Most of the remaining infants with sexual anomalies are registered as male or female according to the judgment of medical professionals, though a few countries and jurisdictions permit infants (and adults) to be recognized as “intersex,” “nonbinary,” “indeterminate,” or “hermaphrodite.” They include India, Malta, New Zealand, the State of Oregon, and the District of Columbia.

Even among individuals who fit into one of the binary sex categories at birth, variations in hormone levels can affect development in puberty or later. Although males typically produce testosterone, they also produce some proportion of estrogen and progesterone; correspondingly, females produce a proportion of testosterone. What those proportions are varies from one individual to another, potentially affecting physical appearance, stature and strength; interest in, and ability to participate in, reproductive activity; and exposure to pathologies more typical of the opposite sex.

Unambiguous categorization at birth does not guarantee that an individual will be attracted romantically to persons of the opposite sex or be capable of participating in what our culture considers “normal” sexual activity. The individual may be aroused erotically by members of his or her own sex, both sexes, or neither. Homoerotic activity has been recorded throughout history,<sup>6</sup> and the Bible documents a famous case pointing to bisexuality.<sup>7</sup> But issues of homosexuality, bisexuality and asexuality have attained greater visibility in recent decades, since the health sciences rejected notions that sexual orientation is a “choice” or “pathology”; as patterns of legal and other repression have receded; and as society has become more open to diversity.<sup>8</sup>

Another issue to gain visibility is sexual identity, or self-concept. The sexual assignment made at birth may or may not coordinate with what an individual believes him-or herself to be at the most fundamental level. *Sexual dysphoria* is a sense of inappropriate assignment. A familiar comment among dysphoric adults is: “I feel like a woman (man) trapped in a man’s (woman’s) body.”

Recent studies in neuroscience suggest that our brains contain both male and female features, varying in extent from person to person.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, at least one brain metric appears to lie on a spectrum, with non-dysphoric males at one end, non-dysphoric females at the other end, and persons with sexual dysphoria in between.<sup>10</sup> The relevant brain feature emerges during the latter stages of gestation, after emergence of the sex organs. Although the evidence is not conclusive, this may suggest that persons are born with sexual dysphoria.<sup>11</sup> In any event, dysphoria may be recognized before puberty or may be delayed well into middle age.

People with sexual dysphoria may have a strong desire to embrace a new sexual identity and live their lives accordingly. Physical appearance and voice pitch are likely to be problematic; sexual attraction and functionality pose other problems. Crossdressing may provide an option in cases of mild dysphoria.<sup>12</sup> The more radical solution is hormone therapy and/or surgery to bring the body and its functions into closer congruence with sexual self-concept. In recent years sex reassignment surgery has become safer and more reliable.

Some authorities use “transsexual” to refer to individuals who undergo reassignment surgery, and “transgender” to individuals who simply identify with the other sex psychologically and socially. This is the convention followed in this article. It reflects the recognition that surgery seeks to alter the physical body, not just the individual’s self-concept and social interactions. Other authorities use “transgender” exclusively—perhaps suggesting a belief that self-concept is more important than the means taken to attain it.

### ***What is Gender?***

The word *gender* comes to us, via Old French, from the Latin *genus* (“a broad class or type”), though the closely related verb *generare* meant, “to engender, beget, produce.” Traditionally the term was used in a grammatical context, with limited sexual connotation.

Some languages, such as Hebrew, Gaelic and French, divide all nouns and pronouns into

masculine and feminine genders, while others, including Latin, German and Russian, admit a third gender: neuter. A distinctive suffix or other structural form may or may not identify the gender of a noun or pronoun.

Men typically are referred to by masculine nouns or pronouns, and women by feminine ones. But exceptions occur; and “neuter,” where it is used, does not necessarily imply an inanimate object. Grammatical gender assignments may simply be matters of convention. For example, the French word *bateau* (“boat”) is masculine, while the German *Mädchen* (“girl”) is neuter. Of possible significance to our later discussion, “soul” is feminine in multiple languages, for instance: Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ (*nephesh*), Greek ψυχή (*psyche*), Latin *anima*, French *âme*, Spanish *alma*, German *Seele*, and Russian душа (*dusha*).

English has the neuter “it,” referring to something below the human level—or sometimes even a baby. By contrast, some inanimate objects, like a ship, are referred to as “she.” No structural forms identify the gender of English nouns, though we have the distinctive pronouns: “he/she,” “him/her,” “his/hers.”

Over the last half-century, academic psychologists, sociologists and others have co-opted “gender” as a binary categorization applicable to activities, behaviors, roles, personas, expectations, and other attributes that may be interwoven with but transcend physical sex. Gender categories are “masculine” and “feminine.”

As already noted, psychologists and others disagree on whether gender encompasses biological sex or is a distinct attribute.<sup>13</sup> They also disagree on how far it transcends sex; transpersonal psychologists might claim a larger domain than do colleagues in other branches of the discipline. Another area of controversy focuses on what gives rise to gender: chromosomes, hormones, genetic differences in brain/mind structure or activity, or socio-cultural programming.

Gender correlates to a substantial degree, with biological sex. A majority of men and women see themselves, are seen by others, behave, accept roles, and have expectations that accord with what the prevailing culture assigns to

their sex.<sup>14</sup> Yet the correlation falls significantly short of 100 percent. Most men have some feminine characteristics, and most women have some masculine characteristics, regardless of sexual orientation.

From ancient times some men and women have played roles culturally assigned to the opposite sex. Queen Boudicca and Joan of Arc were just two of history’s female warriors. Conversely, some men were unsuited to military service and sought sanctuary in the religious life, or where circumstances permitted became scholars, poets or musicians. In the courtly love of the Middle Ages, men, in particular, began to express romantic interest in terms that transcended the physical. They seemed to glimpse distinctions between sex and gender that would be made explicit centuries later.

The correlation between gender and sex is continually shrinking. Following the feminist revolution of the 1970s and ’80s, large numbers of women now demand the same “rights” and opportunities as men. The result has been the erosion of legal support for traditional gender-role distinctions. In the developed countries, most business, professional and governmental positions nominally are open to both men and women, though activists claim that a “glass ceiling” still exists. Some Christian denominations and Reform Judaism ordain female clergy, though the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and virtually the whole of Orthodox Judaism and Islam, maintain a male-only policy.<sup>15</sup> Most countries permit women to serve in the armed forces, even in combat roles, and some require them to undergo military training.

While modern women are demanding access, or are drawn, to traditionally masculine roles, smaller numbers of men are drawn to traditionally feminine roles. They feel comfortable playing the role of “mother” in the family or choosing a profession like nursing. Men generally are taking a closer interest in child-rearing and are taking on more parental responsibilities.<sup>16</sup>

Role crossover has afforded new freedoms in the way people express themselves and live their lives. But it has not come without cost,

either to individuals or to society. People who, in times past, would have accepted their roles as god-given may now ask questions that penetrate to the depths of their being. Additional questions arise concerning the future evolution of society, and even of the human race. These questions will be addressed in Part II.

### ***Esoteric Perspectives on Sex and Gender***

Several prominent esoteric teachers, to whom we customarily turn for reference, addressed issues of sex and gender. Importantly, however, most of them lacked the perspectives gained by academic studies of gender over the last fifty years. Accordingly, we must read their work with an appreciation of (a) the limited vocabulary available to them, and (b) the psychological, social, religious and legal views of sex and gender that pertained to the era in which they wrote—views which may differ in important ways from those of today. We can affirm the “truth” of the teachings while acknowledging that they were conditioned by the prevailing paradigms.

The sexual function is associated primarily with the second, “sacral,” chakra.<sup>17</sup> It usually extends to the third chakra, where it begins to merge into gender, and under favorable conditions the creative impulse extends to the heart and throat chakras.<sup>18</sup> Esoteric teacher Alice Bailey also saw “the physical sex organs [as] a lower correspondence of the . . . relation existing in the brain between the two head centers and the pituitary and pineal glands.”<sup>19</sup>

Esotericists in both the western and eastern esoteric traditions typically spoke of sex as an example of *polarity*. Sex divides men from women but also provides the strong attraction that brings them together in the procreative act. Bailey commented: “Sex is, in reality, the instinct towards unity.”<sup>20</sup> Similar polarities exist in the vertical direction. The personality is separated by levels of consciousness from higher elements of the human constitution and from higher beings. Yet mutual attraction seeks cohesion and eventually evokes a response in the personality for creative union with what lies above.

Polarities are categorized as positive and negative. The positive polarity is deemed to be

strong, outgoing, aggressive and phallic, the negative polarity inward-looking, passive, receptive and yonic. Spirit is masculine and positive, while matter is feminine and negative. The positive/negative categorization is usually accompanied by the caveats that “we are speaking only of polarities”; and “negative” does not imply inferiority. Yet there is an unfortunate undertone, a value judgment that echoes a patriarchal mindset.<sup>21</sup>

With regard to levels above the personality, esoteric teachers have focused almost exclusively on vertical polarities. The possibility of horizontal polarities, which could be described in gender terms, has attracted little attention. Yet important exceptions can be found in the esoteric literature.

One esotericist who displayed an unusual appreciation of gender was German Theosophist Franz Hartman. In the early twentieth century he wrote: “In women usually the female [or what we would prefer to call ‘feminine’] elements predominate, and in men the male [‘masculine’] ones are usually most active, although we meet women of a masculine character, and with men who are of a womanish nature.”<sup>22</sup> Hartman added, somewhat condescendingly: “In a perfect human being the male and female elements are nearly equally strong, with a slight preponderance of the male element, which represents the productive power in nature, while the female element represents the formative principle.”<sup>23</sup>

Contemporaneous with Hartman’s work, authors who identified themselves as “Three Initiates” published *The Kybalion*, a text claiming to present a summary of ancient Hermetic teachings. The text identifies seven “principles,” or axioms, of Hermeticism. The seventh principle is *Gender*, carefully distinguished from *Polarity* (the fourth). “Gender is manifested in everything,” the authors declared. “[T]he Masculine and Feminine Principles are ever present and active in all phases of phenomena, on each and every plane of life.”<sup>24</sup>

Entities at all levels, the authors continued, have both masculine and feminine aspects. The burden of creation falls primarily on the feminine: “The part of the Masculine Principle

seems to be that of directing a certain inherent energy toward the Feminine principle, and thus starting into activity the creative processes. But the Feminine principle is the one always doing the active creative work—and this is so on all planes.” Furthermore, the “Feminine Principle has a much more varied field of operation that has the Masculine principle.”<sup>25</sup>

The authors of *The Kybalion* make a good point that “passive” and “active” may be poor terms to describe the respective roles of the masculine and the feminine. Certainly at the physical level, the “burden of creation” falls primarily on the latter. The woman’s investment of energy in procreation is enormously greater than the man’s, and asymmetry usually continues throughout the years of parenting.

At the mental level, according to *The Kybalion*, the “Feminine Principle conducts the work of generating new thoughts, concepts, ideas, including the work of the imagination. The Masculine Principle contents itself with the work of the ‘Will’ . . . energizing the creative portion of the mind.” In the majority of people the masculine principle is weak, and their mental images “are the result of impressions received from outside.”<sup>26</sup> “The strong men and women of the world invariably manifest the Masculine Principle of Will,” whereupon they obtain “the kind of mental images desired, and moreover dominate the minds of others.”<sup>27</sup> In strong people the masculine and feminine principles “act harmoniously and in conjunction with each other . . . in accordance with the universal laws of nature.”<sup>28</sup>

Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson, writing in 1941, seemed to sense not only the emerging understanding of gender but also its antecedent in courtly love; he mused on the qualities of femininity in language that could have graced the poetry of troubadours:

What are the essential qualities of the archetypal woman? They are sacrifice, tenderness, graciousness, divine radiance, heavenly fragrance, beauty, and grace. They are wisdom, fathomness as a still dark pool of infinite depth, profound compassion and intimate concern for all living things, ministration, healing love. They are joyous radiant girlhood, graceful womanhood, cre-

ative, preserving, and transforming motherhood. Within the Heavenly Woman is an ascetic refinement of utter purity.<sup>29</sup>

Pure undifferentiated Spirit, by definition, is presexual or pregender. But all manifestations of Spirit involve *form*. Form, of course, is a relative term; what might appear to us as formless—for example, the monad or the Planetary Logos—is a form when viewed from above. All seven systemic planes comprise the “physical,” or lowest, plane of the Cosmos.<sup>30</sup>

Form involves division; indeed, the very word *exist* means “to stand aside from.” Gender finds its meaning in the process of division and subsequent impulse to become reunited. The Kabbalists recognized that Kether, the first manifestation of the Ain Soph, subsequently divides into Chokmah (viewed in the Kabbalah as masculine) and the feminine Binah.<sup>31</sup> In turn the creative tension between Chokmah and Binah gives birth to the lower sephiroth—and the world we know.

### ***Masculinity and Femininity***

Defining masculinity and femininity is difficult and contentious. We all have a rough idea of what the terms mean, and the insights shared in John Gray’s bestselling book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (1992) have a ring of truth.<sup>32</sup> Yet attempts to compile definitive lists of the respective characteristics can provoke heated arguments.

A major problem is confusion between gender and sex. For example, women may claim certain masculine characteristics as their own, and want to distance themselves from feminine characteristics that a patriarchal culture equated with inferiority. Conversely, men may fear that to display feminine characteristics labels them as unmanly or gay.<sup>33</sup> Both sexes seem to favor masculinity over femininity, perhaps because humanity as a whole is still at the stage of rugged individualism.<sup>34</sup> Femininity may be perceived in more favorable terms when group consciousness takes hold in the Aquarian Age.

The most useful approach may be to view masculinity and femininity as *archetypes* rather than as descriptions of individual men and women—or even the great majority of men and women. From that perspective, contrasting

gender characteristics are proposed in Table 1. They are expressed as pairs of polar opposites, but the understanding is that each pair brackets a continuum of possibilities. To create a list

agreeable to everyone would be impossible, but Table 1 should represent a broad consensus of how masculinity and femininity have been understood throughout history.

**Table 1. Archetypal Masculine and Feminine Characteristics**

Masculine	Feminine
<b>Adjectives:</b> Active Paternal Stern/judgmental Dominant Assertive Aggressive Confrontational Competitive Ambitious Risk-taking Rational Linear-thinking	<b>Adjectives:</b> Passive Maternal Compassionate Submissive Receptive Protective Caring/empathetic Cooperative Nurturing Cautious Intuitive Spatial-thinking
<b>Nouns:</b> Strength Courage Leadership Individualism Provider Hunter Warrior Adventurer Challenger Extrovert Reluctance to express emotion	<b>Nouns:</b> Beauty Gentleness/sensitivity Humility/obedience Group-orientation Recipient Gatherer Peacemaker/nurse Homemaker Helper Introvert Willingness to express emotion

Gender archetypes, like all others, are enshrined in the racial unconscious or, to use esoteric terms, in the Ageless Wisdom. This latter is believed to have informed human civilization from prehistoric times to the present. Just

as sex is procreative in nature, gender is a creative force, producing rich cultures, evolving civilizations, and expanding individual and collective consciousness.



## Gender at the Divine Level

The verse from *Genesis*, cited earlier, reads in full: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”<sup>35</sup> The statement clearly has implications not just for humanity but also for the Creator. God must be male and female—or “masculine” and “feminine.” Masculine aspects of Deity have dominated Western theology and are familiar to everyone. Almost invariably, masculine pronouns are used when referring to God. In order to make the case that gender exists at the divine level, this section focuses on the less-familiar feminine aspects. And here, it will be necessary to inquire into what led up to the present understanding of the Divine Feminine.

### *Gods and Goddesses of Antiquity*

The feminist movement of the 1970s and '80s popularized belief that, in prehistory, the Great Goddess reigned supreme in a peaceful, matriarchal society. The Goddess was identified both with the Earth and with motherhood. Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor declared that goddess worship emerged naturally from the child-mother relationship. “The first love-object for both women and men,” they noted, “is the mother.” Sjöö and Mor added: “In matriarchal society . . . there is a close identification with the collective group of mothers, with Mother Earth, and with the Cosmic Mother.”<sup>36</sup> The goddess religion focused on the seasons of the year, and on the lunar cycle, with its associations with the menstrual cycle.<sup>37</sup> Lithuanian-American archaeologist Marija Gimbutas asserted that the goddess culture ended when invading Indo-European tribes from Central Asia imposed a warlike patriarchy.<sup>38</sup>

The accuracy of that scenario is now questioned, but over the centuries male warrior gods, like Indra, Yahweh, Ares, Mars and Odin, certainly gained ascendancy. They represented the physical strength and prowess in battle to which men aspired—and on which their own, their family's, and their tribe's survival depended.

*Gender is such an amorphous quality that by its very definition is controversial, and rigid categorization is almost impossible. Furthermore, gender does not necessarily correlate with sex. Individuals typically exhibit a blend of gender characteristics that may or may not align with those culturally associated with their biological sex.*

If the god-centered patriarchy did emerge from an earlier goddess-centered matriarchy, that development may have run parallel with an evolving understanding of human reproduction. Women's procreative role was immediately obvious, but over time men became aware that they too played a role. Awe for the womb gave way to awe for the phallus;

the cave was replaced by the menhir as the favored sacred symbol. From being the creators of new life, women became merely the vessels in which seed was planted and grew into sons. Misogyny was born from a focus on men's superior physical strength and a diminution of women's role in procreation.

Even as pantheons became increasingly male-dominated, some powerful goddesses held their own. A few reigned alone, like the Hindu Ushas, goddess of the dawn; the Sumerian Inanna; the Assyrian Ishtar; the Greek Athena; and the Roman Cybele, known as *Magna Mater* (“Great Mother”).

Some goddesses, like the Celtic Danu and the Aztec Coatlicue, became the mothers of male gods. Others became their consorts. All three persons of the Hindu *trimurti* had consorts: Brahma's consort was Vidya, or Saraswati; Vishnu's was Lakshmi; and Shiva's took various forms, including Kali and Shakti. In Egypt Osiris and Isis were not only husband and wife but also siblings. Isis, whose Egyptian name may have been Aset or Auset, was revered as a

mother goddess, and depictions of her holding her son Horus provided the prototype for the Christian Madonna and Child.

Gaia, the Greek Earth goddess, was both consort and mother of the sky god Uranus. Hera was Zeus' principal consort, though he was also linked with Dione and Maia and had many extramarital affairs. Amphitrite was Poseidon's consort. The Celtic Dagda had several consorts, including the Morrigan and Boann.

A question of considerable importance is: how do we know that these individualities *were* goddesses? How did the people of antiquity decide whether a deity was male or female? The answer is that their cultures projected procreative roles onto them—or, in the case of virgin goddesses, what was considered commendable abstinence from that role. In general, gods were expected to copulate with goddesses, begetting new gods, or sometimes god-men. Sky gods inseminated Earth goddesses through precipitation, lightning and thunder, assuring the fertility of crops, livestock and people. “Physical” sex was the discriminant, rather than gender, as we now understand it.<sup>39</sup> Artistic depictions clearly differentiated the deities sexually.

The sexual categorization of deities is understandable, given the level of knowledge available at the time. If it comes across as distasteful or shocking, we should recognize that ancient people had different attitudes towards the Divine—and perhaps toward the sexual function—than we do.

Although ancient gods and goddesses were distinguished sexually, they too exhibited masculine and/or feminine gender characteristics that did not always correlate with the sex projected onto them. Some gods, like the Egyptian Ptah, the Greek Apollo and Pan, and the Welsh Gwydion, exhibited feminine characteristics, while some goddesses exhibited strong, masculine characteristics. A few were goddesses of war, like the Egyptian Sekhmet and the Norse Freyja. Qamaitis was a goddess of war and natural disasters for the indigenous Nuxalk of Canada. Morrigan may have been the Dagda's consort, but she was more warlike than him. Interestingly, a number of war goddesses, including Ishtar, were also goddesses of sexuali-

ty. Athena, in part a war goddess, earned the title *Parthenos* (“the Virgin”), though she was not necessarily *virgo intacta*.<sup>40</sup>

Gods and goddesses played complementary roles in their cultures. Conspicuously absent was any universally accepted rule that goddesses were inferior, or subordinate, to gods. In the ways these cultures created their deities—or the deities revealed themselves—goddesses might or might not be subordinate to the gods with whom they were associated. Gender was recognized, but it was not defined politically; it did not carry a superior/inferior connotation. Gender was essentially a horizontal polarity.

### Western Religion

Judaism, Christianity and Islam stand out in the political power assigned to their masculine concepts of Deity. Even there, however, we see an unquenchable yearning for the Divine Feminine, along with interesting responses to that yearning.

Judaism proudly proclaimed its patriarchal monotheism. Yahweh was the tribal warrior god of the Jewish people, and eventually the universal God, ruling over Jews and Gentiles alike. Yet the Elohim, translated as “God” in the first verse of *Genesis* and elsewhere in the early books of the Bible, was a plural word of ambiguous grammatical gender. Also, אֵל (El), or אֱלֹהִים (El Shaddai, “the High God”) whom Abraham brought with him from Mesopotamia, originally had a consort, אַשְׁרָה (Asherah). She was a goddess of forest groves who sometimes exerted her independence.<sup>41</sup> The “Queen of Heaven,” mentioned in *Jeremiah*, may have been Asherah.<sup>42</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible we find the grammatically feminine רוּחַ (*ruach*, “spirit”) and even הַקֹּדֶשׁ רוּחַ (*ruach ha-kodesh*, “the holy spirit/breath/wind”).<sup>43</sup> In *Proverbs* and elsewhere חֵכְמָה (Chokmah, “Wisdom”) became personified as a divine feminine individuality; in Greek Chokmah became Σοφία (Sophia). In the Rabbinic period, following destruction of the temple, we find the feminine שְׁכִינָה (*shekinah*), the indwelling glory of God, contrasting with but also complementing כְּבוֹד (*kavod*), the masculine transcendent glory.

Christianity embraced the patriarchal monotheism of Judaism. Its focus was on God the Father, identified with the Hebrew Yahweh; Jesus Christ, believed to be the Son of God; and twelve male disciples.<sup>44</sup> But Christianity absorbed less-monotheistic themes from Greece, and thence came the doctrine of the Trinity. The nascent institutional church readily identified the first two *hypostases* (Greek singular: υποστασις, *hypostasis*, or “person”) of the Trinity as the Father and the Son but struggled to identify the third.<sup>45</sup> Theophilus, bishop of Antioch (d.183), and his successor, Paul of Samosata (200–275), suggested Sophia.<sup>46</sup> Sophia also received support among the Gnostics. A feminine Third Person of the Trinity could have served as God the Mother, who, together with the Father, gave birth to the Son.

Instead, the church chose the Judaic Holy Spirit, despite the challenge of personifying what had been no more than a divine force or presence. That choice might have provided gender balance, because the Hebrew Ruach ha-Kodesh was grammatically feminine. Unfortunately, upon translation into Greek it became the neuter Αγιο Πνευμα (Hagio Pneuma), and in Latin the masculine Spiritus Sanctus. The end result, after four centuries of debate, was a Trinity without any trace of femininity, grammatical or otherwise. Later, God the Father assumed the role of Godhead, reinforcing notions of masculine sovereignty, as well as violating the apophatic principle that the Godhead should transcend all attributes.<sup>47</sup>

As an Abrahamic religion, Islam may have inherited a dim memory of Asherah. It rejected any notion of the Trinity, with or without a female/feminine hypostasis. Yet Islam has never been reticent in projecting feminine characteristics onto its monotheistic God. We find, among the Ninety-Nine Names of Allah: “The Most Merciful,” “The All Forgiving,” “The Bountiful, the Generous,” and “The Giver of Life.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Sophia**

Chokmah/Sophia was acknowledged as a personage several times in scripture. In *Proverbs* 9:5 she enacted a proto-Eucharist. And in a later chapter of the same book she boldly declared:

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . Then I was by him, as *one brought up with him* [Hebrew: אמן, *aman*]: and I was daily his delight [רִירִי, *riri*] rejoicing always before him.”<sup>49</sup>

Some translations render *aman* as “master worker” or “architect,” while others suggest “trusted confidante,” even “darling.” *Riri* generally means, “object of delight, desire or pleasure.” The fact that Chokmah/Sophia was the Lord’s delight and pleasure—perhaps his darling—possessed by him from the beginning, leaves little doubt that she was Yahweh’s consort. In the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the Lord declared: “I loved her, and sought her out from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty.”<sup>50</sup> In Michelangelo’s famous painting, “The Creation of Adam” (c.1508–1512), God the Father has his arm around a young woman. Who could this be but Sophia? Psychologist Carl Jung saw Sophia as an archetypal goddess, one who softened Yahweh and helped him develop compassion.<sup>51</sup>

Sophia played prominent roles in Gnosticism. In some texts she was paired with the Logos—that is, Christ—in a masculine-feminine duality. The Gnostic epic narrative *Pistis Sophia* alleged that Sophia fell from grace, eventually to be saved by Christ. Parts of the narrative suggest a strong connection between Sophia and Mary Magdalene,<sup>52</sup> and it is no accident that the Magdalene was often portrayed as a sinner saved by Christ’s grace.

Sophia may have played a role in Islam. Some scholars see Allah’s “hidden treasure” as a reference to Sophia: “God’s experience of Creation, passing down through all levels of life as messenger and mediatrix of compassion.”<sup>53</sup>

By the Middle Ages Sophia had disappeared from mainstream western Christianity. But she survived in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, particularly in the Russian Orthodox Church. Sometimes she served as a symbol of the church, or lost her gender and became identified with Christ. Most often she was revered as “St. Sophia,” patroness of numerous Russian

churches and the subject of numerous icons. The Russian Orthodox liturgy urges the faithful: "Let us behold the miraculous icon of the Wisdom of God . . . I dare to sing in praise of the Patroness of the World, the most innocent Bride and Virgin . . . Sophia, the Wisdom of God."<sup>54</sup>

Russian émigré Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) described three visions of Sophia, the first when he was only nine years old. He recalled his impressions many years later in a poem: "Blue all around. Blue within my soul. / Blue pierced with shafts of gold. / In your hand a flower from other realms. / You stood with radiant smile, / Nodded to me and hid in the mist."<sup>55</sup>

During the same period discussion arose concerning Sophia's precise status and identity. Russian Orthodox priest Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) saw a close association between Sophia and the Glory of God, linking her with the shekinah and kavod. Sophia, he declared, "is the glory of God and either expression could be used indiscriminately of divine revelation within the Godhead, for they both refer to the same divine essence."<sup>56</sup> Commenting on the passage in *Proverbs* quoted earlier, Bulgakov identified Sophia as the "prototype of creation."<sup>57</sup>

Church doctrine placed constraints on how high Sophia could be exalted. But Bulgakov, and Russian theologian and scientist Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), tested those limits by suggesting that Sophia was either a "fourth person" of the Trinity, or in some way was associated with the Trinity as a whole.<sup>58</sup> Their suggestions received no encouragement from ecclesiastical authorities.

Sophia was almost entirely an archetypal figure; no suggestion has been made that she ever took physical incarnation. Yet writers from Theophilus of Antioch to Bulgakov had no doubts that she was female. Sophia was rarely described as a virgin; but neither was any reproductive role projected onto her. Modern feminist theologians have seen Sophia as the closest approximation to a Christian goddess, and a substantial literature has emerged in her support. Official reinstatement into the Trinity

seems unlikely, though some mainstream Christian authorities now refer to the Holy Spirit as "she."

## Mary

Mary the mother of Christ also featured prominently in Christianity's quest for a goddess. A cult of Mary began as early as the second century CE<sup>59</sup> and gained momentum after the Council of Ephesus (431 CE) declared her, "in the true sense of the word," to be Θεοτοκος (Greek: *Theotokos*, "God bearer," or "Mother of God"). The church fathers did not acknowledge that Mary was divine, but many people have questioned how else she could be the mother of God.<sup>60</sup>

Mary won strong veneration in nascent Islam. The *Qur'an* recorded the words of the Annunciation as: "O Mary, God has chosen you, made you pure and chosen you above all the women of the world."<sup>61</sup> The "angels" [sic] prophesied that Mary should bear a son whose "name is the Christ Jesus son of Mary, greatly honored in this world and the next, and among those drawn nearest to God."<sup>62</sup>

In Christianity, Marian devotion reached a peak in the late Middle Ages, by which time she had acquired a status rivaling Christ's. She inherited titles, like "Queen of Heaven" and "Star of the Sea," previously held by Isis, and possibly by Asherah. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) associated Mary with the "woman clothed with the sun," referred to in *Revelation*.<sup>63</sup>

The Protestant Reformers reacted strongly against the Marian cult. Mary was demoted to a mere instrument in the Incarnation of Christ. In its purge of "Romishness," a prospective goddess was one of many things that Protestantism sacrificed, to its detriment. Devotion to Mary recovered to some degree in the Anglican and Lutheran churches. Anglican churchman Mark Frank (1612–1665) assigned Mary the greatest glory, short, he hastened to add, of what belonged to Christ.<sup>64</sup>

Devotion to Mary continued to develop in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The Church of Rome declared as infallible doctrine

the Immaculate Conception of Mary<sup>65</sup> and her Assumption, “body and soul,” into heaven. In 1954 Pope Pius XII proclaimed that Christ crowned his mother Queen of Heaven.<sup>66</sup> His successor, John Paul II (r.1978–2005), assigned her multiple honors: “In the mystery of Christ she [Mary] is present even before the creation of the world, as the one whom the Father has chosen as Mother of his Son in the Incarnation. And . . . together with the Father, the Son has [entrusted] her eternally to the Spirit of holiness.”<sup>67</sup> The possibility of proclaiming Mary “Mediatrice of all Graces” was considered prior to the Second Vatican Council.

Eastern Orthodoxy took no action on the issue of the Immaculate Conception and, in place of the Assumption, proclaimed the doctrine of the *Dormition*: that Mary was raised to heaven after “falling asleep.” In the Orthodox churches Mary Theotokos is regarded as the supreme example of cooperation between God and humanity. She shares with Sophia the accolades of holy protectress of Russia and “Mother of the World.”<sup>68</sup>

Renaissance physician and alchemist Paracelsus (c.1493–1541) came to the conclusion that Mary had a “higher prototype,” a female aspect of Deity—*ein Göttin*, or “goddess”—who, with God the Father begot the Son.<sup>69</sup> Paracelsus’ Göttin would seem to be a feminine Third Person of the Trinity, though he did not make that claim. Significantly, the Apostles’ Creed affirms that Christ “was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”<sup>70</sup>

Strong devotion to Mary developed among certain esotericists. Consciously or unconsciously they followed Paracelsus’ lead in perceiving Mary to be the incarnation of a cosmic feminine entity. Annie Besant identified her with the goddess Virgo, and Rudolf Steiner with the virgin Sophia.<sup>71</sup>

After her Assumption/Dormition, Mary allegedly made the rare transition to the deva evolution, becoming in a very real sense “Queen of the Angels.” Theosophist Charles Leadbeater explained that: “finding the seven paths open before her, she chose to enter the glorious Deva evolution and was received into it with

great honor and distinction.”<sup>72</sup> Rosicrucian writer Corinne Helene commented: “Upon the completion of her earth mission, the holy Virgin was lifted out of the human stream and translated into the angelic evolution.”<sup>73</sup> Yet Mary did not abandon her human charges: “Although the Blessed Virgin now makes her home in the heaven world with the Angels, she spends much of her time on the earth plane working with humanity. Many have testified to seeing her.”<sup>74</sup>

Throughout Christian history, highly favored saints have had visions of Mary. But the frequency of apparitions has increased dramatically over the last 200 years, and a broader range of people has witnessed them. Bernadette Soubirous reported a sequence of eighteen visions at Lourdes, France, in 1858. During the twentieth century 386 significant Marian apparitions were reported. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the official Roman Catholic investigative body, judged that eight of the apparitions “could not be attributed to natural phenomena, delusion or fraud”; they included the ones at Fátima, Portugal (1917) and Zeitoun, Egypt (1968–1971). A further eleven were deemed “worthy of faith” by local bishops.<sup>75</sup>

The gender of the ancient goddesses, as we have seen, was usually established through projections of sex and procreation onto them. Mary had borne the Savior, but she was a virgin: the Blessed Virgin. Even the *Qur’an* defended Mary’s virginity; when people questioned the circumstances of his birth, the baby Jesus spoke from the cradle: “I am a servant of God . . . . He charged me . . . to be dutiful to my mother,” adding, “Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am resurrected.”<sup>76</sup> By decree of the Second Council of Constantinople (553–554), Christianity affirmed that Mary was “ever virgin,” where that condition was understood in a gynecological sense.

Mary most likely was a real person as well as an archetypal figure. Her devotees assigned her distinctly feminine qualities: compassion, humility and submission. She was the woman who responded to the Angel Gabriel: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me ac-

ording to thy word”<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, male personages were also given feminine qualities. Charles Wesley, co-founder of Methodism, wrote the hymn “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild” (1742).<sup>78</sup> Mary’s femininity may stand out in stark contrast to Yahweh’s masculinity; but contrasts with the male divine figures of Christianity and Islam are less clear.

### The World Mother

We have seen that Mary—sometimes along with Sophia—has long been revered in Eastern Orthodox Christianity as “Mother of the World.” In the West, Pope John Paul II referred to Mary in 1990 as “You who serve as Mother of the whole family of the children of God.”<sup>79</sup> For esotericists, these notions of Mary as Mother—not only of Jesus, but in some way also of humanity—resonated with and reinforced traditional concepts of the World Mother from the religions of South Asia.<sup>80</sup>

Geoffrey Hodson, Theosophist and priest in the Liberal Catholic Church, wrote: “The Blessed Lady Mary, incarnation of the Maternal Spirit of the Godhead, moved by purest compassion and love, holds the whole of humanity in Her arms and at Her breast, nourishing it with spiritualizing life for the purpose of quickening the evolution of all sentient beings.”<sup>81</sup> He also depicted her as “*the highest possible imaginable spiritualized Queen.*”<sup>82</sup>

Leadbeater described the World Mother as “a mighty Angel, having under Her a vast host of subordinate Angels whom She keeps perpetually employed in the work which is especially committed to Her.”<sup>83</sup> Hodson viewed the World Mother as an office held by a succession of exalted entities: “That Official is the World Mother for a planet and a period. . . . Mary the mother of Jesus now holds that Office, as Isis held it in earlier days.”<sup>84</sup> Moreover:

The planetary World Mother is conceived . . . as a highly-evolved Archangel Representative and Embodiment on earth of the Feminine Aspect of the Deity. She is also thought of as an Adept Official in the Inner Government of the World, in whom all the highest qualities of womanhood and moth-

erhood shine forth in their fullest perfection.<sup>85</sup>

Perhaps Mary’s translation to the deva evolution was a necessary step for her to assume the office of World Mother.

Alice Bailey considered Eve, Isis and Mary to be the three “mothers” of Christ:

Eve has no child in her arms; the germ of the Christ life is as yet too small to make its presence felt; the involutionary process is yet too close; but in Isis the midway point is reached; the quickening of that which is desired (the Desire of all nations, as it is called in the Bible) has taken place and Isis consequently stands in the ancient zodiacs for fertility, for motherhood and as the guardian of the child. Mary carries the process down to the plane or place of incarnation, the physical plane, and there gives birth to the Christ child.<sup>86</sup>

Bailey also saw in the three mothers an expression of the constellation Virgo—and the great Life that lies behind it:

In these three Virgins and these three Mothers of the Christ, you have the history of the formation and the function of the three aspects of the personality through which the Christ must find expression. The sign of Virgo itself stands for a synthesis of these three feminine aspects. . . . She [Virgo] is the Virgin Mother, providing that which is needed for the mental, emotional and physical expression of the hidden but ever present divinity.”<sup>87</sup>

Interestingly, Bailey included Eve in the list of Virgin Mothers, despite the usual assumption that she and Adam had sexual relations. Conversely, she omitted Athena and other virgin goddesses from the list of individualities whom she saw as expressions of Virgo’s procreative power. In her view their creative activities evidently lay in directions other than motherhood.

Bailey agreed that the World Mother is the “feminine aspect in manifestation, symbolized for us in many of the world religions as a virgin mother and in the Christian religion as the Virgin Mary.” But she stopped short of assert-



ing, as Hodson did, that Mary held the office of World Mother. Rather, Bailey viewed Mary's role as no more than symbolic: "The concentration of the feminine force in nature in some individual in female form . . . has never existed in our particular planetary life, though the avatars of a previous solar system, expressing itself through planetary life, always took this form."<sup>88</sup> Bailey did acknowledge, however, that a matriarchy once existed "which had a religion that recalled the ancient ways of the earlier system and in which period of time Lilith symbolized the World Mother, until Eve took her place."<sup>89</sup>

Corrine Helene expanded the number of personages associated with Virgo to "Isis of Egypt, Ishtar of Babylon, Minerva of Greece, Maya of India, and Mary of Bethlehem."<sup>90</sup> And she took a somewhat different perspective on her relationship with the World Mother. "That divine Being," she declared, "whom we know as the World Mother is the prototype for the Madonna of all great religions; she is the teacher of these high feminine Initiates at certain stages of their development."<sup>91</sup> Of these madonnas and feminine initiates Mary took precedence: "To Palestine came the exalted of them all, Mary of Bethlehem, mother of the Lord Jesus."<sup>92</sup>

Having embraced Buddhism, Helena Roerich, amanuensis for the Agni Yoga teachings, rarely addressed issues of Judeo-Christian concern. Yet she weighed in boldly on the composition of the Trinity, suggesting that the World Mother is a divine hypostasis: "[T]he Mother of the Universe, or of the manifested Cosmos, can be accepted as one of the figures of the Holy Trinity."<sup>93</sup> Roerich criticized institutional Christianity for its omission of a feminine as-

pect of Deity, implying that Sophia would have been the better choice than Ruach ha-Kodesh:

Indeed, there is no religion, except later ecclesiastical Christianity, in which the Feminine Element is not included among the Primates of Be-ness. Thus, the Gnostics also considered the Holy Ghost as a Feminine Element. In the most ancient Teachings, the

manifested Trinity of Father, Mother, and Son was considered as an emanation of the highest, eternally hidden Cause; and the latter, in turn, as that of the Causeless Cause.<sup>94</sup>

Bede Griffiths (1906–1993), Benedictine monk and Swami, tapped into notions of the World Mother in the religions of South Asia, and sought to explain them in a Christian context. He identified the World Mother with the Holy Spirit and

linked both with Mary and the Hindu Shakti:

It is in the Holy Spirit that the feminine aspect of the Godhead can be most clearly seen. She is the Shakti, the power, immanent in all creation, the receptive power of the Godhead. . . . But it is the Spirit who conceives these "ideas" in her maternal womb and brings them forth in creation. She is the Great Mother (the *Devī*), who nourishes the seeds of all beings and makes them grow. Still more, she is the mothering Spirit in humankind, who receives the Word, the Wisdom of God, in her heart, of whom in the Christian tradition Mary is the figure, receiving the Word of God in her heart and bringing him forth in his earthly manifestation.<sup>95</sup>

The World Mother featured in South-Asian religions long before any suggestion was made

*... some form of gender—or "horizontal" polarity with mutually attractive, creative potential—exists at all levels, short of the unmanifest Godhead. Gender polarities at the personality level are best considered as archetypes enshrined in the Ageless Wisdom. These polarities correlate strongly with distinction between the odd- and even-numbered rays, pointing to a way to identify gender, at higher levels, including those where the human soul and the Planetary Hierarchy reside.*

that she might be associated with Mary or Sophia. In the Vedantic tradition, from which the trans-Himalayan teachings drew much of their inspiration, only the Brahman surpasses the World Mother in status. The Brahman—or to give added emphasis, the “Supreme Brahman,” or Parabrahm—is the utterly transcendent and formless Godhead. The Brahman is unmanifest and therefore above gender, but the first manifestation is believed to be feminine. Vedantic scholar and early Theosophist, Tallapragada Subba Row, called this first manifestation the “Cosmic Virgin,” adding that she is the mother of the Logos.<sup>96</sup> Helena Blavatsky, who acquired much of her knowledge of Vedantism from Subba Row, noted:

[I]t is impossible to define Parabrahm, yet once that we speak of that first something which *can* be conceived, it has to be treated of as a feminine principle. In all cosmogonies the first differentiation was considered feminine. . . . The first emanation becomes the immaculate Mother from whom proceed all the gods, or the anthropomorphized creative forces.<sup>97</sup>

From this perspective the World Mother may be hierarchical in nature. At her highest level, she is the first form to emerge from the Formless; she serves as Procreatrix, giving birth to all lower levels of reality, including some we call “divine.” At a still lower level she may have incarnated as Mary.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, the designation of Mary as Theotokos, or “Mother of God,” suggests an attempt, by western theologians, to capture the notion of a feminine first manifestation from the transcendent Godhead.

The World Mother was established as a goddess by her procreative—but not sexual—role. Roerich anointed her with unmistakably feminine qualities: “The play of the Mother of the World is in joy. She enfolds the enlightened ones in Her veil of joy. Rejoice amidst flowers; and in the midst of snow—equally redolent—also rejoice!”<sup>99</sup> And: “How beautiful is the Image of the Mother of the World! So much beauty, self-renunciation and tragedy is in this majestic Image! Aspire in your heart to the Highest, and joy and exultation will enter your soul.”<sup>100</sup>

Writing in the 1880s, Anna Kingsford—feminist, Hermeticist, and briefly head of the London lodge of the Theosophical Society—described the dual nature of the Divine.

God is twain. He is the Life, and She is the Substance. And to speak of Her, is to speak of Woman in her supreme mode. She is not “Nature”; Nature is the manifestation of the qualities and properties with which, under the suffusion of the Life and Spirits of God, Substance is endowed. She is not “Matter”; but is the potential essence of Matter. She is not Space; but is the within of space . . . She is Daughter, Mother, and Spouse of God.<sup>101</sup>

Kingsford continued: “She is mystically styled the Blessed Virgin Mother . . . . As Venus [she is] the brightest of the mystic seven who represent the Elohim of God . . . . She is portrayed as Aphrodite, the Sea-Queen, and Mary the Star of the Sea.”<sup>102</sup>

Roerich’s husband Nicholas created the painting “Mother of the World,” shown at the beginning of this article. It resonates strongly with traditional depictions of Mary, with Pamela Coleman Smith’s “High Priestess” in the Waite-Smith Tarot deck, with Solovyov’s Sophia, and with Kingsford’s Divine Feminine. All these images are distinctively feminine, at least as we understand the term. We are using anthropomorphic language, but that is the only language we have.

Isis, Mary, Sophia, the World Mother, Subba Row’s Cosmic Mother, and the Holy Spirit represent—in whatever order and with whatever overlaps among them—a feminine channel, extending up to the Godhead. It runs parallel to the more familiar masculine channel extending from Jesus to the Christ, to God the Son, and to the Father.

## Gender at Intermediate Levels

We have examined gender at the human and divine levels. It remains to address the possibility that gender exists in a meaningful way at intermediate levels, including the higher components of the human constitution and the Planetary Hierarchy.

### ***The Human Soul and Monad***

As noted earlier, “soul” is grammatically feminine in many languages. Greco-Roman culture went farther to assert that the soul (Greek: *ψυχη*, “psyche”; Latin: *anima*) really is feminine. Creative tension between it and the masculine body—the philosophers were all male—provided the key to perfectibility. In Islam the soul is also viewed as feminine, and in the Shia traditions, the feminine is associated with the Angel of the Soul—or what Christians would call the Guardian Angel, and esotericists the Solar Angel.<sup>103</sup>

The theory of “twin souls” has a long history, probably a dim memory of pre-sexual reproduction in Lemurian times. Plato’s *Symposium* records that Zeus devised a way to control ambitious men who threatened his sovereignty: “I will slice each of them down the middle,” producing two half-beings, one male and one female. Each had its own soul, and each desperately needed the other to restore unity; sexual attraction between them took precedence over all other instincts.<sup>104</sup>

According to Kabbalistic teachings, the newly created Adam was androgynous. When the first man’s rib was taken to create “an help meet,”<sup>105</sup> their souls were separated—Adam with a male soul and Eve with a female soul—whereupon the separated twins embarked on an eternal quest for reunification. The legend was interpreted on multiple levels. At the cosmic level it provided a metaphor for the division of the Unmanifest into masculine and feminine aspects of Deity. At the human level, it symbolized marriage, in which husband and wife become “one.”<sup>106</sup> Notions of twin souls and soul-mates gained popular appeal during the New Age movement of the late twentieth century.

Alice Bailey dismissed the theory of twin souls.<sup>107</sup> And few esotericists take it seriously in its literal sense; rather, they emphasize the existence of soul groups that tend to incarnate together for karmic and other reasons.

Nevertheless the notion of masculine and feminine souls deserves consideration. Some insight can be gleaned from trans-Himalayan teachings on the seven rays. All souls exist on one of the seven rays—or perhaps on one of the seven sub-rays of the monadic ray.<sup>108</sup> If certain rays can be identified as masculine and others as feminine, a basis would exist for dividing souls into gender categories.

Numerology provides an important hint; from the time of Pythagoras onward numerologists have claimed that odd numbers are masculine, always thrusting forward into new territory, while feminine even numbers respond to restore harmony. Harriette and Homer Curtis commented: “Number 2 is sacred to all female deities, such as Rhea, Isis, . . . the Virgin Mary . . . as it represents the Mother-force separated from the Father and ever seeking reunion.”<sup>109</sup> It will be instructive to inquire whether the odd-numbered rays are distinctively masculine in character, and the even-numbered rays are feminine.

Table 2 shows the “special virtues” and “virtues to be acquired” for each of the seven rays, as presented by Bailey.<sup>110</sup> The correlation between the masculine characteristics, listed earlier in the article (Table 1), and the “special virtues” of the odd-numbered rays {Table 2(a)} is striking; and the correlation between the feminine characteristics and the “special virtues” of the even-numbered rays {2(b)} is equally striking.<sup>111</sup>

In some cases the “virtues to be acquired” reinforce the characteristics of their rays, while in other cases they provide balance. For example: “Tenderness, humility, sympathy, tolerance, patience” help soften the harshness of Ray I. “Reverence, devotion, sympathy, love, wide-mindedness” soften the cold intellect of Ray V. Intentionally, the “vices” of each ray are not shown. We assume that they would have been overcome before the soul begins to play an active role in a disciple’s life.

**Table 2. Virtues of the Seven Rays**  
**(a) Odd-Numbered, “Masculine” Rays**

Ray		Special Virtues	Virtues to be Acquired
I	Will or Power	Strength, courage, steadfastness, truthfulness arising from absolute fearlessness, power of ruling, capacity to grasp great questions in a large-minded way, and of handling men and measures.	Tenderness, humility, sympathy, tolerance, patience.
III	Active Intelligence	Wide views on all abstract questions, sincerity of purpose, clear intellect, capacity for concentration on philosophic studies, patience, caution, absence of the tendency to worry himself or others over trifles.	Sympathy, tolerance, devotion, accuracy, energy and common-sense.
V	Concrete Science	Strictly accurate statements, justice (without mercy), perseverance, common-sense, uprightness, independence, keen intellect.	Reverence, devotion, sympathy, love, wide-mindedness.
VII	Ceremonial Order	Strength, perseverance, courage, courtesy, extreme care in details, self-reliance.	Realization of unity, wide-mindedness, tolerance, humility, gentleness and love.

**(b) Even-Numbered, “Feminine” Rays**

Ray		Special Virtues	Virtues to be Acquired
II	Love–Wisdom	Calm, strength, patience and endurance, love of truth, faithfulness, intuition, clear intelligence, and serene temper.	Love, compassion, unselfishness, energy.
IV	Harmony through Conflict	Strong affections, sympathy, physical courage, generosity, devotion, quickness of intellect and perception.	Serenity, confidence, self-control, purity, unselfishness, accuracy, mental and moral balance.
VI	Devotion and Idealism	Devotion, single-mindedness, love, tenderness, intuition, loyalty, reverence.	Strength, self-sacrifice, purity, truth, tolerance, serenity, balance and common sense.

Souls normally incarnate only when their ray is in cyclic manifestation on the planet. Five of the rays are currently in manifestation; Rays I and IV are not. We can conclude that the only

souls currently in incarnation lie on Rays II, III, V, VI and VII. Bailey declared that “A pure first ray ego in incarnation at this time would be a disaster.”<sup>112</sup>

Ray VI is “passing rapidly out of manifestation,”<sup>113</sup> and the number of sixth-ray souls is dwindling, though Bailey explained that “it will be about two hundred years [from the 1930s, when that was written] before all the sixth ray egos pass out of incarnation.” On the other hand, Ray IV will come into manifestation in 2025,<sup>114</sup> and many fourth-ray souls are expected to incarnate over the next several centuries. Replacement of Ray VI by Ray IV—both even-numbered rays—will not affect the overall gender balance. The comment is often made that Ray VII—a masculine ray—is now coming into manifestation, but Bailey stated that this began in 1675.<sup>115</sup> Presumably, large numbers of seventh-ray souls are already in physical embodiment, explaining, among much else, rapid developments in technology and the healing arts.

The soul ray and personality ray are normally different, providing vertical tension that aids the individual’s growth in consciousness. When personality–soul integration has reached a significant level, the soul ray may override the personality ray in its effect on the lower vehicles. The result may be to weaken the correlation, or even create dissonance, between gender and biological sex. For example, a Ray III soul might override a Ray II personality, creating strong masculine gender, even if the individual has a female body.

An individual remains on the same soul ray for many lifetimes, gaining the experience of its gender and serving in its unique way. But some souls eventually will transition to a new ray. “All egos found upon the fourth, the fifth, the sixth and the seventh rays,” we are told, “must after the third initiation, blend with the three major rays, or monadic rays.”<sup>116</sup> The “major rays” are the Rays of Aspect: Rays I, II and III.

Until the fourth initiation the human soul is under the guidance of its solar angel. Subba Row described the solar angel as “a little girl”—though he conceded that “the girl may be a pretty big lady!”<sup>117</sup> He added: “This girl will ultimately have to be married to the man’s own Logos [the monad].” The marriage metaphor is apt because the deva evolution, to which the solar angels belong, is feminine in

polarity, relative to the human kingdom, which is masculine.<sup>118</sup>

Bailey dismissed notions of gender at the monadic level, insisting that “there is no identity apart from universality” and affirming “the union in one of the pairs of opposites, negative and positive, male and female.”<sup>119</sup> Notwithstanding that universality, Bailey taught that monads are differentiated by ray.

Human monads lie only on the Rays of Aspect. Reportedly, there are sixty billion human monads: five billion on Ray I, thirty-five billion on the Ray II, and twenty billion on the Ray III.<sup>120</sup> If Rays I and III are masculine, and Ray II is feminine, then the gender balance of the human lifestream tips seven-to-five in favor of female monads—despite humanity’s alleged masculinity relative to the devas.<sup>121</sup> Human monads of the two genders no doubt collaborate in creative activities on their level of consciousness, or “identification,” as other components of the human entity do on their own levels.

If gender at the soul and monadic levels is understood in terms of ray influence, an inevitable question is whether the same might be true at the personality level. The personality can lie on any of the seven rays, but restrictions apply to the rays that govern its vehicles: the (lower) mental, emotional and physical bodies. Senior disciples and initiates “are liable to build vehicles of any type of force to meet the emergency, the need or the service of a particular life.”<sup>122</sup> For the rest of us, the mental body can lie only on Rays I, IV or V, two masculine and one feminine; the emotional body only on Rays II and VI, both feminine; and the physical body on Rays III and VII, both masculine.<sup>123</sup>

Eighty-four (7 x 3 x 2 x 2) possible ray combinations govern the personality and its three vehicles, while four (2 x 2 x 1 x 1) gender profiles are possible: MMFM, MFFM, FMFM, or FFFM.<sup>124</sup> Any of these four would be interwoven with our biological sex; hormone balance; and socio-cultural, environmental and astrological factors. From this perspective, as from others, considerable gender complexity can exist even at the personality level.

### The Planetary Hierarchy

All who have attained the fifth initiation are known as *adepts*. The subset of human adepts who remain on Earth to serve humanity—and can be considered part of the Planetary Hierarchy—are known in the trans-Himalayan teachings as *masters*.<sup>125</sup> All adepts have renounced the lower self, and their consciousness is focused in the spiritual triad; likewise, their souls are absorbed into the triad. The *atmic*, *buddhic* and (higher) *manasic* bodies comprise the vehicles of the monad.<sup>126</sup>

We are told that adepts and even *chohans*—who have attained the sixth initiation—are found on all seven rays. Since monads can lie only on the Rays of Aspect, the rays attributed to the adepts and chohans may be their triadic or soul rays; or they may be subrays of the entities' monadic rays.

The ray characteristics in Table 2 were described in terms relevant to, and understandable by, disciples in a certain range of consciousness. Even the conventional names attached to them betray an anthropocentric perspective. Caution must be exercised in extrapolating those characteristics to much higher levels of consciousness. Similar caution must be exercised with regard to gender. As in the case of deities, we can do no more than project human concepts of gender onto entities whose level of consciousness is remote from our own.

The rays can be divided into two categories that seem to form a horizontal polarity. Through their ray associations, each of the masters, as well as their ashrams, can be identified with one category or the other. We are told, for example, that the Master Djwhal Khul heads a second-ray (even-numbered) ashram, while the Master Hilarion heads the fifth-ray (odd-numbered) ashram.<sup>127</sup> Hence the former presumably has a feminine quality, and the latter a masculine quality.

What those qualities might be, and what kind of creative tension exists between them, are matters on which we can only speculate. Until new teachings are revealed, more detailed discussion is inappropriate. What we can affirm is that, just as the seven rays shine with more

brilliance at the Hierarchical level than they do in the “three worlds,” so too will the gender qualities that emerge from them.

### Two Issues

Issues of concern among esotericists relate to Hierarchical-level gender *as it appears to us*, and the possibility that biological sex might render one-half of the disciple population ineligible to attain adeptship during their present incarnations. Two questions arise:

- Can an individual attain the fifth initiation in a female body?
- Why have all, or the great majority of, masters revealed themselves in male bodies?

A number of writers have insisted that the female form is not equipped, or suited, to support the attainment of adeptship. Certain Buddhist sects and at least one sect in Jainism have held that souls cannot attain liberation from female bodies; “liberation” would seem to correspond at least to the fourth initiation.<sup>128</sup> In the West, Franz Hartmann conceded that “exceptions are found” but declared:

It does not indeed very often happen that an individual attains adeptship while inhabiting a female organism, because such an organism is not as well adapted as a male one to develop energy and strength, and it is, therefore, frequently the case that those women who have advanced far on the road to adeptship must reincarnate in a male organism, before they can achieve the final result.<sup>129</sup>

Such “gender discrimination” has an eerie resemblance to traditional barriers against women's advance to leadership positions in society, suggestions that women are mentally unsuited to study the sciences, and a long-standing view that women are not physically or emotionally equipped to celebrate the Christian Eucharist. Leadbeater, who was not only a Theosophist but also presiding bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church, commented that the Mass “is not adapted to work through the feminine organism.” He added, though, that Christ could make other arrangements when he returns.<sup>130</sup>



Other authorities have taken a different position. Damodar K. Mavalankar, an early Theosophist and former Brahmin, responded that he saw no “good reason why females should not become Adepts. None of us, Chelas, are aware of any physical or other defect which might entirely incapacitate them from undertaking the dreary ordeal.” But he did warn—without offering a reason—that it might be “more dangerous for them [women] than it is for men.”<sup>131</sup>

Helena Blavatsky declared: “Woman has as good a chance as any man has to reach high Adeptship.” She added that this has not occurred in Europe because women were socially conditioned to accept a position of inferiority.<sup>132</sup> Blavatsky also looked to the future: “[A] woman-adept can produce high occultists—a race of “Buddhas and Christs,” born “without sin.”<sup>133</sup>

Regarding the issue of how adepts appear to us, the trans-Himalayan teachings speak of “masters,” but never “mistresses.” In the western esoteric tradition adepts are referred to as “elder brothers,” but never “elder sisters.” Almost without exception masculine nouns and pronouns are used to refer to members of the Hierarchy. Sketches, paintings and photographs of the masters known in the West uniformly portray them as male; several are shown with facial hair.<sup>134</sup>

We must not forget that these depictions are of physical bodies, which masters do not normally “wear.” In order to appear in physical form, a master can either use the body in which adeptship was attained or materialize a *mayavirupa*, or “body of Maya.” Presumably a master could manifest a female mayavirupa if that would facilitate the work to be undertaken. A master could also choose to exhibit feminine or masculine characteristics, regardless of the mayavirupa’s sex.

Perhaps we have simply lived in an era when adepts felt that more could be accomplished through male bodies and masculine characteristics. Their work may have required them to blend into a patriarchal society.<sup>135</sup> Writing in 1928 Dion Fortune attributed the following comment to an adept with whom she was in communication:

It has . . . often been asked why it is that women do not manifest themselves as Masters and Adepts on the inner planes, or indeed on the outer. In the very early days they did so . . . . In the future they will again and even now there are certain adepts in female bodies who have definite inner plane missions and who are genuine adepts. The number is small as yet but will increase.<sup>136</sup>

Several writers have reported encounters with initiates of various degrees in female embodiment. Henry Olcott, first president of the Theosophical Society, stated: “I personally have encountered in India two . . . initiated women, and know of a number of others in the East.”<sup>137</sup> Olcott continued with the interesting statement: “Some women, it must be remembered, are of that sex only in body.” Notwithstanding his view on women and the Eucharist, Leadbeater affirmed: “The existence of the World-Mother is an answer to the question” of whether there are female adepts.<sup>138</sup>

We have a description of at least one initiation of Mary the mother of Christ. Corinne Helene explained: “Mary’s crowning initiatory experiences occurred in connection with the Crucifixion of Christ Jesus and the events associated therewith. . . . It was during the Resurrection of Easter dawn that the initiatory experiences of the Blessed Virgin reached their culmination.”<sup>139</sup> Reportedly, Mary shared her experience with John the Beloved thus:

I will tell thee an astounding and hidden Mystery which cannot be comprehended by the understanding, which my Lord Jesus Christ, my beloved one and my redeemer, revealed unto me at Golgotha. A shining cloud came and bore me along and took me up into the Third Heaven and set me down at the boundary of the earth. *I looked and saw the whole world was like a thing of nothing.*<sup>140</sup>

Based on the notion that Mary, the mother of Christ, presently holds the office of World Mother, that initiation may have been an important one.

Mary Magdalene may have attained a significant initiation on the first Easter morning. In

one of her detailed visions, Anthroposophist and stigmatic Judith von Halle (1972–) recorded the following conversation outside the empty tomb, when the risen Lord asked Mary whom she was seeking:

[Mary Magdalene] answered that she was seeking her Master and wanted to fetch him back. Christ did not ask her for any arbitrary reason. . . . He asked her this question as a teacher of initiation asks his pupil. With this question He asked her if she was seeking *Jesus* or *Christ*. But initially she was only looking for Jesus of Nazareth, her beloved teacher in his physical body. But as Christ then touched her heart (in the Gospels this is when He called her by her name) she reacted immediately, so filled with love and so overwhelmed by the fact that she was standing in front of Him that she forgot everything. At this moment she even forgot that Jesus Christ her teacher had died, that he had died in front of her own eyes.<sup>141</sup>

Despite attempts to portray her as a repentant prostitute, Mary Magdalene has been held in high spiritual regard from the early church to the present.<sup>142</sup> Of particular note is the account by Jacobus de Voragine, medieval archbishop of Genoa, of Mary's legendary voyage to the south of France. Commenting on her alleged effectiveness as a preacher, Jacobus remarked that "it was no marvel that the mouth that had kissed the feet of our Lord so debonairly and so goodly, should be inspired with the word of God more than the other."<sup>143</sup>

Mavalankar named several female high initiates in South Asia. Additional examples are provided in a study of women adepts in Tibet.<sup>144</sup> And according to legend, Tara, the Tantric embodiment of the Divine Feminine, was a buddha.<sup>145</sup> The classical Buddhist text known as the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* recognized the goddess Prajnaparamita as the mother of all Buddhas.

Subba Row, one of the first individuals to share teachings on the seven rays, declared: "There are instances of females becoming the greatest Adepts." He added: "There is one woman who still stands in the list of the Ma-

hachohans of one of the greatest Rays," and "She is . . . a great Adept of that Ray."<sup>146</sup> According to Subba Row, "There is a Ray specially adapted to women; it is sometimes called the 'body of love'." Its Logos, he added, is female rather than male.<sup>147</sup> Subba Row explained: "I do not think there will ever be a female Adept of the First Ray, because it belongs entirely to the positive pole."<sup>148</sup> We noted earlier that the odd-numbered rays have a "positive," masculine, character.

Hodson recorded the receipt of information from "A Feminine Adept"<sup>149</sup> and "A Great Feminine Chohan."<sup>150</sup> Hodson implied that they were human, but it is possible that they were devas. Because we know much more about the masters than we do about devic adepts, the apparent gender imbalance may stem from our anthropocentric view of the Hierarchy. Devic adepts have passed through the human stage.<sup>151</sup> They now work alongside their still-human counterparts but probably have responsibilities that involve less contact with us. At some point, as we move from adepts to chohans and beyond, the human and devic lifestreams merge.

## Conclusions

Sex and its higher correlate, gender, are complex topics. Traditional notions of binary sexual categories have been challenged on several fronts. And gender, as understood by modern psychologists and sociologists, is both ill-defined and only loosely correlated with biological sex; almost everyone exhibits a blend of masculine and feminine characteristics. Attempts to define masculinity and femininity inevitably become contentious. The approach adopted here has been to treat gender characteristics as archetypes, rather than attributes of any particular man or women, or even men and women in general.

The transcendent, unmanifest Godhead is undifferentiated, but gender differentiation is recognized at levels of *manifest* divinity. Western patriarchy's attempts to suppress the female deities of antiquity were confronted by humanity's yearning for a goddess. The result was the deification of individuals like Sophia and Mary. Institutional Christianity missed an

opportunity to incorporate Sophia into the Trinity and condemned its theology to two millennia of gender imbalance. Changes in official doctrine seem unlikely, but Eastern Orthodox theologians have flirted with ways of relating Sophia to the Trinity. And in the West it is becoming more common to refer to the Holy Spirit as “she.”

Another favorable development has been the acknowledgement, by Eastern Orthodox Christianity and most recently within the Church of Rome, of Mary’s role as World Mother. Support has come from the trans-Himalayan teachings where she is viewed as a senior member of the Planetary Hierarchy. The latter teachings drew upon the Mother’s deep roots in the religions of South Asia.

Virgin mothers have always had strong appeal, and several have been mentioned herein, from the Great Goddess of prehistory to the World Mother. But many divine feminine personages were paired with masculine figures in “sexual unions.” Although we may criticize primitive cultures’ projection of the sexual function onto them, the notion of creative tension between the masculine and feminine aspects of Deity has considerable merit.

At the level of the human soul, and possibly the monad, a promising way to define gender is by ray characteristics. The odd-numbered rays have a distinctly masculine quality, and the even-numbered rays a feminine quality. Interactions between the masculine and feminine qualities, within the individual or the group, provide a fertile environment for growth in consciousness and opportunities to contribute to Hierarchical Purpose. From a ray perspective, even the personality and its vehicles can have four possible gender profiles.

The relationship between an individual and his or her solar angel has a gender connotation insofar as the deva evolution, to which solar angels belong, has a feminine polarity, relative to the human lifestream. Creative tension between them urges the disciple forward on the spiritual path. When the disciple attains the fourth initiation, he or she stands free and the solar angel is released to take up work elsewhere.

Ray characteristics may also help identify gender at the level of the Planetary Hierarchy where consciousness is focused in the monad and the spiritual triad. We must be cautious and respectful in projecting our limited understanding of gender onto members of the Hierarchy and their ashrams. Based, however, on evidence from the progressive expansion of “gender” from the mineral to the human kingdom and beyond, we can be sure that the form it may take on Hierarchical levels—and above—is more splendid than anything experienced in our earthly realm.

An issue of some interest is whether an individual can attain the fifth initiation while in female embodiment. Some authorities have implied, or even stated explicitly, that the female form is defective in that regard, while other authorities in both East and West have rejected notions of a “glass ceiling.” Mary the mother of Christ, who unmistakably came from the human lifestream, reportedly attained an initiation of considerable significance before making her transition to the deva evolution. Mary Magdalene may also have attained a significant initiation when she witnessed the Resurrection. Hinduism and Buddhism recognize a number of high initiates in female bodies.

The apparent rarity of masters in female bodies could be attributed to the work they have undertaken in male-dominated societies. But a careful distinction must be drawn between the sex in which they appear to us and the masters’ own gender—assuming that it exists. An important consideration is that the Planetary Hierarchy includes entities from both the human and devic lifestreams. There may actually be a predominance of masculine human masters, but overall gender balance is preserved by feminine devic adepts whose work is less apparent to us.

Part II of this article will explore the “longitudinal” dimension of gender: the evolution of human gender and its implications for the race and ourselves. Humanity’s creative potential can only increase if men and women have equivalent opportunities and if gender differences among—and within—individuals are

joyfully recognized and utilized for cooperative group purpose.

- <sup>1</sup> Chromosomes were identified in the 1880s. Nettie Stevens and Edmund Beecher Wilson independently discovered the XY/XX sex pattern in 1905.
- <sup>2</sup> One-half of the father's sperm count carries an X chromosome and the other half a Y chromosome. The baby's sex is determined by which sperm fertilizes the mother's ovum—which carries an X chromosome. Both sperm and ovum also contain DNA, through which ethnic and other genetic characteristics are inherited from the father and mother.
- <sup>3</sup> Melanie Blackless, et al. "How sexually dimorphic are we? Review and synthesis." *American Journal of Human Biology* (vol. 12. 2000), 151-166.
- <sup>4</sup> "Beyond XX and XY," *Scientific American* (Sept. 2017), 50-51.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. Surgical intervention is performed at the request, or with the consent, of parents, many of whom fear the question: "Is it a boy or a girl?" Since the child is not consulted, but faces what may be irreversible, life-altering consequences, such procedures raise serious ethical questions.
- <sup>6</sup> See for example, John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York: Vintage, 1995); Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996).
- <sup>7</sup> King David had at least six wives, some of whom bore him sons. Additionally, he had a relationship with Jonathan—the brother of his wife Michal—that writers from medieval times to the present have suspected was homoerotic. In particular, they point to the scriptural passage in which David tells Jonathan: "thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Samuel 1:26).
- <sup>8</sup> Acceptance varies greatly, both within and among countries. In some countries homosexual behavior is a capital offense.
- <sup>9</sup> Lydia Denworth, "Is There a 'Female' Brain?," *Scientific American* (Sept. 2017), 38-43. Earlier theories asserted either that there is no difference between men's and women's brains, or that the brain features of men and women are distinctively different. Recent research suggests that each of us has a blend or "mosaic" of both features.

- <sup>10</sup> Richard A. Friedman, "How Changeable Is Gender?" (August 22, 2015). Online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/23/opinion/sunday/richard-a-friedman-how-changeable-is-gender.html>. (accessed Sept. 11, 2017).
- <sup>11</sup> Brain structure can change due to hormonal or environmental factors, possibly explaining the emergence of sexual dysphoria in adults. Alternatively, dysphoria may be present from birth but acknowledged only in adulthood.
- <sup>12</sup> As will be discussed in Part II, crossdressing also serves other purposes and does not necessarily imply transsexuality or homosexuality.
- <sup>13</sup> Perhaps from a desire to be politically correct, some writers, and even professional bodies, use "gender" when referring to biological sex. An example is "gender reassignment surgery."
- <sup>14</sup> Some writers see this as the *definition* of gender; for example: "Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex." Norman B. Anderson, "Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients," *American Psychologist*, (vol. 67, no. 1, 2012), 11.
- <sup>15</sup> A small number of women have been ordained Orthodox rabbis in Israel, and some now serve in the United States and elsewhere. A few female *imamas* serve in the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Germany.
- <sup>16</sup> According to the Pew Research Center, the number of "stay-at-home dads" in the United States increased from 1.1 million in 1989 to 2.0 million in 2012. Moreover: "In 2015, fathers reported spending, on average, seven hours a week on child care—almost triple the time they provided back in 1965. And fathers put in about nine hours a week on household chores in 2015, up from four hours in 1965." Online: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/06/05/growing-number-of-dads-home-with-the-kids/>, and <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/15/fathers-day-facts/>. (accessed Sept. 15, 2017).
- <sup>17</sup> See for example Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York: Lucis, 1953), 45, 176.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 62.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 316.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 180.
- <sup>21</sup> Aristotle claimed: "[T]he male is by nature superior, and the female inferior," *Politics*, book 1, part V. 350 BCE.

- <sup>22</sup> Franz Hartmann, *With the Adepts: An Adventure Among the Rosicrucians*, (New York: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1910), 89.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> “Three Initiates,” *The Kybalion* (Chicago: Yogi Publication Society, 1912), 183. Capitalization in original. An earlier version of 1908 includes the phrase “even the spiritual plane.”
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 189. Capitalization in original.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 203
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., 206.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 205, 209. Capitalization in original.
- <sup>29</sup> Sandra Hodson (ed), *Light of the Sanctuary* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishers, 1988), 81-82. The book is an edited version of her late husband Geoffrey Hodson’s esoteric diary.
- <sup>30</sup> For a detailed discussion of the planes and subplanes see John F. Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2004), 40ff.
- <sup>31</sup> Why the Kabbalists converted Chokmah into a masculine entity or force is unclear. Perhaps they sensed—as Blavatsky did in her exposition of Vedantic teachings—that the first definite manifestation from the Godhead is feminine and saw Chokmah and Binah as co-creative agents.
- <sup>32</sup> Published by Goodreads of San Francisco. Gray suggested, for example, that men try to offer solutions to problems, while women just want to talk about them. The outcome is poor communication: men become frustrated that women are indifferent to their suggestions, while women complain that men refuse to listen to them.
- <sup>33</sup> Persisting stereotypes depict homosexual men as effeminate in appearance and/or mannerisms.
- <sup>34</sup> This favoritism carries over, in third-world countries and elsewhere, to a preference for sons over daughters. In some societies preference even manifests in female infanticide.
- <sup>35</sup> *Genesis* 1:27.
- <sup>36</sup> Monica Sjöö & Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 67.
- <sup>37</sup> The liturgical calendars of more modern religious traditions are still based on solar and lunar cycles. For example, the dates of Passover, Easter and Ramadan are all determined by the intersection of solar and lunar cycles.
- <sup>38</sup> Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess: Unearthing the Hidden Symbols of Western Civilization* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989).
- <sup>39</sup> Supporting the theory of an ancient matriarchal culture are the many pre-historic figurines depicting women with exaggerated sexual characteristics, suggesting fertility and childbirth. One of the most famous is the Seated Mother Goddess of Çatal Höyük, excavated in present-day Turkey and said to date from 6000 BCE.
- <sup>40</sup> In Greco-Roman culture *virgo* could be applied to an independent, i.e., single, adult woman. *Virgo intacta* referred specifically to a woman without sexual experience.
- <sup>41</sup> Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 10.
- <sup>42</sup> *Jeremiah* 7:18. The passage reads: “The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven.”
- <sup>43</sup> There is no evidence that *ruach ha-kodesh* was considered a personage in biblical Judaism; more likely it was regarded as a divine force or presence. Even in modern Christianity, theologians struggle to make the case that the Holy Spirit is a “person.” Words or phrases that were, or became, names, like Chokmah, are shown with initial capitalization, even though the Hebrew alphabet does not provide distinctive capitals.
- <sup>44</sup> Women also played significant roles in Christ’s ministry and in the early church, but church history downplayed their contributions.
- <sup>45</sup> *Hypostasis*, which originally meant “underlying reality,” was honed over a period of centuries to contrast with *Ousia* (οὐσία, “substance”). Its final meaning became “individual, or distinct, reality”—imperfectly translated as “person”—providing the trinitarian formula: “three Hypostases in one Ousia,” or “three Persons in one [substance of] God.”
- <sup>46</sup> Theophilus of Antioch is credited with coining the term “trinity.” See his *Epistle to Autolychum*, II, 15.
- <sup>47</sup> Christianity made no serious attempt to develop a theology of a unifying, transcendent Godhead, on the lines of the Hindu Brahman or the Kabbalistic Ain Soph. At best, the three persons of the Trinity were said to be united in their common substance. And notwithstanding the doctrine that the Son and Holy Spirit are consubstantial with God the Father, the latter two “proceed” from the Father, implying the Father’s precedence. Attempts by Peter Lom-

bard and Meister Eckhart, in the 12th and 13th centuries, to conceive of an overshadowing Godhead were declared heretical.

48 Source: <https://99namesofallah.name/>. (accessed Sept. 15, 2017).

49 *Proverbs* 8:22-30. Emphasis added.

50 *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:2.

51 Bernice H. Hill, "Sophia and Sustainability," 2006. Online: <http://www.cgjungpage.org/learn/articles/technology-and-environment/810-sophia-and-sustainability> (accessed Aug. 8, 2017).

52 See the discussion in Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1993), 47.

53 Caitlin Matthews, *Sophia, Goddess of Wisdom, Bride of God* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publ. House, 2001), 175. The notion of a "hidden treasure" comes from the extra-Qur'anic *hadith*: "I was a hidden treasure, then I desired to be known so I created a creation to which I made Myself known." See: <https://darvish.wordpress.com/2010/10/21/i-was-a-hidden-treasure/>.

54 Liturgy for the feast of the Dormition of Mary, August 15. Source: Sophia Foundation of North America. Translated from Old Church Slavonic by Natalia Bonetskaya. Use of this hymn for a Marian feast suggests that Sophia was sometimes confused, or conflated, with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

55 Quoted in Eugenia Gourvitch, *Vladimir Solovyov: the Man and the Prophet* (Sussex, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1992), 25.

56 Sergei Bulgakov *Sophia: the Wisdom of God*, (transl: P. Thompson *et al.*; Stockbridge, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1993), 50.

57 *Ibid.*, 65.

58 The various claims made about Sophia are discussed in detail in John F. Nash, "Sophia: the Gnostic Heritage," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Fall 2009), 29-39.

59 Church father Irenaeus described Mary as "the second Eve." *Against Heresies*, book III, ch. 22, §4, (transl: W. Rambaut; Christian Classics Library).

60 Some bishops at the Council of Ephesus suggested that Mary should instead be termed *Christotokos* ("Christ bearer"). When the council decreed that Christ was a single hypostasis, the dissenting view was swept up in the more general condemnation of Nestorianism.

61 *Qur'an* 3:42 (transl: T. Khalidi; New York: Viking Press, 2008). Mary is mentioned 34 times in the *Qur'an*, far exceeding the number of New Testament references. An entire *surah*, or chapter, is named for her, and significant references appear elsewhere.

62 *Ibid.* 3:45.

63 *Revelation* 12:1.

64 Quoted in Marianne Dorman, "Andrewes and the Caroline Divines: Teachings on the Blessed Virgin Mary," Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 2000.

65 The immaculate conception, not to be confused with the virgin birth, asserts that Mary was conceived free from the stain of original sin.

66 Pius XII, Encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam*, 1954.

67 John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, part I, 1:8, 1987.

68 Maria Skobtsova, *Veneration of the Mother of God* (transl: S. Janos; Paris: YMCA Press, 1992/2001), 109-126.

69 See for example Andrew Weeks, *Paracelsus: Speculative Theory and the Crisis of the Early Reformation* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1997), 83.

70 Note that the Creed does not say that the Holy Spirit *impregnated* Mary, though that has been the traditional interpretation in Christian doctrine. Rather it says *conceived by*, which has female connotations.

71 Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1908/1940), 191.

72 Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925/1953), 288.

73 Corinne Heline, *The Blessed Virgin Mary: Her Life and Mission* (Black Mountain, NC: New Age Press, 1971), 78, 106.

74 *Ibid.*, 109.

75 Source: International Marian Research Institute, Dayton, Ohio: <https://udayton.edu/imri/mary/archive.php?tags=Miracles%20and%20Apparitions>. (accessed Sept. 9, 2017). The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sets stringent standards of authenticity. For example, a factor that persuaded the Congregation that the phenomena at Zeitoun were authentic was the testimony of non-believers, including law-enforcement officers. Blurred images in window condensation or faded plaster walls are not even considered.



- <sup>76</sup> Ibid. 19: 30-33.  
<sup>77</sup> *Luke* 1:38.  
<sup>78</sup> The hymn contains language such as “Meek and lowly may be, Thou art all humility” and “Loving Jesus, gentle Lamb.”  
<sup>79</sup> John Paul II, prayer before the Roman Icon of Our Lady, “Salus Populi Romani,” December 8, 1990—the feast of the Immaculate Conception.  
<sup>80</sup> For a detailed discussion of esoteric claims regarding Mary, see John F. Nash, “Mary, Blessed Virgin and World Mother,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Winter 2010), 19-39. See also John F. Nash, “The World Mother: Teachings of Helena Roerich and Geoffrey Hodson,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Winter 2006), 35-46.  
<sup>81</sup> Hodson, *Light of the Sanctuary*, 414.  
<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 267. Emphasis in original.  
<sup>83</sup> Charles W. Leadbeater, *The World-Mother as Symbol and Fact* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1928), 4.  
<sup>84</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1992), 70. See also Hodson, *Light of the Sanctuary*, 355.  
<sup>85</sup> Geoffrey Hodson, *The Kingdom of the Gods* (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1952), 244.  
<sup>86</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis, 1951), 253. Parenthesis in original.  
<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 253-254. Capitalization in original.  
<sup>88</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 362-363.  
<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 363.  
<sup>90</sup> Corinne Heline, *The Mystery of the Christos* (Los Angeles: New Age Press, 1961), 213.  
<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 13.  
<sup>92</sup> Heline, *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, 19. Capitalization in original.  
<sup>93</sup> Helena I. Roerich, *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. I, June 18, 1935. Online: [http://www.agniyoga.org/ay\\_en/Letters-of-Helena-Roerich-I.php](http://www.agniyoga.org/ay_en/Letters-of-Helena-Roerich-I.php). (accessed July 30, 2017).  
<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Capitalization in original.  
<sup>95</sup> Bede Griffiths, *Marriage of East and West* (Tuscan, AZ: Medio, 1976), 192. Italicization in original.]  
<sup>96</sup> T. Subba Row, “The Virgin of the World,” *Esoteric Writings* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1895), 230ff.  
<sup>97</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society: Stanzas I & II*, (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1889), 4.
- <sup>98</sup> In contrast to later writers, like Leadbeater and Bailey, Subba Row gave Isis a higher status than Mary, insisting that the former could be identified with the Cosmic Virgin, whereas Mary was an incarnation of the Virgin of the World.  
<sup>99</sup> Helena I. Roerich, *Fiery World*, vol. 1 (New York: Agni Yoga Society, 1933), §663.  
<sup>100</sup> Roerich, *Letters of Helena Roerich*, vol. I, Jan. 9, 1935.  
<sup>101</sup> Anna B. Kingsford, *The Perfect Way*, Cambridge (UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1882/2011), 55-56. Capitalization in original.  
<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 56.  
<sup>103</sup> The author is indebted to a reviewer for these insights into Islamic views of the soul. Notions of the Guardian Angel, trivialized in modern usage, were taken seriously by theologians like Thomas Aquinas.  
<sup>104</sup> W. H. D. Rouse (ed.), *Great Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Mentor, 1956), 86-87.  
<sup>105</sup> *Genesis* 1:20.  
<sup>106</sup> *Zohar*, vol. 1, (transl.; D. C. Mott, Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004), 314 and accompanying footnotes.  
<sup>107</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (New York: Lucis, 1936), 278.  
<sup>108</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human & Solar* (New York: Lucis, 1951), 121.  
<sup>109</sup> Harriette A. & F. Homer Curtis, *The Key to the Universe: or a Spiritual Interpretation of Numbers and Symbols* (San Francisco: Curtiss Philosophic, Book Co., 1917), 86. The Curtisses also listed Vishnu as one of the female deities, though Hinduism traditionally depicts him as male.  
<sup>110</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. 1, 201-210.  
<sup>111</sup> Brief comments on these correlations were made in Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny*, 117.  
<sup>112</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. 1, 26-27.  
<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 411.  
<sup>114</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>115</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 402.  
<sup>117</sup> Subba Row “Women Adepts,” *Esoteric Writings*, 539-542.  
<sup>118</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis, 1925), 91.  
<sup>119</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and The Initiations*, 106.  
<sup>120</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 579.  
<sup>121</sup> “Relative” may be the key word. Gender presumably lies on a continuous spectrum, so that an entity can be viewed as masculine from one side but feminine from the other.

<sup>122</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. 1 (New York: Lucis, 1944), 366. See also her remarks concerning the etheric body on p. 566.

<sup>123</sup> Note that the “physical body” includes both the dense physical and the etheric bodies. Restriction of the physical body to masculine rays in no way implies that all dense physical bodies are, or should be, male!

<sup>124</sup> If all restrictions were lifted, as for “senior disciples and initiates,” the number of possible gender profiles would increase to 16.

<sup>125</sup> In the western esoteric tradition, *adepts* tends to be used more generally.

<sup>126</sup> Correspondingly, for disciples at lower levels, the soul’s vehicles are the (lower) mental, emotional, etheric, and dense physical bodies, collectively known as the lower quaternary.

<sup>127</sup> Bailey, *Initiation, Human & Solar*, 49.

<sup>128</sup> Alice Bailey refers to the fourth initiation as the “liberating initiation.” *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 121.

<sup>129</sup> Hartmann, *With the Adepts*, 89.

<sup>130</sup> Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Science of the Sacraments* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 1920/2000), 291, 349-350. It should be noted that women priests now celebrate the Eucharist in the Anglican Communion and in the major branches of Lutheranism.

<sup>131</sup> Damodar K. Mavalankar, “Can Females become Adepts,” *The Theosophist* (vol. V, Oct. 1883), 23.

<sup>132</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, “A Few Queries,” *Lucifer* (vol. 4, no. 22, June 1889), 348. An accompanying comment, possibly by someone else with Blavatsky’s approval, states: “[I]t would testify of a, least said, curious partiality on the part of the ‘All-love’ and ‘All-wisdom’ to have denied woman, that half of humanity which is said to be the counter-type of even that Wisdom—*Love* being the masculine, *Wisdom* the feminine, principle in Deity—the means and possibilities to claim and attain the same high wisdom which is attainable for men.” Capitalization and italicization in original.

<sup>133</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. IV (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989), 262. Capitalization of “woman-adept” removed.

<sup>134</sup> We should note that most of the portraits date from a period when beards were fashionable. If the masters’ desire was to blend in with the general population, growth of facial hair was understandable.

<sup>135</sup> We are reminded of the charge to the Brothers of the Rose Cross to “follow the custom of the country” and “not wear distinctive clothing.” *Fama Fraternitatis*, (transl.: Thomas Vaughn), 1610/1652.

<sup>136</sup> Dion Fortune *The Esoteric Orders and Their Work* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1928/1978), 22.

<sup>137</sup> Henry S. Olcott, “Becoming a Theosophist,” *The Theosophist* (March & May, 1880). Olcott did not specify what level of initiation the women had attained.

<sup>138</sup> Leadbeater, *The Masters and the Path*, 288.

<sup>139</sup> Heline, *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, 69

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Italicization in original.

<sup>141</sup> Judith von Halle, *And if He had not Been Raised: The Stations of Christ’s path to Spirit Man* (Forest Row, UK: Temple Lodge, 2007), 133-134. Parenthesis in original. See an interview with von Halle at: <http://southerncrossreview.org/112/jvh-interview.html>. (accessed Sept. 6, 2017).

<sup>142</sup> In a notorious case of character assassination, Pope Gregory I and subsequent generations of western church leaders conflated Mary Magdalene with the “woman from the city” (*Luke* 7:37)—a prostitute. The Eastern Orthodox Churches never accepted that conflation, and the Church of Rome finally rejected it in 1969. By contrast, the early church fathers gave Mary Magdalene the accolade “Apostle to the Apostles” based on *John* 20:17-18 and *Mark* 16:9-11. Theosophist and Hermeticist Anna Kingsford (1846–1888) claimed that Mary Magdalene appeared to her and chose Mary as her confirmation name when she became a Roman Catholic.

<sup>143</sup> Jacobus de Voragine, “The Life of St Mary Magdalene,” *The Golden Legend*, vol. IV, (transl.; W. Caxton; c.1275/1460). Online: <http://sourcebooks.web.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume4.asp#MaryMagdalene>. (accessed Sept. 6, 2017).

<sup>144</sup> Tsultrim Allione, *Women of Wisdom* (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 2000).

<sup>145</sup> See for example: Lama Surya Das, *Awakening the Buddha Within: Eight Steps to Enlightenment* (West Chester, PA: Broadway, 1998), 245-247.

<sup>146</sup> Subba Row, “Women Adepts,” *Esoteric Writings*, 568.

<sup>147</sup> We would have preferred “feminine rather than masculine,” but we recognize the limited vocabulary available in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>148</sup> Subba Row, "Women Adepts," *Esoteric Writings*, 568.

<sup>149</sup> Hodson, *Light of the Sanctuary*, 504.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 535.

<sup>151</sup> Devic adepts may, like Mary, have made the transition from the human kingdom to the deva evolution during Earth's present planetary cycle. Alternatively, they may have experienced the human condition elsewhere or in another cycle.



## Pioneers of a New Age

### Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931)

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Kahlil Gibran in 1897<sup>1</sup>

The poet, artist, philosophical essayist and novelist, Gibran Kahlil Gibran was a key-figure in the Romantic Movement that transformed 20<sup>th</sup> century Arabic Literature. But Gibran is probably best known for *The Prophet*, a book of prose poems that achieved cult status in the 1930's and again in the 1960's in the United States. While critics have dismissed him as a "populist poet," he is still one of the world's best-selling prose poets and the author of nearly 19 books. Although Gibran is usually classified as an iconoclastic Christian mystic, his work is a blend of Christianity, Islam, Sufism and Theosophy.

Jubran Kahlil Jubran was born in the village of Bsharri, at the edge of the stunning *Wadi Qadisha* or Sacred Valley on the slopes of Mt. Lebanon, to a humble Maronite<sup>2</sup> family. Despite the family's poverty and struggles with a temperamental father, Gibran's youth was filled with the beauty of his surroundings in which the snow capped mountains, the cliffs, deep gorges, crystalline rivers, and the "Cedars of God formed the heart of his youthful world."<sup>3</sup> The young Jubran was a lonely and contemplative child who loved to draw. He had a vivid imagination, an inquiring mind and a strong mystical bent that lead him to ascribe

spiritual significance to all his life experiences.<sup>4</sup> These qualities, along with a wealth of inner resources, nourished and sustained him through difficult times and served as the source of his many creative endeavors.

However, the refuge of Bsharri and his own imagination were not enough. In 1881, Jubran's father, a temperamental man and hard-drinking gambler, was sent to prison for a tax irregularity and his property was confiscated. This was "the final blow that led to the family's collapse."<sup>5</sup> Jubran's mother, Kamileh, the daughter of a Maronite priest, who refused to acquiesce to the family's precarious state, left her husband in 1895, and sailed with Jubran and his three siblings to the tenements of South Boston as part of the Great Migration from the Middle East.

Once there, Jubran, now 11, began his formal education and was introduced to the visual and performing arts by the social workers at the nearby Denison House. But less than 3 years later, in 1898, Jubran or Gibran (the American spelling given to him in Boston), returned to Lebanon to study French, "cultivate his native language and become better acquainted with Arabian erudition."<sup>6</sup> Gibran not only longed

for the sanctuary of his native land, he also sought to find a “utopian state of existence” and “a higher world of metaphysical truth”<sup>7</sup> that would serve as the basis for his creative

expressions. The great beauty of the country, its ancient history and its many sacred places of peace and power seemed to provide the perfect environment.



Gibran's hometown of Bsharri  
(Author's photo)

Gibran's plans were thwarted when, after a fifteen-month stay in Lebanon, he was forced to return to Boston to visit one of his sisters who was gravely ill. She died before his arrival. His half-brother and mother died shortly thereafter. Gibran and his remaining sister Mariana, were heartbroken by these many losses, and fought to keep their faith in life.<sup>8</sup>

Despite having only a few friends and being cut off from relatives in Lebanon, Gibran decided to stay in Boston with his sister. It was during this phase that his nascent beliefs about man's immortality and death began to take shape. Life and death, as Gibran ultimately conceived of them, were not opposites, but “a great chain that allows man to persist in his ascent toward self-knowledge and God realization.”<sup>9</sup> These thoughts culminated in what is thought to be one of the finest poems on the theme of *Death*, ever written. Part of the poem is excerpted here:

You would know the secret of death.  
But how shall you find it unless you seek it  
in the heart of life?  
The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind  
unto the day cannot unveil the mystery of  
light.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of  
death, open your heart wide unto the body  
of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river  
and the sea are one.

For what is it to die but to stand naked in  
the wind and to melt into the sun?

And what is it to cease breathing, but to  
free the breath from its restless tides, that it  
may rise and expand and seek God unen-  
cumbered?<sup>10</sup>

It was also through these many aforementioned losses that Gibran would eventually come to understand the inevitability and spiritual significance of pain. Just as the Nichiren Buddhist teachings conceive of pain as a “peaceful practice,” Gibran tells us to “watch with serenity the winter of your grief.” “Pain,” as he wrote in *The Prophet*, “is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.”<sup>11</sup> As his words in *Sand and Foam* reveal: “We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them.” They are the “bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self.”<sup>12</sup> As one insightful interpreter of Gibran explains, “It is only when pain is misunderstood and unheeded that it is truly pain-

ful.”<sup>13</sup> For if God is our higher or greater Self, “anything that gives us pain tells us that our self is not broad enough to contain the God that we are.”<sup>14</sup>

Gibran also learned to take life-long solace in his belief in reincarnation—ideas he garnered from Vedic doctrine and certain Islamic philosophers who had been influenced by Neo-Platonic thought. He believed, for example, that death allowed for a rebirth to a higher state, that the bonds of love had the effect of bringing loving souls together, while hate and evil people were bound to others of the same mien. But “those souls that neither love nor hate remain self-contained as regards one another, and meet but once in the pattern of the ages.”<sup>15</sup>

These beliefs, along with those on past lives, which are spread throughout his works, are conveyed in the following passage from *The Prophet*:

This day has ended...  
Know, therefore, from the greater silence  
I shall return. Forget not that  
I shall come back to you.  
Dust and foam from another body.  
A little while, and my longing shall gather  
A little while, a moment of rest upon the  
wind, and another woman shall bear me.<sup>16</sup>

During this period, with the support of his sister, who offered to be the breadwinner for the family, Gibran threw himself into his work. He also found several wealthy patrons. It was at Denison House, where years before, he met Fred Holland Day, an eccentric Bostonian photographer and philanthropist, who persuaded him that he had a singular artistic vocation. Day was financially generous to the young boy and helped him mount his first exhibit in 1904. The exhibit was a success, and there were buyers for Gibran work, but before anything was formally sold, a fire in Day’s studio destroyed the contents of the studio, including 24 years of Day’s work and Gibran’s entire portfolio.

The young Gibran also developed a close and important relationship with Mary Haskell, a respected headmistress and onetime financier that lasted for the rest of his life. Haskell, who

believed that money was a responsibility and not a possession, and that it needed to be put to right use, spent large sums of money to support Gibran. She also served as his literary collaborator and the editor of all his English works. At one point, she and Gibran organized a “world soul” course of literature for her prestigious girl’s school in Boston. The course included selections and readings given by both Haskell and Gibran from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the three great Athenian tragedians: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, as well as the Qur’an, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and others.

Haskell is credited with preserving Gibran’s correspondence, his sketches and other memorabilia. And it was she who made it possible for him to undertake artistic training in Paris, where he studied for a time with Auguste Rodin.

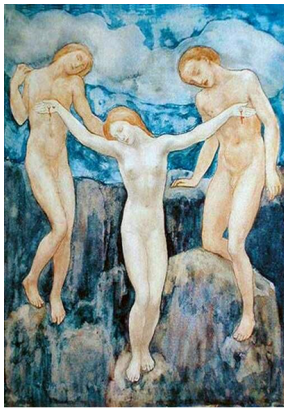
In Paris, from 1908 to 1910, Gibran was exposed to the aesthetic revolution then taking place. However, cubist and fauvist ideas did not resonate with him. He was drawn instead to the symbolist painters, and to an interior vision based on religious mysticism, myth, the sensuous and the occult. He eventually left off formal training to paint on his own.

It was also during this time that Gibran wrote a book entitled *Al-Arawah-Mutamarida* or *Spirits Rebellious*, which condemned the injustice of the ruling class in Lebanese society and its religious ministers who colluded with the State. The work was filled with a new social philosophy based on the principles of freedom, social justice and spiritual independence. The four narratives in the book questioned religious authority, saying that: “True light is that which radiates from within,”<sup>17</sup> and has nothing to do with church hierarchy or a priest’s authority. True religion, says Gibran, teaches joyousness and liberation. It gives men and women the wings of spirit “to soar aloft into the spacious firmament of love and freedom.”<sup>18</sup> Other narratives examined such themes as the problem of materialism, the need for brotherhood and equality among all men, and “the plight of women in the Middle East, and its bigoted, oppressive and patriarchal system.”<sup>19</sup>



*Spirits Rebellious*, with its new ideas and subversive characters caused such a stir that it was purportedly burned in the market places in Lebanon. Gibran was branded a heretic in much of the Arab world, where he was seen as a danger to morality, stability and peace. There was a failed assassination plot on his life in which he was wounded. Finally, Gibran was excommunicated from the Maronite Catholic church and exiled from his beloved Lebanon.

Later, in 1931, at the time of his death at the age of 48, the order was rescinded and Gibran's body and his works were returned to Lebanon. He was heralded as a genius and patriot and given a highly elaborate funeral. But to this day the Catholic Church advises against Gibran's work, lest one be influenced by his heretical revisioning of Christianity, his "New Age" and sexually permissive thought, or his quasi-erotic art.



*Serene Crucifixion*

We must accept with serenity the winters of our grief.



*The Archer*

The child as the arrow, the parents as the bow, and God as the archer.



*The Summit*

Love, as it surrounds every being and extends to embrace those who dwell in the deepest valley.

Gibran was an unconventional, free thinking Catholic, but he had immense admiration for Jesus Christ and his philosophy of life.<sup>20</sup> The majority of heroes in his written works, such as those in *Khalil the Heretic* and *John the Madman*, were firm believers in the teachings of Jesus.<sup>21</sup> Another of his works, *Jesus the Son of Man*, which was written after a profound mystical vision, rewrites the history of Jesus Christ; a history, according to his cousin and biographer, that would "complement the one-sidedness that was prevalent among scholar theologians on the nature of Christ."<sup>22</sup> The book describes the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of his contemporaries. The church, Gibran thought, placed undue emphasis on Christ's divine nature. Therefore, Gibran's intention was to portray Christ's human nature and immanence. As Gibran saw it, Christ never intended to establish a hierarchical religious organization with rules and codes, nor did he believe that Jesus Christ ever assigned a physi-

cal place or a heaven where God the Father was present.<sup>23</sup>

In his poem "The Crucified" from *Secret of the Heart*, Gibran says:

Jesus came not from the heart of the circle of Light to destroy the homes and build upon their ruins the convents and monasteries. He did not persuade the strong man to become a monk or a priest, but He came to send forth upon this earth a new spirit, with power to crumble the foundation of any monarchy built upon human bones and skulls.... Jesus was not sent here to teach the people to build magnificent churches and temples amidst the cold wretched huts and dismal hovels.... He came to make the human heart a temple, and the soul an altar, and the mind a priest.<sup>24</sup>

Returning to Boston in 1911, but still longing for his homeland, Gibran began a series of letters to *Mirat al-Gharb* (Mirror of the West), a

publication in New York that catered to Arab-Americans, Lebanese and Syrians, in which he encouraged his compatriots to throw off the yoke of Ottoman rule using non-violent means. He also spoke out about the divisions in Lebanon and Syria between the Druze, the Orthodox Christians and the Maronites, while insisting that the war then taking place (between Turkey and Italy) was not a conflict between Christians and Muslims.<sup>25</sup>

Although Gibran was brought up as a Maronite Christian, he was deeply influenced by both Bahá'í and Islamic thought. His appreciation for the Bahá'í can be seen in the parallels between passages in *The Prophet* and the writings of Abdu'l-Baha, who Gibran commemorated in a portrait.

Sufism, the esoteric dimension of Islam, played an especially important role in Gibran's writings, which are replete with Sufi concepts, symbols and images. Sufism, Gibran thought, was an antidote to Islamic extremism. This affinity for Sufism is clearly demonstrated in *al-'Awassif* (The Tempest), his book of essays on Ibn al-Farid, al Ghazali and Ibn Sina or Avicenna, three of the greatest Sufi philosophical and literary figures.<sup>26</sup>

Gibran's deep affinity with Sufism stemmed from the fact that it has much in common with other mystical and spiritual traditions and his own un-dogmatic and Universalist approach toward religion. These ideas are reflected in the following passage from *Iram Dhat al-'Imad* or City of the Lofty Pillars, a lost city or country mentioned in the Qur'an:

There is no God but Allah... there is nothing but Allah. You may speak these words and remain a Christian, for a God who is good knows no segregation between words and names, and were a God to deny His blessings to those who pursue a different path of eternity, then there is no human who should offer worship.<sup>27</sup>

Gibran's rebellion against religious tyranny, injustice, and division in the Middle East won him much admiration among artists and writers in the émigré community. Thus he was compelled to move to New York, so that he could join his close friends, like Ameen Rihani, a

Mason, and the so-called father of Arab American Literature, to be a part of an emerging Arab-American journalism.

While in New York, Gibran interacted with some of the most notable figures of the time: figures such as William Butler Yeats, Carl Gustav Jung and Rabindranath Tagore. He also became friends with Claude Bragdon, an architect, artist and Theosophist, who was the first person to publish the English version of Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*, a book he helped to translate. Bragdon introduced Gibran to the teachings of his friend, P.D. Ouspensky, whose ideas on art, beauty and spiritual matters were similar to his own. Ouspensky believed that art in the search of beauty was a path to the new 4<sup>th</sup> dimension, and to cosmic consciousness. Likewise, Gibran maintained that: "Art is a step from nature toward the Infinite"<sup>28</sup> and that "Beauty is eternity gazing at itself in a mirror." For Ouspensky, art and beauty must contribute to the perfection of humanity. For Gibran, it was not possible, as he writes in his poem *On Beauty*, to find perfection and beauty unless "beauty herself becomes the way and the guide."<sup>29</sup>

In one of Mary Haskell's recorded conversations, Bragdon suggests that Ouspensky's work appealed to Gibran because "it represented a bridge between Western rationalism and Eastern mysticism."<sup>30</sup> So deeply impressed was Gibran that he recommended Ouspensky's work, to the readership of the Arab world.

William Blake, Emanuel Swedenborg, Friedrich Nietzsche and Helena Blavatsky also helped to refine Gibran's thinking. Other influences included the New England Transcendentalists, such as Emerson, Whitman and the other American literary masters who drew their inspiration from Sufism. Buddhist thought also made an impression on Gibran, who appreciated it for its simple yet profound teachings on how to live life.

In New York Gibran was known to have frequented the salon of the arts patron, Alma Reed. The apartment, dubbed "the Ashram," was a meeting place for philosophers, poets and artists like Bragdon and Emil Bistram,<sup>31</sup> and others who believed in Universal Brother-

hood and societal revolution by peaceful means.

Gibran, the poet, placed an emphasis on inspiration as opposed to intellectual knowledge. His poetry and written work were intended to convey the fundamental truths about life in clear and simply terms. "The teacher," he held, "who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind."<sup>32</sup>

"The poet and artist," he often claimed, "expressed what was latent in the collective consciousness of the human race."<sup>33</sup> His symbolist paintings, which used mythological and classical figures, depict personal, as well as universal themes—themes ranging from Love and Self Offering, Despair, Death, the Awakening of Conscience, the Growth of the Spirit, the Struggle between Two Worlds, the Triad and Transfiguration. A number of the dreamlike figures in his paintings are floating in midair, free of the affiliations of the physical plane. The figures in his visionary paintings are often nude to depict purity, or to show the interconnections between man, nature and the spirit.

Significantly, much of Gibran's artwork and poetry were developed in tandem and serve to complement one another in the quest for truth and the spiritual aspiration for the meaning of existence. Although Gibran never received critical acclaim for his work, it is appreciated widely for its sincerity and ethereal beauty. As such, Gibran's art serves as an antidote to cynicism and the coarse materialism of the world.

Contributed by Donna M. Brown  
Washington, D.C.

<sup>1</sup> Photograph by Fred Holland Day. Royal Photographic Society / National Media Museum / Science & Society Picture Library.

<sup>2</sup> The Maronites are an Eastern Rite Catholic Church, named after St. Maroun, a 4<sup>th</sup> century hermit. They profess the Apostolic Faith, celebrate the same sacraments and are united with the Roman Catholic Pope, but they maintain their own distinct spirituality, theological liturgy and cannon law.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Gibran & Khalil, G. Gibran, *Khalil Gibran: Beyond Borders* (Northampton, MA: Interlink Publishing Group, 2017) 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph P. Ghougassian, ed., *Kahlil Gibran: Wings of Thought* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1973), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Nadeem N. Naimy, "The Mind and Thought of Khalil Gibran," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 5, 1974, 57.

<sup>8</sup> Suheil Bushrui and Joseph Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet* (Oxford: One World Publications, 1998), 62-63.

<sup>9</sup> Nadeem N. Naimy, "The Mind and Thought of Khalil Gibran," 64.

<sup>10</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (1923, reprint; New York: Alfred A. Knoff, Inc. 1969), 80-81.

<sup>11</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, 52.

<sup>12</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam* (1926, reprint; New York: Alfred A. Knoff, Inc. 1969), 73.

<sup>13</sup> Nadeem N. Naimy, "The Mind and Thought of Khalil Gibran," 65.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph P. Ghougassian, ed., *Kahlil Gibran: Wings of Thought*, 220.

<sup>16</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, 94-95.

<sup>17</sup> *Khalil Gibran: Collected Works* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2007), 685.

<sup>18</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *The Treasured Writings of Kahlil Gibran* (Brunswick, VIV: Castle Books, 2013), 327.

<sup>19</sup> Suheil Bushrui and Joseph Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *A Third Treasury of Kahlil Gibran* (Ontario: Citadel Press, 1979), 402.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>24</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *The Treasured Writings of Kahlil Gibran*, 848.

<sup>25</sup> Suheil Bushrui and Joseph Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>28</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam*, 83.

<sup>29</sup> Kahlil Gibran, "On Beauty," *The Prophet*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Suheil Bushrui and Joseph Jenkins, *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*, 161.

<sup>31</sup> See for example: "Transcendental Abstractionist: Emil Bisttram," *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Volume 10, No. 3, Fall 2014. <http://www.esotericquarterly.com/issues/EQ10/EQ1003/EQ100314-End.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Robin Waterfield, *Prophet, The Life and Times of Khalil Gibran*, 228.

## Book Review

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***Integral Meditation: The Seven Ways to Self-Realisation*, by Kenneth Sørensen**, first edition, Kentaur Publishing, 2017. Paperback, 259 pages. List price US \$25.00. Available at: Amazon.com. ISBN-10: 8792252192.

To the best of my knowledge, there are few published self-inquiry studies in the field of transpersonal psychology. This is paradoxical, but quite understandable, paradoxical because authors in this field are trained in exploring and sharing with peers their own experience of growth and research with transpersonal methods. Understandable because communicating one's own journey can be overwhelming. Apart from the barriers that language presents, an interpretative approach presupposes two challenges. First, that one is willing to face the possibility of being misunderstood, and second, that which one is publishing effectively serves the purpose of moving readers toward transformative practices. In *Integral Meditation: The Seven Ways to Self-Realisation*, Kenneth Sørensen offers a work that can open up a new method for inquiry that succeeds over both challenges.

Sørensen sets out to write “an introduction to energy psychology, which looks at life and existence in terms of different energies.” (Preface, p. 15) His book accomplishes this goal. It describes the theory of energy psychology, its main ideas, origins and the methods used. Additionally, it has the great merit of sharing with the reader the author's own account of the journey, the challenges encountered, the discoveries made, and the twists and turns on the path.

*Integral Meditation* is a dedicated study of the application of transpersonal psychology as a method for spiritual growth. In particular, the author examines Assagioli's essays on human typology and elaborates on the Psychosynthesis model of the seven psychological functions or “functions of consciousness.” In this regard, it is important to note that the author modifies Assagioli's model slightly. The sev-

en functions redefined are: will, feeling, thought, imagination, logic, passion and action.

Sørensen also integrates other approaches, especially the Seven Rays Psychology described by Djwhal Khul /Alice A. Bailey, Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and Ken Wilber's Integral Theory. The book explores the Seven Rays (or “Ways of Life”) as seven levels of consciousness and seven psychological types:

- 1) The Dynamic River of Life;
- 2) The Sensitive River of Life;
- 3) The Intelligent River of Life;
- 4) The Creative River of Life;
- 5) The Scientific River of Life;
- 6) The Idealizing River of Life; and
- 7) The Manifesting River of Life.

Each of these Ways of Life represents an energy current streaming forth from the Universal Source and coloring our psychological life. However, “the center of pure consciousness can never be the whole story of our identity. If that were the case we would all be the same... Consciousness *manifests* in many ways” (p. 29) and each of these are detailed by Sørensen's psychological study.

These many ways are aligned in the book to several meditation methods, which are sequentially introduced and discussed by Sørensen, and complemented by an extended appendix with practical meditation exercises. Arguably, some readers might feel that the discussion is hindered by the lack of references and index of terms, which could have provided an important additional resource. On the other hand, the charts and visuals are quite practical and will help the reader better understand the concepts the author presents.

In each chapter, self or qualitative inquiry is woven into the discussion of each of the psychological types. This type of inquiry, one of the most important contributions of this book, assumes that the writer's account of personal experiences and epiphanies is of methodolog-

ical value. The experiencer can't be divorced from the experience, the observed and the observer constitute one unit of consciousness.

Because of the author's personal approach, the book will be appeal to a range of readers. Those who are completely new to the Seven Rays psychology will find a straightforward description of each of these psychological types and gain familiarity with a variety of available meditation methods. Others may be motivated to explore the ray types in depth through further esoteric training.

Those who are more experienced will be stimulated by the way Sørensen integrates Assagioli, Aurobindo and Wilber with esoteric

teachings, especially those of Djwhal Khul/Bailey's. They will be drawn to assess Sørensen's discussion about the model of psychological functions. Practitioners in the field will appreciate the value of the exercises compiled in the appendix, and possibly try them in their own practice or training workshops. I suggest that these two groups of readers will find a good companion in Sørensen's first book, *The Soul of Psychosynthesis: The Seven Core Concepts*, which I reviewed for the 2017 Summer issue of *The Esoteric Quarterly*.

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