

Fall 2011, Volume 7, Number 3



# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

*A publication of the School for Esoteric Studies*

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



**The School for Esoteric Studies**

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## *The Esoteric Quarterly*

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# *The Esoteric Quarterly*

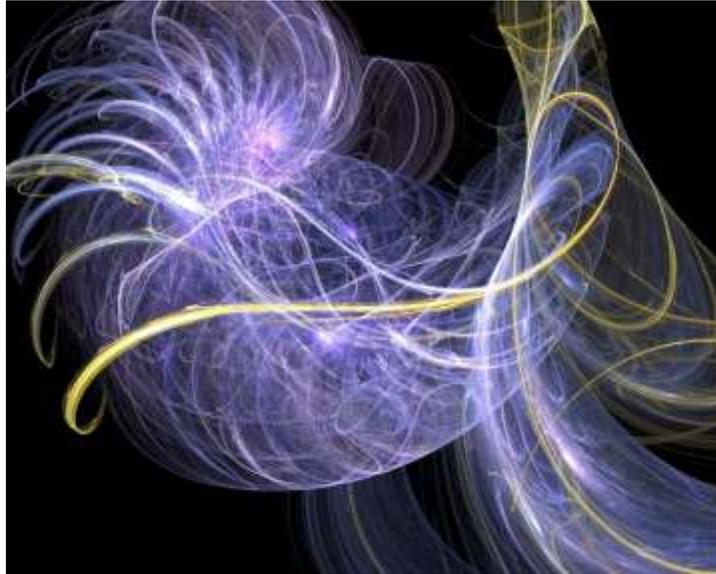
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The mission of the *Esoteric Quarterly* is to provide a forum for the exploration of esoteric philosophy and its applications. Full-length articles and student papers are solicited pertaining to both eastern and western esoteric

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@esotericstudies.net](mailto:editor@esotericstudies.net).



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**T**he Ageless Wisdom concepts come to us across a span of time and through the medium of human interpreters who reflect the times in which they lived. In the meantime, social awareness has evolved, and many students see the need for these concepts to be reinterpreted vis-à-vis a world that has become more inclusive and more integrated.

The Tibetan has said, “It is for you to ascertain the truth [in his books] by right practice and by the exercise of the intuition.” In order to have a dialogue about those concepts that need to be placed in the modern context, the School for Esoteric Studies has implemented a Discussion Forum on its website. This Forum is intended to support each of us in our verification of the truth as it relates to our spiritual growth and service, while at the same time encouraging a tolerance of different perspectives.

Please join us in this endeavor by commenting on the topics presented, suggesting new topics and submitting relevant articles. The Discussion Forum can be accessed at: <http://esotericstudies.net/forum/>

*School for Esoteric Studies*

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## Editorial

# Parts of a Whole: Mysticism, Esotericism and Science

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For centuries there has been a tense relationship between mysticism, esotericism and science. Mysticism has invited suspicion as far back as ancient Greece. Similar attitudes continue today. The mystic tends to be characterized as astral, as lacking mental rigor and as focusing unduly on the inner realms without the necessary balance of attention to the outer world. Esotericism, on the other hand, is often associated with secreted knowledge, irrationality and speculative metaphysics. The frictions between science and religion also have a long and storied history. Current critiques center on mechanistic or atomistic science and its denial of subjective experience and the subtle energies and forces at play in the world. Having drawn rigid boundaries that categorically exclude metaphysical and religious concepts, science has seemed hard set on eliminating the idea of a conscious Creative Power.

Fortunately, more enlightened views have begun to prevail. There are mounting attempts to reconcile and align the various facets of spirituality with one another and with science. Rather than treating each as a flawed and conflicting discipline, mysticism, esotericism and science are being viewed as parts of a whole. The articles in this issue reflect and contribute to that unifying or holistic trend. Each embodies an integral approach that illuminates differences to give us an understanding of each tradition or discipline, while allowing us to clarify the connections and relations between disciplines and traditions. It is hoped that the offerings in this issue encourage a more completed point of view and an understanding of a still greater truth.

Our first article, from John Nash, surveys the origins and development of Christian Mysticism in the contemplative traditions of

East and West. He examines the meaning of mysticism along with diverse forms of prayer and meditation from biblical times to the present. The article offers a description of mysticism as a “path of the heart” and a “spirituality of love.” It details the historical progression of Christian mysticism, its strengths and weakness, as well as its uncertain relationship with the institutional church. The article goes on to provide a rich account of various mystical practices, such as: *hesychastic*, *katapathic* and *apopathic* prayer leading to theosis and/or the ecstatic or unitive state. It concludes with a comparison of the “heart centered” and “head centered” approaches that reveals the nexus between Christian contemplative practices and the esoteric or occult path.

Our next offering, by Zachary Lansdowne, is part of a continuing series of articles comparing Alice Bailey’s Techniques of Integration for the Seven Rays with the sacred texts from various religious traditions. This article compares the renowned *Bhagavad Gita*—the so called “jewel of India’s spiritual wisdom”—with Bailey’s Technique of Integration for the First Ray. Lansdowne opens the article with a concise summary of the Gita story, including a discussion of its three-fold structure. His primary focus, however, is the initial section on karma yoga, which he links to the First Ray or “active” psychological type. The five phases of Bailey’s Integration Technique for the First Ray are detailed and then analyzed alongside passages from the first five chapters of the Gita to show that both are concerned with karma yoga and that both are symbolic depictions or archetypal patterns of psychological or spiritual integration.

The final article in this issue is the last in a four-part series by Christopher Holmes on the *Origins and Nature of Consciousness*. In

this paper, Holmes correlates and synthesizes the fundamentals of Blavatsky's metaphysics with a number of emerging, but dominant ideas in science. The article provides a cogent elucidation of Blavatsky's teachings on the emergence of the Kosmos from the zero point singularity (white laya center) at the dawn of creation to its dissolution (through the black point) into the "Eternal Parent Space," along with a useful perspective on the illusions of gravity, location and space. While Holmes seems to equate ancient spiritual axioms with scientific theories on black holes, zero point foundations, string theory and spin properties, his primary focus is on holographic physics and its connection to the human heart, consciousness, the Soul and the Monad.

In addition to the featured articles in this issue, we include a student paper on the Seven Ray Manifestations of the Will. This paper presents an intriguing hypothesis on the Rays in their Will aspect, with a special focus on the First Ray, its constellations, and the process of synthesis underlying the evolutionary process. Also included is a short paper—*Behind the Mask*—by Donald Craig.

The book review in this issue looks at an alternative interpretation of Genesis based on the original Hebrew number-code in which the Bible was written. The concepts presented in *The Cipher of Genesis* are certain to be of interest to those who have attempted to understand something of the occult truths underlying this allegorical story.

This issue of the Quarterly also features two sacred artforms, each with the power to soften and awaken the heart. Our first offering is a potently evocative mandala—*Cosmic Ocean*—by Cynthia Rose Young. Rose Young's transcendent paintings manifest a dual approach: her attention to light and the ordering of her works around a radiant core or center. We think our readers will agree that the immense calm and beauty of her work, which can kindle the sparks of consciousness within, fulfills the true purpose of art. Additional information on the artist and her work, can found at: <http://www.sacredpaintings.com/>.

Our second offering is a selection of heart opening poems from *Gifts with No Giver: A Love Affair with Truth*, by Nirmala, poet and teacher in the Advaita tradition. To share in the liberated vision expressed in Nirmala's non-dualist poems visit: <http://endless-satsang.com/>.

### **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 or the School for Esoteric Studies 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."

## Poems of the Quarter

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**A selection of poems from:  
Gifts with No Giver  
by Nirmala**

<http://endless-satsang.com/spiritual-poetry.htm>

Take my hand  
feel the vital grip  
that love lends to this flesh  
listen to my voice  
hear the catch in my throat  
of awe that can't be expressed  
gaze into my eyes  
see tears welling up  
as I recognize my long lost self in your smile  
rest in my arms  
find refuge in my embrace  
until you know you are forever safe  
join me now here  
where we have never parted

\*

My longing was never deep enough  
to touch this empty well  
my effort was never great enough  
to move this unmovable mountain  
my understanding was never broad enough  
to contain this silent truth  
my dreaming was never real enough  
to shape this formless presence  
nothing is always enough  
when nothing is needed

\*

All I have ever wanted is wanting  
all I have ever had is having  
all I am is all there is  
and wanting and having are always here  
in equal measure  
all I have ever loved is love  
all I have ever loved is loving  
all I am is love  
and loving is always here  
in infinite measure



***Cosmic Ocean***  
by Cynthia Rose Young  
[www.sacredpaintings.com](http://www.sacredpaintings.com)

## Quotes of the Quarter

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And what is prayer, if not the sole stable point—a point of peace and light—in this dream universe, and the straight gate leading to all that the world and life have sought in vain? In the life of man, these four certitudes are all; the present moment, death, the encounter with God, eternity. Death is an exit..., the meeting with God is like an opening towards a flashing and immutable infinitude, eternity is a fullness of beginning in pure light; and the present moment is, in our duration, an almost unseizable ‘place’ where we are already eternal—a drop of eternity amid the ceaseless shiftings of forms and melodies. Prayer gives to the terrestrial instant its full weight of the eternal and its divine value; it is the sacred ship bearing its load, through life and death, towards the further shore, towards the silence of light—but at bottom it is not prayer which traverses time as it repeats itself, it is time which, so to speak, halts before this oneness of prayer which belongs already to heaven.

Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts* (Paris: Cathiers dy Sud, 1953.)

The paradox of Deity, in so far as it is apprehended by human intuition and love, appears to us as a vast, all-encompassing, all-penetrating Reality, which is both transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic, changeless yet changeful, ineffable yet personal. . . . From this dual manifestation of God, which demands for its full apprehension a dual movement on the part of man, one line of spiritual life selects the utterly transcendent aspect—pure Being—as the only Reality, the objective towards which it is destined to return. From the rich possibilities of human nature it again selects one aspect—its Being—as real. For it, the true Self is as unconditioned as the Absolute; it does not struggle for expression, it has no qualities, it merely is. . . . Refusing all else it pours itself out in a single state, of which the intensity is progressively enhanced by con-

centration, but the cutting off of all contacts with the “unreal” world of things. . . . Those who choose this road to transcendence go up alone to meet God on the mountain.

[In] the second path toward the transcendent sphere . . . we find inclusiveness rather than subtraction: a growing intuitive conviction that the One shall justify rather than exclude the many, that the life of spirit shall involve the whole man in all his activities and correspondences. The mounting soul carries the whole world with it; the cosmic crossbearer is its true type. It does not abandon, it remakes: declaring that the “glory of the lighted mind” once he has attained to it, will flood the totality of man’s nature, lighting up the World of Becoming, and exhibiting not merely the unknowable character of “the Origin of all that is,” but the knowable and immediate presence of that Immanent Spirit in Whom “we live and move and have our being.”

Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way* (Atlanta GA: Ariel Press, 1913/1992), pp. 24-25, 35-36.)

In one aspect, the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a personal book. It is for each man; and it is in that way we have so far considered it. Some have called it obscure, and others a book which deals solely with the great principles of nature; with only great questions of cosmogony; with difficult and bewildering questions relating to the first cause; and still others think it is contradictory and vague. But this first scene in the great colloquy is plain. It has the din of arms, the movement of battalions and the disposition of forces with their generals. No one need feel any hesitation now, for we are face to face with ourselves. The weak man, or he who does not care for truth no matter where it leads, had better shut the book now. Unless he can go on reading the poem with the fixed intention of applying it to himself, it will do him no good whatever. He may say, how-

ever, that he will read it for what it may seem to contain, but if he reads to the end of time and does not fairly regard this first lecture, his knowledge gained further on will be no knowledge. It is indeed the book of the great mystery; but that problem was never solved for anyone; it must be settled and solved by each one for himself.

William Q. Judge, *Essays on the Gita*,  
(Pasadena, CA: The Theosophical University  
Press, 1969.)

In addition to explaining why quantum physicists find so many examples of interconnectedness when they plumb the depths of matter, Bohm's holographic universe explains many other puzzles. One is the effect consciousness seems to have on the subatomic world. Bohm rejects the idea that particles don't exist until they are observed, but he is not in principle against trying to bring consciousness and physics together. He simply feels that most physicists go about it in the wrong way, by once again trying to fragment reality and saying that one separate thing, consciousness, interacts with another separate thing, a subatomic particle. Similarly, he believes that dividing the universe up into living and non-living things also has no meaning. Even a rock is some way alive, says Bohm, for life and intelligence are present not only in all of matter, but in energy, space, time, and the fabric of the entire universe. The idea that consciousness and life are ensembles enfolded throughout the universe has an equally dazzling flip side. Just as every portion of a hologram contains the image of the whole, every portion of the universe enfolds the whole... Every cell in our body enfolds the entire cosmos. So does every leaf, every raindrop and every dust mote, which gives new meaning to William Blake's famous poem:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And Heaven in a Wildflower,

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an Hour

Michael Talbot, *The Holographic Universe*  
(New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers,  
1992.)

As Isis in the Cosmos, meaning the soul of the Great Deep—with its triple powers of self-reproduction, positive, negative, and neutral—was and is represented by mighty *Dhyān Chohans*, so at each lower level, down to the planetary *Aditi-Akasha*, an Adept Official undertakes the task of directing the manifestation of the Triple Feminine current in the creative life and activity in and on a planet. That Official is the World Mother for a planet and a period, and the basis of truth in the successive ideas of the civilizations and religions of the world. . . . Mary the mother of Jesus now holds that Office, as Isis held it in earlier days.

She was a veritable Being, a highly spiritual Adept Who had come along the *Prakriti* rather than the *Purusha* line, the Third Ray rather than the First, and had become its very soul . . . . She is the Lady of the Lotus Who protects, inspires, and draws upwards the aspirant *Sensa*, symbol of the Ego awakening to gnosis, and all that the gnosis implies. She is Herself the heavenly "Cup," the receptacle and vehicle for both the creative current and the pure knowledge of the divine Mind. . . .

[Isis] was a very glorious and beautiful female Adept Who took the whole Egyptian nation under Her charge, and for at least 10,000 years guarded and inspired its progress and development from birth to death. She was a very wonderful Being Who has now gone to higher spheres of Buddahood.

[Sandra Hodson (ed.), *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition: Compiled from the Writings of Geoffrey Hodson*, Manila, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 1992, 69-70.]



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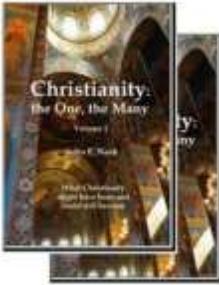
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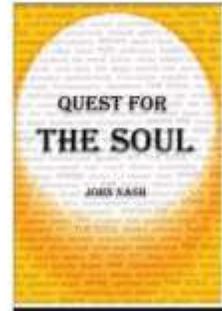
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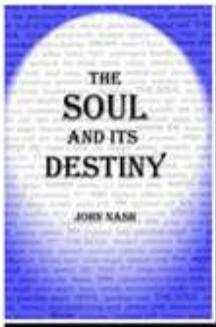
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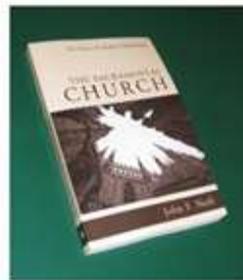
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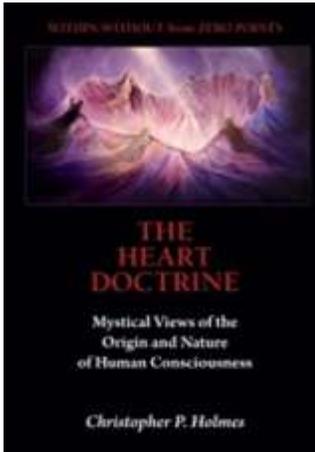
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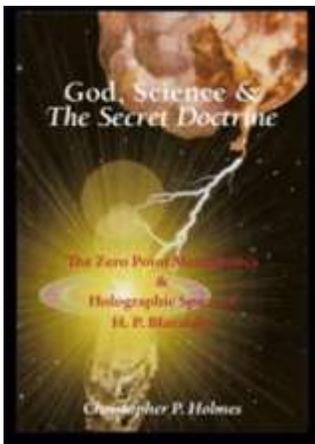
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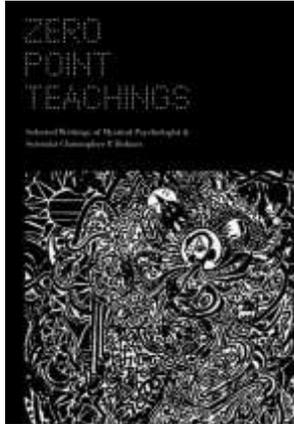
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# Prayer and Meditation in Christian Mysticism

John F. Nash

---

## Summary

This article explores Christian mysticism as a phenomenon distinct from the mysticism of other world religions, and as a branch of esotericism complementing occultism and esoteric philosophy. It focuses on the mystical path that leads through “dark nights” and/or ecstasy to loving union with God. The basis of mysticism is contemplative prayer, which may be kataphatic or, more commonly, apophatic: the one employing words and images, the other seeking to transcend them.

The article examines Christian mysticism’s origins and development in the contemplative traditions of East and West and notes its struggle to survive in denominations that rejected monasticism. The article discusses in greater detail the contemporary relevance of mysticism to people who “live in the world.” It concludes with comments on mysticism’s relationship to the discipleship training of modern esoteric schools.

## Introduction

Mysticism (from the Greek *mystikos*, “a secret”) is a phenomenon involving deeply personal experiences, leading to what are believed to be encounters with God. Mystical states are qualitatively different from ordinary human experience and can be of an intensity that overwhelms the senses, emotions and intellect. Language loses much of its usefulness in describing them. Mystics struggle to capture the indescribable, the ineffable, the indefinable, the unnamable. The Apostle Paul reportedly “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”<sup>1</sup> Mystics may use metaphor and allegory in the attempt to communicate what they have heard or seen. Or they may turn to poetry, song, dance, or the visual arts. The

mystic, the artist, and the visionary share certain instincts—though it would be naïve to equate or confuse one with another.

Mystics are not lost for words, however; we are confronted by what one commentator called their “copious eloquence.”<sup>2</sup> Writing in ordinary prose and employing commendable standards of logic, the world’s mystics created a vast literature discussing methodologies, providing at least minimal or peripheral accounts of their experiences, and sharing insights gained therefrom. That literature provides a basis for the academic discussion of mysticism. We should also note that mysticism has produced great teachers and scholars, and the field of mystical theology evolved when personal and collective insight was allowed to augment scripture and tradition as a legitimate source of authority.

This article addresses Christian mysticism as a phenomenon distinguishable from the mysticism of other religions. At its core the mystical experience may transcend religious boundaries.<sup>3</sup> But it occurs in the context of the traditions, beliefs and expectations of a particular religion. No Jewish or Sufi mystic ever contemplated Christ’s passion or was rewarded with the stigmata, though many experienced physical manifestations of a more temporary nature. No Buddhist or Huna mystic ever permuted the letters in Hebrew divine names, but mystics from diverse back-

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## About the Author

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grounds have used mantras as aids to concentration and meditation.

Christian mysticism developed in the context of belief in Christ's Incarnation: the descent of the Divine into the world of human affairs. It also developed in the context of devotion, liturgy, and the sacraments—and in the context of ascetic discipline. To quote a modern writer: "Much of Christian mysticism revolves around the experiential realization, embedded in prayer, ritual, ascetic practices, and contemplation, of what such a trinitarian and incarnate God was like, of how human beings could know God and of how they could be at their most intimate with him."<sup>4</sup>

Christ is sometimes described as a mystic, and the calendar of saints lists mystics from every period of Christian history. Yet institutional Christianity's attitude toward mysticism has been ambiguous. Mysticism seemed to threaten ecclesiastical authority or compete with pastoral ministry. Perhaps mystics' intimate relationship with God might encourage spiritual autonomy and undermine the church's self-concept as the sole intermediary between the faithful and God. The renowned Spanish mystic Theresa of Ávila went to considerable lengths to alleviate ecclesiastical fears.<sup>5</sup> Her writings were scrutinized by the Inquisition, but eventually she was canonized. Significant parts of Meister Eckhart's mystical theology were condemned as heretical, but he died before the edict was issued; efforts continue to have the edict lifted so that canonization can be considered. Thirteenth-century Beguine Marguerite Porete, Joan of Arc (c.1412–1431), the outspoken hermeticist Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), and others went to the stake.

Christian mysticism was tolerated in monastic environments, away from centers of ecclesiastical power and contact with the masses. Fortuitously, seclusion provided the ideal environment where mysticism could flourish. In the silence of their isolation hermits, anchorites, and cloistered monks and nuns could hear the "still small voice" of God.<sup>6</sup> Renunciants dominate the story of Christian mysticism, whereas denominations like Calvinism that did not embrace monasticism

produced few mystics. A rich contemplative tradition grew up out of sight of the everyday world.

Mysticism was not entirely confined to the cloister. Non-enclosed religious orders took mysticism "into the world" and gave it new meaning. Secular clergy<sup>7</sup> and laypeople were drawn to mysticism, too. Quakers pursued the mystical path outside the framework of institutional religion. Over the last fifty years methodologies have emerged to meet growing interest among Christians at large. Contemplative practices of Eastern Orthodox Christianity and practices imported from South Asia provide further options.

Mysticism is a spirituality of love. Mystics seek God in the inner reaches of the self, hoping for glimpses of, and eventual union with, the Divine. Their vehicle is prayer: not petitionary or intercessory prayer, or even praise or thanksgiving, though those may play ancillary roles. The prayer of the mystics is *contemplative prayer*, often wordless and formless. How transformative—one might almost say how *worthwhile*—the mystics' prayer is depends not only on their inner experiences but on what they are able to share with others. Mystics throughout Christian history, even those in enclosed monasteries, have stressed their sense of communion with the whole of humanity. Love of God becomes love of one's neighbor, and many mystics have dedicated their lives to service.

This article addresses Christian mysticism as a branch of esotericism. Christianity's contemplative tradition is *esoteric*, contrasting with the exotericism of the church hierarchy, the liturgy, popular piety, and the various forms of outreach. Esoteric Christianity is to be found in its mysticism and the mystical theology that developed from it. Mysticism, with its emphasis on the heart, is one of the pillars of esotericism. It complements psychism, occultism, and esoteric philosophy, which emphasize perception, will and intellect, respectively. Mysticism has attracted little attention in the esoteric literature; and among the few studies of mysticism, Christian mysticism has attracted less attention than its counterparts in Hinduism, Bud-

dhism and Sufism. This article seeks to redress that imbalance by stimulating greater interest in Christian mysticism and encouraging participation in contemplative practices.

## Historical Development

Church father Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215) first used the term *mystical* in a Christian context at the turn of the third century.<sup>8</sup> We know from the Pauline epistles, the Gospels of John and Thomas, and other early writings that mysticism already existed in apostolic times. And within a century of Clement's death it was becoming a significant force in Christianity.

Thousands of men and women took to the Egyptian desert in the third and fourth centuries to escape Roman persecution. Many more followed to escape the secularization of post-Constantinian Christianity. They are referred to as the “desert fathers and mothers.” The earliest known desert father was Paul of Thebes (230–341 CE) who devoted his long life to penitence and prayer. More famous was Anthony of Egypt (c.251–356) who felt the call when he was about twenty years old and spent eighty-five years as a hermit.

The desert hermits began the practice of quiet, prayerful reading of scripture; eventually it evolved into the *Lectio Divina*. Along with the harsh conditions and ascetic lifestyles, “praying with scripture” fostered high levels of mysticism. The hermits had many spiritual experiences in which they heard voices or had angelic visions. But they also saw demons that mocked and tempted them. Although Anthony was a man of great sanctity, he reported ongoing temptations, anxieties, and spiritual assaults; “Who sits in silence,” he remarked, “has escaped three wars: hearing, speaking, seeing, yet against things shall he continually battle, that is his own heart.”<sup>9</sup>

Groups of neighboring hermitages eventually coalesced into communities, and new communities were established beyond the desert. *Rules* articulated shared ideals and governed community life. In some communities members took vows. From small beginnings

Christian monasticism grew to play a huge role in the medieval church.

## Mysticism in the West

Mysticism flourished in both East and West but took on distinctive characteristics, reflecting differences in their monastic systems. Augustine of Hippo wrote a rule for a community of contemplative monks in North Africa in about 400 CE. Three decades later former desert father John Cassian founded the abbey of St Victor, near Marseilles in Gaul,<sup>10</sup> and romanized Briton Patrick founded the abbey at Armagh, Ireland. The famous abbey on the island of Iona, Scotland, was founded by the Irish monk Columba in 563.

Early in the sixth century, Benedict of Nursia (480–547) established several communities, including the monastery of Monte Casino, Italy. He also wrote the rule that we know as the Rule of St Benedict. The Benedictine rule, embraced throughout the West, had at its heart the notion of *ora et labora* (“pray and work”). Monks worked to support their communities and provided religious and social services to local populations. They also spent long hours in prayer. Prayer in the Benedictine monasteries included liturgical prayer: primarily the daily offices and the Mass. It also included private prayer. The rule instructed monks to practice the *Lectio Divina* for at least two hours a day and longer on Sunday when the monks were not expected to work.<sup>11</sup>

The *Lectio Divina* took on a fourfold structure, consisting of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio* and *contemplatio*. *Lectio* was the quiet reading of a passage from scripture and selection of a word or phrase that seemed particularly meaningful. *Meditatio* was reflection on what had been read, letting the word or phrase “speak.”<sup>12</sup> *Oratio* (“prayer”) was a dialogue with God that the word or phrase might inspire. *Contemplatio* (“contemplation”) was a period of wordless “rest” in which the individual experienced the love of God—or if spiritual development was sufficient—a sense of union with God.

By the eleventh century, laxity in monastic discipline threatened the contemplative tradi-

tion. In response, reforms were initiated on several fronts. The Carthusian Order founded in 1084 by Bruno of Cologne required monks to spend most of the day in their cells, coming together only for daily Mass. They were permitted to talk to one another only once a week when they went on a communal hike.<sup>13</sup> Needless to say, their lives of near-total silence provided rich opportunities for mysticism. Other monastic orders soon emerged. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) founded the famous Cistercian abbey of Clairvaux and another 65 houses throughout Europe. The Carmelite Order, dedicated to contemplative prayer, received its papal charter in 1226. Initially based on Mount Carmel, Palestine, it later flourished in Europe.

From the twelfth century onward, orders of mendicant friars offered further options for the religious life. Mendicants were not cloistered but traveled, usually on foot, caring for the sick and preaching. They relied on donations of food, clothing or money for their support; their name comes from the Latin *mendicus* (“beggar”). Though they had little time for quiet contemplation, their ascetic lifestyle encouraged mystical experiences, and mendicants had greater opportunities to share the benefits with others. The Order of Friars Preachers (Dominicans), founded by former crusader Dominic Guzmán (1170–1221), produced a number of renowned mystics, including Meister Eckhart and Johannes Tauler. Dominic’s close contemporary Francis of Assisi (c.1182–1226) embraced a life of extreme austerity and had profound spiritual experiences. He was the first person known to have received the stigmata: marks on his hands, feet and side, corresponding to the nail and spear wounds Jesus suffered on the cross. The several Franciscan orders that trace their origins to Francis produced many other mystics, including Bonaventure (1221–1274), the “seraphic doctor.”

Women, particularly nuns, played a major role in western mysticism.<sup>14</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Julian of Norwich, Theresa of Ávila, and Catherine of Sienna were just a few of the many revered for their mystical attainments. Hildegard’s

(1098–1179) most famous mystical work, *Scivias*, detailed a number of visions and discussed their theological implications. Catherine (1347–1380), an extreme ascetic, received the stigmata. Her contemporary Julian (c.1342–c.1416) lived as an anchoress in a tiny cell in the wall of a church in Norwich, England. Julian’s *Showings*, which remains a best-seller of devotional literature, documented fifteen visions of Christ.

Medieval mysticism was by no means confined to official religious orders or even to mainstream Christianity. The Celtic church of the fourth–eleventh centuries operated independently from Rome. Based on a strong monastic system, it produced numerous mystics, as well as artists and scholars. The Cathar church of the eleventh–thirteenth centuries also sought independence. It produced many mystics before its members were condemned as heretics and exterminated.<sup>15</sup>

Before she entered a Cistercian convent, Mechthild (c.1207–c.1282) was a Beguine living in a women’s community that operated beyond the formal structure of religious orders. The fourteenth-century mystic known as the Friend of God from the Oberland (“high country,” the Alps) endured rigorous, ascetic training, after which he was told in a vision: “Only now have you trodden the right path of love. You have passed your time of probation.”<sup>16</sup> His followers, the Friends of God, had considerable influence in Germany, operating outside episcopal control. In the same period Dutchman Gerald Groote founded the Brethren of the Common Life, whose members included Thomas à Kempis (c.1380–1471), probable author of *The Imitation of Christ*.

Religious orders continued to flourish and even expand in the Church of Rome after the Reformation. Basque nobleman Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556) had a profound spiritual experience after being wounded in battle. He proceeded to develop his Spiritual Exercises, a structured program for month-long retreats. Retreatants began by contemplating their sins and spiritual weaknesses in relation to the passion of Christ, so as to foster a sense of shame and abhorrence for sin. Then they

were encouraged to commit themselves to Christ, to be thankful for forgiveness, and finally to share in the divine glory. In 1539 Ignatius and his followers founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) whose members submitted to rigorous training and discipline before serving as missionaries and teachers. The intensity of the Exercises led many participants to mystical experiences. But Ignatian spirituality was more will-oriented than earlier forms had been; union with God was sought primarily through submission to the divine will.

John of the Cross (1542–1591), the most famous Spanish mystic of his time, and his friend and mentor Theresa of Ávila founded the Order of Discalced (“barefoot”) Carmelites as part of a reform movement within the larger Carmelite Order. The new order was committed to strict asceticism. John’s poem “The Dark Night of the Soul”—possibly written while imprisoned in a windowless cell by opponents of reform—formed the basis of his most famous books: *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul*.<sup>17</sup> A century later, Armand de Rancé reformed the Cistercian abbey of La Trappe, France, to place greater emphasis on austerity and penance. His monks became known as Trappists, and monasteries following a similar rule were founded in many countries.<sup>18</sup> Trappist discipline includes silence for most of the day, except for the recitation of the daily offices and participation in the Mass.

Outside the Church of Rome, religious orders were suppressed and were only revived in the Anglican Communion in the nineteenth century. Correspondingly fewer opportunities existed for the contemplative life. Nevertheless, continuing a trend that began with the mendicant orders and the Jesuits, mysticism moved further into the world. Secular clergy and laypeople found ways to integrate contemplative prayer into family- and work-oriented life.

George Fox (1624–1691) founded the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers, whose collective worship involved extended periods of silent prayer.<sup>19</sup> Some Quakers experienced ecstatic trembling during those periods, giv-

ing the Friends their popular name. Those who encouraged ecstatic behavior eventually left to form the “Shakers,” but the Quaker practice of silent prayer continues to the present.

The Church of England also produced the “metaphysical poets” of the seventeenth century, a loose-knit group of as many as seventeen men and women that included John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, and Anne Bradstreet. Clergy within the group had opportunities to apply their talents to preaching and hymnody. Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) were famous Lutheran mystics—both persecuted by ecclesiastical authorities. Böhme influenced eighteenth-century Anglican clergyman William Law and Russian Orthodox mystics in the nineteenth century. Britain’s most famous mystic at the turn of the nineteenth century was the metaphysical artist and poet William Blake (1757–1827).

### **Mysticism in Eastern Orthodox Christianity**

A separate monastic tradition developed in the Greek and Russian churches. Basil of Caesarea (330–379) developed a rule, which included the earliest known religious vows: love, obedience, poverty and chastity.<sup>20</sup> At about the same time monks began to settle on Mount Athos, on the coast of northern Greece. In 885, the Emperor Basil I reserved the area for monastic use. More than twenty monasteries were founded on “the Holy Mountain,” and Mount Athos retained its spiritual preeminence, despite the growing power and strong monastic tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>21</sup>

Several men stand out from among the numerous mystics of the Greek church. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662) built upon the teachings of the fourth-century church father Gregory of Nyssa and the fifth-century Syrian Neoplatonist known as the Pseudo-Dionysius. One of Maximus’ best-known works was *The Four-Hundred Texts on Love*. It and other works contain his contribution to the doctrine of *theosis*, or deification. *Theosis*, Maximus explained, involves the mutual

interpenetration of the human and divine natures, on a smaller scale but comparable with what occurred within the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup> Man always had the latent potential to become divine, but as a result of the redemption theosis became attainable. Maximus was charged with heresy and met a gruesome death at the hands of the Byzantine emperor. The doctrine of theosis survived, however, and became an important component of Orthodox mystical theology.<sup>23</sup>

Symeon the New Theologian (949–1032) served as abbot of the monastery of St Mamas in Constantinople. He promoted the notion of union with God through the divine light, a concept that also contributed to the understanding of theosis. Unusual for his time, Symeon saw the potential for laypeople as well as renunciants to pursue a mystical path.

Monasticism spread to Russia soon after Vladimir I's conversion to Christianity. Antony, a monk from Mount Athos, founded the Petchersky Lavra, or Monastery of the Caves, in Kiev. Sergius of Radonezh (c.1314–1392) established the first of a number of monasteries in the forests of northern Russia. The fifteenth-century Russian hermit Nilus of Sora combined his mysticism with social activism. Three centuries later Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833), who had spent many years as a recluse, embarked on a public ministry, gaining wide recognition as a teacher, counselor and healer. Seraphim's teachings emphasized the transformation of the whole human entity, body and soul, by the influx of divine light. Often compared with Francis of Assisi, he became one of Russia's best-loved saints.

Eastern Orthodoxy never permitted the establishment of religious orders like the Benedictines or Jesuits; all monasteries were under local episcopal control. And although monas-

teries were established for both men and women, the eastern churches never produced significant numbers of female mystics. An interesting feature of eastern Christianity, however, was the work of "elders": monks, nuns and hermits who provided spiritual counseling to other religious, secular clergy, and laypeople. Known as *gerontes* in the Greek church and *startsy* in Russia (singular: *gerontas* and *staretz*), the elders combined service with mysticism. Seraphim of Sarov was a famous staretz.

Eastern Orthodoxy's greatest contribution to contemplative practice was *hesychastic* prayer. Hesychasm (from the Greek: *hesychia*, "stillness" or "silence") may have originated on Mount Athos as early as the fourth

century. It involved extended periods of solitary meditation, intended to bring heart and mind together in a synthesis of the whole being. Participants often spoke of being filled with a bright light, which they identified with the divine presence. Hesychastic prayer came under attack in the fourteenth century from critics who argued that only intellectual pursuits had value and that claims to have seen the divine light were blasphemous. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), a monk of Mount Athos and later archbishop of Thessaloniki, defended the hesychasts:

Through the practice of the life of stillness they devote their attention undistractedly to themselves and to God, and by transcending themselves through sincere prayer and by establishing themselves in God through their mystical and supra-intellectual union with Him they have been initiated into what surpasses the intellect.<sup>24</sup>

Hesychastic practice was finally approved by the Councils of Constantinople of 1341 and 1351, and many people came to see it as the royal road to theosis.

**Mysticism is a spirituality of love. Mystics seek God in the inner reaches of the self, hoping for glimpses of, and eventual union with, the Divine. Their vehicle is prayer: not petitionary or intercessory prayer, or even praise or thanksgiving, though those may play ancillary roles. The prayer of the mystics is contemplative prayer, often wordless and formless.**

Hesychasm enjoyed a revival in the eighteenth century, and it survives today as a significant practice in Orthodox mysticism. Contributing to the revival, the *Philokalia* (Greek: “Love of the Beautiful”) was published in 1782. It was a collection of hesychastic and other texts written between the fourth and fifteenth centuries. Compiled by Nikodemos of Mount Athos and Makarios of Corinth, it was intended as a manual for contemplative monks. Over time it acquired broader influence, and English translations became available in the twentieth century. The *Philokalia* preserved many ancient texts that otherwise might have been lost.

An important element of hesychastic practice was the Jesus Prayer. Attributed to the fifth-century Bishop Diadochos of Photiki, Greece, the words are: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.”<sup>25</sup> According to Hesychios the Priest, who lived in a monastery on Mount Sinai in the eighth or ninth century:

In great watchfulness and fervent desire travel along it with the Jesus Prayer, with humility and concentration, keeping the lips of both the senses and the intellect silent . . . travel along it with a mind trained in understanding, and with God’s help it will teach you things you had not hoped for; it will give you knowledge, enlightenment and instruction of a kind to which your intellect was impervious.<sup>26</sup>

Another writer cited in the *Philokalia* was Ilias the Presbyter who commented that the seeker who uses the Jesus Prayer attentively “has glimpsed the holy of holies who, with his natural thoughts at rest, contemplates that which transcends every intellect, and who has in this way been granted to some extent a vision of the divine light.”<sup>27</sup>

Recitation of the Jesus Prayer, hour after hour, was often synchronized with inhalation and exhalation of the breath and even with the heartbeat, recalling yogic disciplines of *pranayama* and *mantra yoga*. As the prayer session continued, hesychastic prayer became silent, automatic, and centered on the heart. Eastern Orthodoxy has always attached great importance to the Apostle Paul’s admonition

to “pray without ceasing.”<sup>28</sup> Laypeople as well as monks are urged to pray as they go about their everyday business—even when they sleep. Church father John Chrysostom is credited with saying: “Everywhere, wherever you may find yourself, you can set up an altar to God in your mind by means of prayer.”<sup>29</sup>

## Concepts and Terminology

Mystics continually speak of the soul: how it yearns for God, how the divine light illuminates the inner reaches of the soul, and so forth. But “the soul” is not defined in Christian doctrine as precisely as it was in Greek philosophy or is in modern trans-Himalayan teachings. According to Plato the *nous* (“mind”) was the eternal *Form*, and the *soma* (“body”) its “shadow” on the earthly plane. The *psyche* (literally “soul”) was an intermediate principle that animated the *soma*. In the third century CE Neoplatonists introduced the *pneuma* (“spirit”), equivalent to, or possibly transcending, the *nous*. The *pneuma* was a divine emanation, a divine “spark,” that affirmed humanity’s divine origin and destiny.

Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy had a strong influence on early Christianity, but that influence declined over time. The Second Council of Constantinople (553 CE) rejected suggestions that the soul preexisted the body,<sup>30</sup> implying that each soul is individually created by God. The Fourth Council of Constantinople (869) rejected any notion of a divine spark and conflated the *nous* and *psyche* into a single entity. It decreed that man “has one rational and intellectual soul” which “animates the flesh.”<sup>31</sup>

With the rise of scholasticism, Aristotelian concepts of the soul came to dominate western Christian thought. The Aristotelian revival’s most famous exponent, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), built upon the Constantinople decrees, declaring that humanity’s rational, intellectual soul embraces and transcends the “vegetative” soul, shared with plants, and the “sensitive” soul, shared with animals.<sup>32</sup> Aquinas still spoke of the soul’s “essence” and regarded it as the form of the body. But

the soul was no longer an autonomous entity; it was more like a collection of faculties. Aquinas declared that the soul was immortal because the intellect was superior to physical matter,<sup>33</sup> but it was “incomplete substance” and “connaturally related to the body.” After death it remains in an incomplete state until the resurrection of the body. The scholastics listed the soul’s faculties as imagination, memory, understanding and will; love featured only as an application of will.

To the mystics, the soul’s principal faculty was to love God. Mystics have always regarded the soul as the ethical component of the human constitution, the part that yearns for union with God. Mystics also expressed continuing belief in a divine spark, even as an emanation from God. Meister Eckhart described the spark, or *Seelenfünklein*, as the “citadel of the soul” and the “light of the soul.”<sup>34</sup> In his words: “There is something in the soul which is only God . . . For herein the soul takes its whole life and being and from this source it draws its life and being.”<sup>35</sup> His views on the spark contributed to his condemnation by Rome, but other mystics agreed with him. Theresa of Ávila spoke of “the spirit in the soul.”<sup>36</sup> And William Law wrote of the hidden “pearl of eternity” in the center of the soul.<sup>37</sup>

The word “meditation” has changed in meaning over the centuries, causing considerable confusion. The Latin word *meditatio*, as used in medieval writings, referred to the thoughtful reflection on scripture. In the twelfth century, Carthusian monk Guigo II assigned each element of the *Lectio Divina* to a different stage on the mystical path: *lectio* was for “beginners,” *meditatio* and *oratio* became appropriate in turn as experience increased, and *contemplatio* was for seasoned mystics.<sup>38</sup> Many contemplatives disagreed, insisting that they used all four elements to great benefit. In recent times, the low status accorded to *meditatio* has led to claims that Christianity places prayer—perhaps identified in critics’ minds with petitionary prayer—ahead of meditation. The problem is one of semantics.

In modern usage, influenced by the literature of Asian spirituality, “meditation,” has be-

come a catch-all term for a variety of techniques designed to relax the body, calm the mind, induce subjective experiences, access higher states of consciousness, or sense higher realities. Except in monastic circles, where traditional terminology persists, contemplative prayer now is commonly classified as a form of meditation. Whether that classification is valid depends, of course, on how flexible “meditation” is allowed to be. Some would argue that it ignores the qualitative difference that contemplative prayer is more than a self-improvement technique; it is an encounter with God.

## The Mystical Path

### Contemplative Prayer

Christian contemplatives distinguish between *kataphatic* and *apophatic* prayer. *Kataphatic* (or *cataphatic*) prayer, from the Greek *kataphatikos* (“positive”), employs words, concepts and images in the belief that they assist our understanding of the divine nature and orient us—thinking and feeling creatures—toward God. *Apophatic* prayer, from the Greek *apophatikos* (“negative”), stems from the assertion that God is unknowable, whereupon words and images are unhelpful and distracting. It seeks, to the extent possible, to transcend discursive thought. Corresponding branches of theology are *kataphatic* theology, which seeks to describe the divine nature, and *apophatic* theology, which asserts that the divine nature is so far removed from human understanding that we can only say what it is *not*. *Apophatic* Christian theology has its equivalent in the *neti neti* of jnana yoga and Advaita Vedanta.

*Kataphatic* prayer, often referred to as the “way of affirmation,” forms the basis of the liturgy and public worship. Virtually all types of popular devotional prayer also are *kataphatic*.<sup>39</sup> For example, the Lord’s Prayer uses prescribed words and also concepts or images like “father,” “kingdom,” and “daily bread.” Prayers of thanksgiving articulate what the individual or group is thankful for. Petitionary and intercessory prayers spell out what is needed or desired. *Kataphatic* prayer is “talking” to God and also “listen-

ing” to God, hoping for a message, image or vision.

Kataphatic prayer is employed by some contemplatives. The *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* provide one of its most complete expressions. Ignatius, to quote Jesuit priest Frederick McLeod, had a three-fold intent:

First, he employs it not only to provoke faith experiences but to specify the kind of experience. By carefully building up an affective setting and mood and presenting appropriate material, he influences the form that an experience will take. Secondly, when an experience does occur, he wants a person to stay with the thoughts, images and feelings and to share them with Christ. This helps to develop and deepen one's relationship with Christ. Thirdly, he sees that *kataphatic prayer* can aid a person in knowing how to live out what has been experienced.<sup>40</sup>

Most other mystics have practiced apophatic prayer, or the “way of negation.” Apophatic prayer is formless, seeking God without the use—or distraction—of words, images or thoughts. The Pseudo-Dionysius spoke of seekers “who leave behind them every divine light, every voice, every word from heaven, and who plunge into the darkness where . . . there dwells the One who is beyond all things.”<sup>41</sup> He went on to speak of the “darkness so far above light.”<sup>42</sup> Maximus the Confessor wrote: “It is said that the highest state of prayer is reached when the intellect goes beyond the flesh and the World, and while praying is utterly free from matter and form. He who maintains this state has truly attained unceasing prayer.”<sup>43</sup> Apophatic prayer is inner silence, “echoing” the outer silence of the hermit’s cave or monk’s cell. That inner silence is likened to the primeval silence into which the Elohim spoke the words of creation.

The Pseudo-Dionysius’ influence is seen in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous fourteenth-century English work to which all later commentators on apophatic prayer have referred. Its author insisted that God lies beyond a “cloud” that is impervious to the hu-

man mind. However, the cloud can be penetrated by love: “So lift up your love to that cloud. Or, more accurately, let God draw your love up to that cloud.”<sup>44</sup> The writer advocated use of a monosyllabic mantra, like “God.”<sup>45</sup>

Henry Vaughan contrasted kataphatic and apophatic prayer in his metaphysical poetry. *The World* portrayed God and creation in images of light and brightness:

I saw eternity the other night  
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
All calm, as it was bright,  
And round beneath it, Time in hours,  
days, years Driv’n by the spheres  
Like a vast shadow moved, In which the  
world And all her train were hurled.<sup>46</sup>

In another poem *The Night*, God was seen as hidden, invisible, or “dark”:

There is in God (some say)  
A deep, but dazzling darkness; As men  
here Say it is late and dusky, because they  
See not all clear O for that night!  
where I in him Might live invisible and  
dim.<sup>47</sup>

Frederick McLeod discussed the relative merits of kataphatic and apophatic prayer but stopped short of identifying one as superior to the other. “Much depends,” he explained, “on how the Lord calls one, and on what kind of experience one is looking for. What really matters is whether one encounters the Lord in a prayer experience.”<sup>48</sup>

In practice, kataphatic and apophatic prayer are not stark alternatives but define a spectrum of possibilities in which discursive thought is of greater or lesser importance. For example, a prayer session may begin with words but become wordless as the experience deepens. Indeed the *Lectio Divina* moves from reading to kataphatic prayer, to apophatic prayer. And to quote an Eastern Orthodox writer, contemplative prayer moves “from the frequent vocal prayer to prayers of the mind and from that to prayer of the heart.”<sup>49</sup> The “heart,” in that context, is more than the physical organ, more even than the seat of emotion; it is the conscious link with

the soul—the individual human soul and perhaps also the collective soul of the Mystical Church.

### The Mystical Journey

Fourth-century church father Gregory of Nyssa compared the mystical path to the biblical story of the Exodus. Milestones on the path corresponded to Moses' encounter with the burning bush, ascent into the dark cloud on Mount Sinai, and return with the tablets of the Law. The journey is ongoing, and the mystical and the moral must always go together.<sup>50</sup>

A century later, the Pseudo-Dionysius divided the mystical journey into three stages: purgation, illumination and unity.<sup>51</sup> The purgative stage—richly illustrated by the desert fathers and mothers—consists of renunciation of the things of this world. It is intended to instill a sense of detachment, rid the self of passions, and focus attention on God. The illuminative stage allows the light of God to shine into the soul; it encourages the increase of virtue, particularly love. Intensely rewarding, this stage may involve ecstatic experiences. In the third stage of the journey, the individual achieves loving union with God. Ecstatic and unitive states will be discussed in more detail later.

John of the Cross is credited with coining the term “dark night of the soul,” the title of his poem and book mentioned earlier. The dark night is a long purgative stage—or series of stages—in which the seeker may experience “aridity” in prayer and a sense of abandonment by God. Through that experience the soul is purged of its weaknesses and prepared for the journey that lies ahead. John identified “two kinds of darkness and purgation correspondingly to the two parts of man's nature—the sensual and the spiritual.”<sup>52</sup> Correspondingly, there is a “night of the sense” and a “night of the spirit.” John also referred to the “active night,” in which the seeker strives to overcome his or her own weaknesses, and the more painful “passive night,” in which God completes the process of purgation. The latter, despite its harshness, is a blessing in disguise; the darkness humbles

the soul and makes it miserable “only to give it light in everything.”<sup>53</sup> God demands total renunciation in preparation for the glory of the unitive state.

Twentieth-century scholar Evelyn Underhill sought to accommodate the work of John of the Cross by expanding Dionysius' three stages of the mystical path to five. In her description the soul first awakens to new possibilities and then progresses through purgation, illumination, and the “dark night,” to the final stage of loving union.<sup>54</sup> Underhill's five stages can be correlated with events in the life of Christ. Awakening corresponds to Christ's nativity; purgation to the baptism and temptation in the wilderness; illumination to the transfiguration; the “dark night” to the passion and crucifixion; and union to the resurrection and ascension. Later in the article we shall see that the five stages can also be correlated with the planetary initiations discussed in trans-Himalayan teachings.

Separate from Dionysius' three stages, and Underhill's five, the ladder became a popular metaphor for spiritual ascent, recalling Jacob's ladder described in *Genesis*. John Climacus (“John of the Ladder”), a seventh-century monk at the monastery on Mount Sinai, acquired his name (*klimax* is the Greek for “ladder”) from his work called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Seven hundred years later, Englishman Walter Hilton wrote *The Ladder of Perfection*.<sup>55</sup> John of the Cross wrote of a “mystic ladder of love” consisting of ten steps.<sup>56</sup>

Theresa of Ávila had a vision of the soul as like “a diamond of very clear crystal in which there are many rooms.”<sup>57</sup> That vision inspired her to conceive of the mystical path as progress through seven mansions, the innermost being the sanctuary of God. If we detect influence of Merkabah mysticism, in which the seeker ascended through seven palaces to the throne-world,<sup>58</sup> that would not be surprising since Theresa was of mixed Christian and Jewish ancestry. Like the Merkabah mystics, she recognized that to move from one mansion/palace to the next requires progressively greater effort and brings increasing risk of failure. But at least in Theresa's description,

divine grace helps the seeker overcome demonic efforts to impede progress.

Francis of Assisi and fellow Franciscan Bonaventure both had visions of a crucified seraph with three pairs of wings.<sup>59</sup> Bonaventure interpreted the six wings as stages on the mystical journey. A seventh and final stage: a “stage of repose and illumination by supreme wisdom,” lies beyond human effort but is “made possible through Christ and mediator.”<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the seraph’s tiered wings can be compared with the petals of the Egoic Lotus of trans-Himalayan teachings.<sup>61</sup>

For some Christian mystics opportunities to express their love of God occurred not only in prayer but also in the sacraments. The Eucharist was considered particularly important in that regard. Thomas à Kempis (c.1380–1471) shared sentiments with which he approached the sacrament:

O Lord God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I long to receive You this day with such reverence, praise, and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope, and purity . . . . Therefore I offer and present to You the gladness of all devout hearts, their ardent affection, their mental raptures, their supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions together with all the virtues and praises which have been or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and on earth, for myself and all commended to my prayers, that You may be worthily praised and glorified forever.<sup>62</sup>

Numerous others have written mystical devotions to the Eucharist, some enshrined in the liturgy.

A life of solitude avoids the distractions of everyday life and allows more time to devote to mystical pursuits, but it does not automatically lead to inner peace. The desert fathers were tormented by demons, and numerous mystics complained that they were constantly tempted to sin. Until comparatively recently the autobiographies of mystics, even those revered as great saints, invariably proclaimed abject wickedness; the standards of self-

judgment clearly rise along the path to sanctity. Mystics struggled valiantly to overcome temptation and sought forgiveness. Theresa of Avila prayed: “God of mercy, have mercy upon this poor sinner, this miserable worm . . . Behold . . . the tears with which I beg this of Thee.”<sup>63</sup> The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* declared that “whoever would work at becoming a contemplative must first cleanse his conscience, and then, after he has made due amends, he can give himself, boldly, but humbly, to contemplation.”<sup>64</sup>

Self-incrimination has become less common in recent times, but contemplatives still complain of exasperating distractions. In the words of a contemporary Trappist abbot: “The monastic tradition sees . . . tranquility as a short-lived consolation to encourage beginners, which will dissipate once the search for God is pursued with real determination and the demons get to work to prevent any further progress.”<sup>65</sup>

One might think that with enough effort any person who loved God above all else and surrendered completely to God—anyone, for instance, who joined a strict-observance monastery—could eventually attain the unitive state. Yet some writers have declared that success depends on God’s blessing, a blessing that may be delayed or even permanently withheld. They distinguish between “acquired prayer,” the product of human effort, and “infused prayer,” a divine blessing on those “called by God” to be mystics. Individuals who never receive the call are doomed to fail, no matter how great their efforts. Perhaps that was a ploy by ecclesiastical authorities to limit the number of Christian mystics. On the other hand, a more general awareness exists that the mystical path is very much under God’s guidance and that unity with God is a gift bestowed only on a small elect.

### **Ecstatic and Unitive States**

Contemplative prayer can be interrupted by distractions. It can be bogged down for months or years in purgative states. It can be blessed with feelings of great peace and love.

Occasionally it can induce states of ecstasy.<sup>66</sup> In an ecstatic state the mystic may hear voices, see visions, become aware of love on a new level, or understand reality in an entirely new light. He or she may lose a sense of time, location, and even separate existence. The individual's body may writhe on the ground, tremble uncontrollably—or become comatose. Cases have been reported in which an ecstatic's body levitated or bilocated. Medieval mystics were fond of quoting the Latin dictum: *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, freely translated as “the terrifying mystery that is also irresistible.” It recalls the psalmist's words: “For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.”<sup>67</sup> The mystic yearns to see God, but even a brief glimpse is overwhelming.

Theresa of Ávila commented: “the soul . . . loses its power of breathing, with the result that . . . it cannot possibly speak. At other times it loses all its powers at once, and the hands and the body grow so cold that the body seems no longer to have a soul.”<sup>68</sup> She pointed out that “[c]omplete ecstasy . . . does not last long.” But it can produce profound and long-lasting aftereffects.

Ecstatic experiences may yield new insights into complex truths or new synthesis of previously disparate ideas. Hildegard of Bingen reported: “[I]mmediately I knew the meaning of the exposition of the Scriptures, namely the Psalter, the Gospel, and of the other catholic volumes of both the Old and the New Testaments.”<sup>69</sup> Alternatively, the mystic may question previous knowledge. After a vision of Christ in the last months of his life, Thomas Aquinas exclaimed: “everything I have written seems as worthless straw.” Thomas abandoned the theological work for which he is renowned and allegedly wrote a book on alchemy.<sup>70</sup>

German nun Anne Catherine Emmerich meditated for years on Christ's passion and death. During an ecstatic experience on December 29, 1812 she received the stigmata. Her scribe recorded the event:

She . . . saw a light descending toward her, and distinguished in the midst of it

the resplendent form of her crucified Savior, whose wounds shone like so many furnaces of light. Her heart was overflowing with joy and sorrow, and, at the sight of the sacred Wounds, her desire to suffer with her Lord became intensely violent. Then triple rays, pointed like arrows of the color of blood, darted forth from the hands, feet, and right side of the sacred apparition, and struck her . . . The moment these rays touched her, drops of blood flowed from the wounds . . . Long did she remain in a state of insensibility.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to the marks on her hands and feet, Anne Catherine had the mark of a cross on her breast and marks on her head corresponding to the crown of thorns. Transcripts of her “meditations,” which describe the lives of Christ and other biblical figures in great detail, fill 40 volumes.<sup>72</sup>

Many Christian mystics experienced ecstasy during the Mass. Hildegard had visions of angels:

Heaven was suddenly opened and a fiery and inestimable brilliance descended over that offering and irradiated it completely with light, as the sun illumines anything its rays shine through. And, thus illuminating it, the brilliance bore it on high into the sacred places of Heaven and then replaced it on the altar, as a person draws in a breath and lets it out again.<sup>73</sup>

French Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) described an ecstatic experience during adoration of the reserved Sacrament:

[T]he flow of whiteness enveloped me, passed beyond me, overran everything. At the same time everything, though drowned in this whiteness, preserved its own proper shape, its own autonomous movement; for the whiteness did not efface the features or change the nature of anything, but penetrated objects at the core of their being, at a level more profound even than their own life. It was as though a milky brightness were illuminating the universe from within, and every-

thing were fashioned of the same kind of translucent flesh.<sup>74</sup>

As the vision faded, Chardin remarked, “I heard then the *Ave verum* being sung.

Protestant mystics also had ecstatic experiences. Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, a bishop in the Moravian Church, established a religious community at Herrnhut, Saxony, which witnessed a bout of visions, prophecy and healings in the 1720s. In England the “Shakers” routinely participated in ecstatic dancing and exhibited the trademark convulsions at worship services. Their leader, Ann Lee, had a vision in 1774 in which she was told to move to Niskeyuna, New York. From there Shaker communities sprang up throughout the northeast United States. The Shakers form one of the roots of modern charismatic Christianity.

Psychologists classify ecstasy as an altered state of consciousness. Neuroscientists claim that similar experiences can be produced by sensory deprivation, psychedelic drugs, or magnetic stimulation of the temporal lobe in the brain.<sup>75</sup> Renunciants experience some degree of sensory deprivation but usually not enough to explain the scope of their experiences. Mystics dismiss the relevance of artificially induced ecstatic states. While they may agree that mystical states correlate with patterns of brain activity, they strongly dispute notions of a neural basis for their experiences.

Ecstatic phenomena can be euphoric and can provide—at least for the individual involved—the most convincing evidence of higher realities. But few Christian mystics regard ecstasy as an end in itself. Rather, the only worthwhile goal is loving union with God—or, in the writings of Mechtild of Magdeburg, the soul’s “*return* to its original being in God.”<sup>76</sup>

According to the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, love—even an individual’s love of God—can break through the cloud. “[O]ne loving soul by itself,” he wrote, “through its love, may know for itself Him who is incomparably more than sufficient to fill all souls that exist. This is the everlasting miracle of love.”<sup>77</sup> Elsewhere he declared that the “way

to real union with God [lies] in the sweet simplicity of perfect love.”<sup>78</sup> Union with God may seem complete from the mystic’s viewpoint. According to *The Cloud*’s author, however, the creature-Creator divide cannot actually be broached: “[God] is your being, but you are not His.”<sup>79</sup>

Theresa of Ávila was more confident about real, lasting union. In her account, the soul is “betrothed” in the sixth mansion and becomes the “Bride of Christ” in the seventh.<sup>80</sup> Betrothal does not result in continuous union, however, and during interludes of separation the individual can experience great pain. Finally, however, Christ takes the soul “to be His bride, He brings her into [the seventh] Mansion . . . before consummating the Spiritual Marriage.”<sup>81</sup> Thereafter the soul and Christ “have become like two who cannot be separated from one another.” Theresa described the experience thus: “The Lord is pleased to manifest to the soul at that moment the glory that is in Heaven, in a sublimer manner than in possible through any vision of spiritual consolation.”<sup>82</sup>

Christian mystics often resort to erotic metaphor to describe the intensity of their love of God. Mechtild wrote poetry in the style of the troubadours to express her insatiable love for Christ.<sup>83</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux wrote no fewer than 86 sermons on the *Song of Solomon*, many of them containing erotic images. Bernard nevertheless felt compelled to ask: “[W]hat human affections have you ever experienced . . . that are sweeter than is now experienced from the heart of the Most High?”<sup>84</sup> Bernard is remembered, among much else, for promoting the Marian cult in western Christianity. Mary is recognized as the patroness of contemplatives.

Erotic imagery appears in John of the Cross’ poem “The Dark Night of the Soul,” part of which is as follows:

In the happy night, In secret, when none saw me, Nor I beheld aught, Without light or guide, save that which burned in my heart.

This light guided me More surely than the light of noonday, To the place where he

(well I knew who!) was awaiting me—A place where none appeared.

Oh, night that guided me, Oh, night more lovely than the dawn, Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover, Lover transformed in the Beloved!

Upon my flowery breast, Kept wholly for himself alone, There he stayed sleeping, and I caressed him, And the fanning of the cedars made a breeze.

The breeze blew from the turret As I parted his locks; With his gentle hand he wounded my neck And caused all my senses to be suspended.

I remained, lost in oblivion; My face I reclined on the Beloved. All ceased and I abandoned myself, Leaving my cares forgotten among the lilies.<sup>85</sup>

For female mystics, like Mechtild, the use of sexual imagery to describe their love for Christ—or for a God customarily given male attributes—is understandable; nuns, after all, typically view themselves as brides of Christ. On the other hand, people of heterosexual orientation may find the use of such imagery by male mystics, like Bernard and John, discomforting.

John of the Cross explained that the unitive state was possible after “all that is unlike God and unconformed to Him is cast out,” whereupon “the soul may receive the likeness of God . . . and it will thus be transformed.”<sup>86</sup> “The soul,” he continued, “is at once illumined and transformed in God.”<sup>87</sup> The unitive experience is often compared to the Beatific Vision, which theologians promise the righteous after death. In heaven, scripture asserts, we shall “see God face to face” and will dwell “in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.”<sup>88</sup> Biblical Judaism did not envision an afterlife in heaven, so a passage in *Isaiah* may have referred to the unitive mystical experience: “men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”<sup>89</sup>

Eastern Orthodox teachers equate the unitive

state with theosis, and a few western mystics have discussed it in similar terms. The fifteenth-century Catherine of Genoa exclaimed: “My being is God, not by simple participation but by a true transformation of my being.”<sup>90</sup> And John of the Cross declared that union with the Divine “comes to pass when God grants the soul this supernatural favor, that all the things of God and the soul are one in participant transformation; and the soul seems to be God rather than a soul, and is indeed God by participation.” Like the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, however, John cautioned that, despite transformation, the soul remains “as distinct from the Being of God as it was before.”<sup>91</sup> Theosis in the West has normally been interpreted as becoming *like* God.

## Mysticism in Modern Times

The Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution all had dampening effects on the contemplative life. Nevertheless, men and women continued to be attracted to the cloister. Anne Catherine Emmerich, whose long practice of kataphatic prayer led to the stigmata, has already been mentioned. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897) had a profound spiritual experience on her fourteenth birthday and, the following year, entered a Carmelite convent at Lisieux, France. Thérèse, known as “the Little Flower,” impressed everyone with her simplicity of spirit. Although she died of tuberculosis at the young age of 24, she contributed much to western spirituality and was canonized in 1925.

The Padre Pio (1887–1968), the famous Capuchin monk and ascetic of San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, was ordained in 1910. Eight years later he received the stigmata and bore the wounds for half a century.<sup>92</sup> He is said to have been capable of levitation and bilocation, and many miraculous healings were attributed to him. Although controversy over the authenticity of his gifts raged through much of his life and beyond, Pio was canonized in 2002.

One of the best-known mystics of the twentieth century was the Trappist monk Thomas

Merton (1915–1968). He described how he “received the call” to the contemplative life in 1941. Upon taking his vows at the Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky, he imagined God explaining to him: “[Y]ou shall taste the true solitude of my anguish and my poverty and I shall lead you into the high places of my joy and you shall die in Me and find all things in My mercy which has created you for this end and brought you . . . to the Cistercian Abbey of poor men who labor in Gethsemani.”<sup>93</sup> Merton was a strong proponent of apophatic prayer. The contemplative, he wrote, “waits on the Word of God in silence, and when he is ‘answered,’ it is . . . by his silence itself, suddenly, inexplicably revealing itself to him as a word of great power, full of the voice of God.”<sup>94</sup> Merton became an admirer of Asian religions and died a few months after a famous meeting with the Dalai Lama.

Merton was not the only individual to take an interest in Asian religions. Several individuals pursued the contemplative life in a synthesis of traditions. French Benedictine monk Henri le Saux embraced the life of an Indian holy man, taking the name Swami Abhishikantananda and spending the latter part of his life as a hermit. Le Saux founded an ashram, one of whose members was the English Benedictine monk Bede Griffiths who wrote twelve books, including *Christ in India: Essays Towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (1967).

Eastern Orthodox Christianity has continued to produce accomplished mystics. Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov (1853–1900) had three visions of Sophia, which he captured in his poetry. Solovyov’s sensitive writings revealed a relationship with the Divine Feminine not unlike that of the troubadour for his *domna* or Dante Alighieri for Beatrice. Another notable Russian mystic was Daniel Andreev (1906–1959) who spent ten years in a Soviet labor camp. While incarcerated he managed to write much of *Rose of the World* (1991) expressing his vision of a unified Christianity.<sup>95</sup>

The anonymous nineteenth-century Russian story *The Way of the Pilgrim* and its sequel *The Pilgrim Continues his Way* provides an important glimpse into the innocent, childlike

devotion that pervades much of Orthodox spirituality.<sup>96</sup> The main character is a handicapped Russian pilgrim who followed the advice of a staretz and became an itinerant holy man; walking through the steppes of Russia he promoted the Jesus Prayer and the *Philokalia*. The books’ popularity in the West led to widespread use of the Jesus Prayer. On the surface, continuous recitation of the prayer would seem to be kataphatic, but the prayer becomes progressively quieter and almost disappears into the inner self. Proponents say that the Jesus Prayer begins on the lips, becomes a prayer of the mind, and finally becomes a prayer of the heart.<sup>97</sup>

A staretz, Father Amvrosii, comforted Fyodor Dostoevsky after the death of his young son and subsequently became a model for the character Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*.<sup>98</sup> Today, startsy and gerontes provide psychological as well as spiritual counseling, including the exorcism of *logismoi*, or negative thoughtforms.<sup>99</sup>

## Contemplative Practices for the Modern World

Devotional practices, like the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, and walking a labyrinth long provided opportunities for laypeople, as well as clergy, to explore the initial stages of the mystical path. Further options opened up in the West with the development of new contemplative techniques—inspired by western monastic practice or by Asian traditions—that could be learned without extensive training. The Jesus Prayer, imported from Eastern Orthodox Christianity, provided yet another option.

The whole notion of meditation is more familiar to the general public now than it was fifty years ago. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Transcendental Meditation gained popularity in the 1960s and ’70s, with an estimated five million adherents, including the Beatles. Groups sprang up exploring the various types of yoga. Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* became required reading for people interested in raja yoga and Indian mysticism. Buddhist, particularly Zen, meditation acquired a strong following among people who sought spirit-

uality elsewhere than in traditional western religion.

Several Christian meditative techniques were developed with the layperson in mind. All encourage a daily rhythm of meditation in which practitioners withdraw to a quiet location, adopt a comfortable sitting position, and seek to still the mind. The intent is to draw nearer to God or Christ and, as a result, to live better, service-oriented lives. Many people practice meditation at home, others meet in groups, still others attend meditation-intensive retreats.

Centering Prayer was developed in the 1970s by three Trappist monks: William Meninger, Basil Pennington, and Thomas Keating. Its name was suggested by the notion of contacting the divine center of our being. Centering Prayer follows in the tradition of apophatic prayer, dating back to the Pseudo-Dionysius and *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Its simple methodology involves the use of a simple mantra, or “sacred word,” of individual choice; examples might be “peace,” “Father,” or “be still.” The mantra is recited not continuously but as needed to bring the wandering mind back to the apophatic state.

Keating commented that in contemplation our everyday faculties “are at rest so that our intuitive faculties, the passive intellect, and the will-to-God, may access the ‘still point,’ the place where our personal identity is rooted in God as an abiding presence.” He added: “the divine presence has always been with us, but we think it is absent. That thought is the monumental illusion of the human condition. The spiritual journey is designed to heal it.”<sup>100</sup> Episcopal priest Cynthia Bourgeault explained that Centering Prayer “bypasses our capacities for reason, imagination, visualization, emotion, and memory” but makes

use of “spiritual awareness.”<sup>101</sup> The ego, she continued, is transcended in a quest for pure union with God. Keating and others insist that Centering Prayer is not “true” contemplative prayer—*infused* prayer that depends on divine grace—but can lead to it. Centering

**The distinction between occult and mystical meditation is not as clear as might be supposed. Mystics exercise will in spiritual discipline, notably in the determination to endure “dark nights” in anticipation of eventual dawn. Renunciants demonstrate strong will in rejecting the things of this world. They would agree with Bailey’s comment that renunciation imitates, in a small way and in “many lesser renunciations,” the great renunciation Christ made at the crucifixion...**

Prayer groups typically combine the *Lectio Divina* with 20–30 minutes of silent meditation, which expresses the ideal of *contemplatio*.

Christian Meditation, developed by Benedictine monk John Main, stemmed from an encounter in Malaysia with the yoga master Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Satyananda taught Main mantra yoga but urged him to use a mantra with Christian significance. Main chose the Aramaic word

*Maranatha* (“Come, Lord”).<sup>102</sup> Whereas Centering Prayer uses a mantra only as needed, Christian Meditation requires it to be used throughout the meditation sessions. Commitment to twice-daily meditations on those lines, in Main’s words, “will bring you into deeper and deeper realms of silence. It is in the silence that we are led into the mystery of the eternal silence of God.”<sup>103</sup> Main declared that the essence of Christian prayer is “oneness discovered within ourselves but which leads use to oneness with God and to oneness with all.”<sup>104</sup>

Asian influence is even more conspicuous in Christian Zen, a practice promoted by Jesuit priest William Johnston, who lived for many years in Japan. It does not use a mantra but advises participants simply to ignore stray thoughts. Johnston went so far as to advocate sitting in a lotus position and felt comfortable describing the unitive state as “Christian *samadhi*.”<sup>105</sup> Zen, Johnston explained, involves detachment “from everything, even from oneself . . . detachment from the very process

of thinking.” Indeed, “the subject–object relationship disappears.” Johnston rejected criticisms that, at such levels of apophatism, his method can no longer be called Christian prayer. He also dismissed suggestions that it implies “Christian atheism or denial of God.” Rather, he wrote, it is “simply another way of experiencing God.”<sup>106</sup>

The prominent role played by Roman Catholic religious in the development of these meditative techniques has not discouraged people of other persuasions from using them. Centering Prayer, in particular, has been embraced on a substantial scale—and with no greater controversy—by Lutherans, Anglicans/Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others.<sup>107</sup>

How many lay practitioners have visions, experience ecstasy, or achieve union with the Divine has not been recorded. Most participants probably have more modest goals; few would welcome the stigmata. Some people undoubtedly get discouraged by “dark nights” and abandon the practices. Those who commit themselves to regular meditation and weather the storms recognize both the intrinsic rewards and the positive effects on their lives. They also find that contemplative prayer reveals its own purpose. *The Way of the Pilgrim* reminds us that: “Ceaseless interior prayer is a continual yearning of the human spirit toward God. To succeed . . . we must pray more often to God to teach us to pray . . . . It is prayer itself which will reveal to you how it can be achieved unceasingly.”<sup>108</sup>

## Mysticism and Service

Modern spirituality places great emphasis on service. The ethics of seeking a personal union with God inevitably come into question at a time when work is urgently needed to relieve suffering and improve the human condition. Laypeople are unlikely to face significant criticism because they live “in the world,” and everyday activities provide cover for their part-time mysticism. Like the mendicant friars, the Jesuits, and the Quakers, they need periods of solitude and silence for contemplation, but they also have a wealth of

opportunities to share the blessings they receive through service.

More serious criticism is sometimes leveled at people who withdraw from the world to become hermits or join enclosed religious orders. The contemplative life is depicted as self-serving. Evelyn Underhill criticized the path of a seeker who cuts “off of all contacts with the ‘unreal’ world of things [and goes] up alone to meet God on the mountain.”<sup>109</sup> Yet she acknowledged that the contemplative life is not necessarily isolationist. She praised a path in which “the life of spirit [involves] the whole man in all his activities and correspondences.” “The mounting soul,” she continued,

carries the whole world with it; the cosmic crossbearer is its true type. It does not abandon, it remakes: declaring that the “glory of the lighted mind” once he has attained to it, will flood the totality of man’s nature, lighting up the World of Becoming, and exhibiting not merely the unknowable character of “the Origin of all that is,” but the knowable and immediate presence of that Immanent Spirit in Whom “we live and move and have our being.”<sup>110</sup>

Christian monastic institutions typically served the populations or surrounding areas. The rule of Basil of Caesarea required monks to operate guest houses and schools and to care for the poor and sick. When parish churches were still rare, monasteries served the religious needs of local people. Monasteries provided welfare services throughout the Middle Ages, and, when they were suppressed in Protestant countries, disadvantaged people faced enormous hardship. The monasteries established by Sergius of Radonezh brought both Christianity and social services to northern Russia.

Service extends beyond the physical plane. Cloister walls are not impervious to love and light. The Carthusian rule of Bruno of Cologne asserted: “Separated from all, we are united to all.”<sup>111</sup> And the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* assured his readers—presumably who were aspiring mystics—that

“the whole of mankind is wonderfully helped by what you are doing.”<sup>112</sup> A Russian Orthodox writer declared: “The man who lives in silent solitude . . . is in the highest degree active, even more so than the one who takes part in the life of society . . . . For he who watches in silence, by communicating his inward experiences . . . promotes the spiritual advantage and the salvation of his brethren . . . His experience and teaching pass on from generation to generation.”<sup>113</sup>

Participants at a conference on Centering Prayer collectively declared: “The contemplative consciousness bonds each person in a union with God and with all other persons. It enables them to find God present in all things.”<sup>114</sup> Bearing in mind the interconnectedness of all life, spiritual blessings are shared whether or not there is physical communication with the outside world. Individuals and groups engaged in contemplative prayer are beacons of love and light serving to raise the consciousness of the planet.

### Mysticism and the Paths of Discipleship and Initiation

Meditation, often based on Asian precedents, is taught by esoteric schools and teachers as an essential element in training programs. Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson promoted yoga, as understood in the *Bhagavad Gita*, as “a carefully ordered regime of self-training” for discipleship and initiation.<sup>115</sup> As a starting point he recommended

the chanting of a single effective mantram, the skillful establishment of the center of thought and knowledge in the threefold spiritual Self within, and bodily stillness. The mind, too, must be rendered reasonably still, mental activities concerned with space, time, and forms reduced to a minimum.<sup>116</sup>

*Yoga* is the Sanskrit for “union,” and Hodson explained that the committed practitioner can attain a sense of profound oneness: “The yogi or yogini consciously melts, knowing himself or herself forever merged into that nameless Principle, which can only be referred to as Beingness.”<sup>117</sup> Commitment must be strong, but the results can be far-reaching: “The suc-

cessful yogi and yogini must become ablaze with the Fire of God . . . . A kind of divine rest is the real result of yoga, a deepening of consciousness as if a way had been found into the deeper recesses of the Soul into which at any time one could retire.”<sup>118</sup>

Hodson was a priest in the Liberal Catholic Church and reported ecstatic experiences while celebrating the Mass.<sup>119</sup> Unlike William Johnston, who sought to Christianize Zen, Hodson made no attempt to put a Christian face on his yoga. But he did offer a theological interpretation of the famous passage in *John*: “God so loved the world,” relating it to the “wondrous and divine love . . . which the Solar Logos [has] for all parts and beings of His Solar System.”<sup>120</sup>

Alice Bailey, whose Arcane School—and derivative organizations like the School for Esoteric Studies—offer extensive programs for discipleship training, carefully distinguished between mystical and occult meditation. She emphasized the importance of reaching the third of Patanjali’s three stages of “meditation”: concentration (*dhāranā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and contemplation (*samādhi*). But her interpretation of *samādhi* was different from Johnston’s:

[I]t is essential that all disciples in an Ashram should be contemplatives, but contemplatives in the occult sense and not the mystical. In any meditation work which you are doing or may in the future do, your aim should be to achieve as rapidly as possible the highest point in the meditation process, passing quickly through the stages of concentration, alignment and meditation to contemplation.<sup>121</sup>

Occult meditation—in its threefold sense—is driven by the mind and will. Pitfalls are the potentially separative aspects of mind and the ambitious, self-centered aspects of will. To avoid them, emphasis is placed on the group nature of meditation and its fulfillment in service. Occult meditation also proceeds according to “law,” or scientific principles, and is goal-driven.<sup>122</sup> Mystical meditation, by

contrast, is driven by the heart, without concern for specific outcomes.

The distinction between occult and mystical meditation is not as clear as might be supposed. Mystics exercise will in spiritual discipline, notably in the determination to endure “dark nights” in anticipation of eventual dawn. Renunciants demonstrate strong will in rejecting the things of this world. They would agree with Bailey’s comment that renunciation imitates, in a small way and in “many lesser renunciations,” the great renunciation Christ made at the crucifixion and which all must make at the fourth initiation.<sup>123</sup> The very process of meditation, Cynthia Bourgeault remarked, “is an experience of dying to self . . . . When we enter meditation, it is like a ‘mini-death,’ at least from the perspective of the ego.”<sup>124</sup> Contemplative prayer, however, is passive. Perhaps mystics over-emphasize passivity; the desert fathers might have seen fewer demons if they had protected themselves from below, while opening themselves to higher impressions.

For its part, occult meditation has a passive dimension. Bailey explained that it “puts a man into an attitude of equilibrium, neither utterly receptive and negative [that is, passive], nor utterly positive, but at the point of balance.”<sup>125</sup> She proceeded to explain that the receptive attitude affords “opportunity to the Ego, and later to the Master, to disturb [the attitude of] equilibrium.”<sup>126</sup> Christian mystics would not be averse to God or Christ creating similar disturbances.

Bailey declared that mystical meditation “marks the point of the highest emotional aspiration.” Christian mystics would agree that mysticism flows from the affective faculties rather than the intellect, but they would reject suggestions that it is confined to the emotions. Mystics clearly access the abstract mental levels, and their insight into complex truths and ability to integrate seemingly divergent truths suggest significant buddhic consciousness. The buddhic plane is the plane of intuition, synthesis and wisdom. Theosophist Annie Besant commented: “[T]he mystic gazes on the Beatific Vision, . . . the sage rests in the calm of the Wisdom

that is beyond knowledge, . . . the saint reaches the purity wherein God is seen.”<sup>127</sup>

Mysticism and occultism form a complementary polarity. In their approach to the higher reaches of the human constitution, mystics move from the emotional (“astral”) plane to the abstract mental subplanes, to the buddhic plane. Occultists move from the concrete to the abstract mental subplanes, to the buddhic plane. At the buddhic level, where polarities are resolved, mysticism and occultism merge. Meanwhile, both are important, and to develop one at the expense of the other causes imbalance.

Mystics speak of “the heart” in much the same way as do esoteric teachers. Helena Roerich’s comment would win broad assent:

To behold with the eyes of the heart; to listen with the ears of the heart to the roar of the world; to peer into the future with the comprehension of the heart; to remember the cumulations of the past through the heart; thus must one impetuously advance on the path of ascent.<sup>128</sup>

With a slight change of wording, Bernard of Clairvaux would also agree with her comment that “the Era of the Mother of the World is based on realization of the heart.”<sup>129</sup>

Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical movement, listed purgation as a requirement in his programs of meditation and study: “The heart must be purged. Love must lose all unchaste qualities and become divine.”<sup>130</sup> By “heart,” presumably he meant the emotions. Steiner continued: “The understanding must be clear and the will, where it is selfish, must be extinguished; but where it serves as the toll of the master, it must be kindled.”

Steiner offered programs geared to each of several esoteric traditions. One, which recalled the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, focused on events in the life of Christ, particularly his passion, crucifixion and resurrection. In the sixth of seven steps, called “Internment and Resurrection,” the seeker “feels as though he were laid within and belonged to the whole earth planet. His life has been extended into a planetary exist-

ence.”<sup>131</sup> Steiner added: “When the pupil has surrendered himself to these experiences, they act so strongly on the astral body that, in the night, inner sense-organs are developed, are plastically formed.”<sup>132</sup> Throughout the program the seeker is urged to meditate, in a kind of *lectio divina*, on the *Gospel of John*.

The meditative practices recommended by Bailey and Steiner, like Ignatius’, are almost entirely kataphatic, at least until their later stages. Training programs include recommended readings, prescribed seed thoughts, and scripted mental exercises to raise the consciousness. Breathing exercises may also be included, reminiscent of practices in pranayama.<sup>133</sup> The purpose of meditation, in Bailey’s words, “is to assist alignment [of the lower vehicles] and so permit of contact with the Higher Self.” She placed great emphasis on soul contact and on the “soul-infused personality.” Because the soul is more narrowly defined in esoteric teachings, the notions of its relationship to the personality are clearer. Most Christian mystics would accept the proposition that meditation draws the individual closer to those aspects of the human constitution that they identify with the soul, though they would insist that love of God, and the experience of God’s love, is the overriding objective.

As noted earlier, prominent mystics insisted—official doctrine to the contrary—that there is a divine spark within each of us. Esotericists refer to the divine spark, the fragment of divine essence, as the monad. Hodson explained:

[T]he Monad is an immensely powerful concentration of divine power. In terms of consciousness this will be experienced as stimulation, occult tonic, and the enfiring of the will. . . . To reach the Monad . . . one really penetrates in thought deeper and deeper into the innermost recesses, depths of one’s nature, into the very heart, which is the Monad itself.<sup>134</sup>

Bailey’s teachings regard meditation, study

and service as interlocking foundations for building the *antahkarana*—the link, or bridge, in “mind-stuff” between the lower, concrete mind and the higher, abstract mind.<sup>135</sup> Constructing the bridge runs parallel with and interacts with discipleship work to the point where “antahkarana” and “path of discipleship” become metaphors for each other. Bailey commented that the disciple builds the antahkarana “[t]hrough the expansion of his consciousness . . . thereby demonstrating the truth of the statement that in order to tread the Path he must become that Path itself.”<sup>136</sup> Christian mystics would certainly find meaning in a parallel between advancing to higher states of consciousness and becoming more effective in service. Perhaps an analogy can also be drawn between penetrating “the cloud of unknowing” and building the all-important span of the antahkarana from the fourth to the third mental subplane.<sup>137</sup>

Evelyn Underhill’s five stages on the mystical path were correlated earlier with events in the life of Christ. They also have a striking resemblance to the five planetary initiations described in esoteric teachings (Table 1). The first stage, “awakening” clearly can be correlated with the nativity and the first initiation: “the birth of the Christ in the cave of the heart.”<sup>138</sup> The second stage, “purgation” corresponds to Christ’s baptism and temptation and to the second initiation: mastery of the emotional nature.

The third stage, “illumination,” corresponds to the transfiguration and to the third initiation. By the third initiation, the antahkarana extends to the first mental subplane: that is, to the mental permanent atom, the anchor of the spiritual triad.<sup>139</sup> Routine access to the buddhic plane then becomes possible. Moreover, the soul-infused personality begins to develop conscious contact with the monad. Christian mystics who experience awakening of the intuitive faculties and definite encounters with “God” may well have attained the third initiation. The precise terminology offered by esoteric teachings would help mys-

**Table 1. Correspondences with Evelyn Underhill’s Stages on the Mystical Path**

Stage on Mystical Path	Event in Life of Jesus Christ	Planetary Initiation
1. Awakening	Nativity	First initiation: mastery of the physical nature
2. Purgation, self-discipline	Baptism/temptation in the wilderness	Second initiation: mastery of the emotional nature
3. Illumination, receipt of divine grace	Transfiguration	Third initiation: mastery of the mental nature
4. Dark night of the soul, renunciation of the will, apparent absence of God	Passion/crucifixion	Fourth initiation: arhatship, renunciation of the lower self, departure of the solar angel
5. Union with the Divine, theosis	Resurrection/ascension	Fifth initiation: adeptship, (relative) human perfection

tics understand the significance of their experiences and spiritual progress.

The “dark night of the soul,” in which the individual experiences abandonment by God corresponds to the fourth initiation—the “crucifixion” initiation. The fourth initiation is marked not only by great suffering but also by the wrenching departure of the solar angel.<sup>140</sup> The final, unitive stage resembles the fifth, “resurrection/ascension,” initiation, the stage of (relative) human perfection. The resemblance is especially close if the unitive stage is interpreted as theosis. These correspondences are meaningful and significant, but no claim is being made here that the “dark night” can be equated to the fourth initiation. Further work may establish that theosis is equivalent to the fifth initiation, but no statement should currently be made to that effect.

Mystics no doubt can attain adeptship, but once consciousness rises above the mental level the mystical and occult paths are no longer distinct. On the latter stages of planetary initiation, the activities individuals engage in probably have less to do with their orientation to mysticism or occultism and more to do with their monadic and soul rays

and with the work of the ashrams to which they belong.

### Concluding Remarks

Mystics seek the divine presence in the Minner reaches of their being. Whereas mainstream Christianity teaches that the human constitution consists only of body and soul, some mystics have affirmed that the divine presence is localized in a divine spark, equivalent to what esotericists call the monad. Thus the human constitution is triune, more precisely expressing the notion that man is created in the image of God.

The mystic’s challenge, to cite the imagery of a medieval work, is to traverse the “cloud of unknowing” that shrouds the divine presence. The cloud is said to be impenetrable to the intellect but penetrable by the power of love. The famous mystics of history all spoke of their unquenchable love of God, a love transcending anything on a human level. Mysticism is a spirituality of the heart, contrasting with—but also complementing—occultism, which emphasizes will, and esoteric philosophy, which emphasizes the intellect.

Contemplative prayer has long been the private prayer of the cloister, but efforts contin-

ue to make it accessible to laypeople. Centering Prayer offers western seekers an effective meditative technique entirely in the Christian tradition. Christianized versions of Asian meditative traditions are also available. Whether or not participation in various practices constitutes “mysticism,” at the very least it provides relief from the intellectual focus of western Christianity and western culture. For people willing to make a serious commitment to regular meditation, the practices open up avenues to an expanded expression of Christianity in which mystical states may be attainable.

Contemplative prayer is selfless, quiet and intense. It may also be formless and wordless; some of the greatest mystics have promoted apophatic prayer, which transcends language and mental images. In apophatic prayer, the individual seeks God in the silence, listening for the “still small voice.” Even neophytes soon becomes aware that apophatic prayer is not just the absence of thought but the *presence* of something, something real and potent—love—that draws the practitioner to the center of his or her being. From a psychological perspective apophatic prayer qualifies as a distinct state of consciousness.

The mystical path offers experiences ranging from distractions, to “dark nights,” to ecstasy states, to union with God—even theosis. Yet mystics set aside expectations, and certainly ambition, and feel blessed wherever the path may take them. They also recognize that the blessings are not personal but are to be shared. Mystics affirm that love of God leads to increasing love for humanity and provides a strong basis for service. While laypeople may not progress as far along the path as cloistered monks and nuns can, they have opportunities to serve in immediate and practical ways. Modern contemplative practices appropriately emphasize service.

Humanity—and perhaps individuals—should develop both the mystical and the occult faculties, the heart as well as the mind and will. Occultists have much to gain from learning more about mysticism, and hopefully this article will stimulate interest. They could also

benefit from allowing the heart and silence to play larger roles in their own meditations. Mystics, for their part, might overcome distractions in prayer more easily by raising the consciousness by an act of will. And they would benefit from embracing the precision that esoteric philosophy brings to concepts like personality, soul, spirit and God. Conceptual precision would not diminish the sense of mystery that surrounds transcendent reality; rather it could provide a framework to help mystics understand and evaluate their experiences.

Improved knowledge and understanding would also help overcome negative stereotypes. Occultism has a bad name in Christian circles because of confusion with sorcery. Many esotericists characterize mysticism as “astral”—a pejorative term always readily at hand. With healthier attitudes on both sides we can work toward our individual and collective goal for the immediate future: to attain buddhic consciousness where mysticism and occultism are synthesized.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 *Corinthians* 12:4 (All scriptural citations are from the King James Version.)  
<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J. W. Harvey (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1923/1958), 2.  
<sup>3</sup> Trappist monk Thomas Merton and the Dalai Lama found, in their contemplative experiences, an unexpected understanding of each other’s faith. Merton died in 1968, a few months after his third meeting with the Dalai Lama.  
<sup>4</sup> Ursula King, *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies throughout the Ages* (Mahwah, NJ: HiddenSpring, 2001), 12.  
<sup>5</sup> Theresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, trans. E. A. Peers (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1946/2007), 14.  
<sup>6</sup> *1 Kings* 19:12.  
<sup>7</sup> “Secular clergy” includes all clergy who have not taken monastic or similar vows.  
<sup>8</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 31.  
<sup>9</sup> Frances M. Young, *Brokenness and Blessing: Towards a Biblical Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 58.  
<sup>10</sup> The abbey complex included facilities for both men and women.  
<sup>11</sup> Source: Order of St Benedict, <http://www.osb.org/lectio/rbonld.html> (accessed June 6, 2011).

- <sup>12</sup> As will be noted later, *meditatio* had a meaning quite different from what today we call “meditation.”
- <sup>13</sup> Christopher Jamison, *Finding Sanctuary: Monastic Steps for Everyday Life* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 40.
- <sup>14</sup> Roughly 80 percent of known stigmatics have been women. Stigmata is unknown in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, possibly because less devotion is focused on Christ’s passion and death.
- <sup>15</sup> See for example Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 1998).
- <sup>16</sup> William Rath, *The Friend of God* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Hawthorn Press, 1991), 32.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* is an obvious reference to the Carmelite Order.
- <sup>18</sup> In 1902 the Trappists took the name The Order of Cistercians of Strict Observance.
- <sup>19</sup> The Quakers rejected organized religion, refused to swear oaths, and refused to serve in the armed forces. But they embraced social causes like the abolition of slavery.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ascetic Discourses*, 31: 877. The work, traditionally attributed to Basil of Caesarea, is now believed to have been written by later followers
- <sup>21</sup> Kyriacos C. Markides, *The Mountain of Silence* (New York: Image Books, 2002).
- <sup>22</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 198-199.
- <sup>23</sup> For a detailed discussion of theosis see John F. Nash, “Theosis: a Christian Perspective on Human Destiny,” *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Spring 2011) 15-35.
- <sup>24</sup> Gregory Palamas, *The Declaration of the Holy Mountain in Defense of Those who Devoutly Practice A Life of Stillness*, *Philokalia*, trans. G. Palmer et al, vol. 4 (Thatcham, UK: Eling Trust, 1977), 419.
- <sup>25</sup> The prayer is sometimes expanded to: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”
- <sup>26</sup> Hesychios the Priest, *On Watchfulness and Holiness*, §116, *Philokalia*, vol.4, 182.
- <sup>27</sup> Ilias the Presbyter, *A Gnostic Anthology*, I, §104, *Philokalia*, vol. 3, 46.
- <sup>28</sup> *1 Thessalonians* 5:17.
- <sup>29</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homily on Prayer*, quoted in *The Way of a Pilgrim*, trans. R. M. French (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 174-175
- <sup>30</sup> That declaration, initiated by the Emperor Justinian and vague in its application, does not appear in the Council’s official proceedings. Yet denial of the soul’s pre-existence passed into mainstream Christian teachings.
- <sup>31</sup> Fourth Council of Constantinople, canon 11 and preamble. Online: [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0869-0869\\_Concilium\\_Constantin-opoli-tanum\\_IV\\_Documenta-Omnia\\_EN.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0869-0869_Concilium_Constantin-opoli-tanum_IV_Documenta-Omnia_EN.pdf) (accessed June 7, 2001).
- <sup>32</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Shorter Summa*, trans. C. Vollert (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute, 1993), §90, 89-90.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, §84, 79.
- <sup>34</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 109.
- <sup>35</sup> Meister Eckhart, Sermon 6, “The Greatness of the Human Person,” reproduced in Matthew Fox, *Passion for Creation* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1990), 103.
- <sup>36</sup> Theresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 152.
- <sup>37</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer*, part I (London: Ogles, et al., 1816), 51.
- <sup>38</sup> Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks* (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 1981).
- <sup>39</sup> It could possibly be argued that *glossolalia* (“speaking in tongues”) transcends discursive thought.
- <sup>40</sup> Frederick G. McLeod, “Apophatic or Kataphatic Prayer?” *Spirituality Today* (Spring 1986, vol. 38), 41-52.
- <sup>41</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Mystical Theology*, §1:3, in *The Complete Works*, trans. C. Luibheid (Mahwah, New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 136.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, §2:1, 138.
- <sup>43</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Four Hundred Texts on Love*, II, §61, *Philokalia*, vol. 2, 76.
- <sup>44</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing*, trans. C. Wolters (London: Penguin, 1961), §9, 66. The work’s title seems to have been suggested by a passage in the Pseudo-Dionysius’ *The Mystical Theology*. 1:3.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, §36, 95. Another recommended mantra was “sin.”
- <sup>46</sup> Reproduced in Colin Burrow (ed.), *Metaphysical Poetry* (London: Penguin, 2006), 220. Another relevant poem is “They Are All Gone into the World of Light,” *ibid.*, 226-227.
- <sup>47</sup> Benedictine monk Luke Dysinger provides a detailed discussion of these poems at: [http://www.ldysinger.com/@themes/apoph-kat-01\\_apo-kata.htm](http://www.ldysinger.com/@themes/apoph-kat-01_apo-kata.htm) (accessed June 12, 2011).
- <sup>48</sup> McLeod, “Apophatic or Kataphatic Prayer?,” 41-52.
- <sup>49</sup> *The Pilgrim Continues his Way*, trans. R. M. French (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 175.

- <sup>50</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 46-49.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20, 54-56.
- <sup>52</sup> John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. E. A. Peers (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003), 19.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.
- <sup>54</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way* (Atlanta, GA: Ariel Press, 1913/1992), 52ff.
- <sup>55</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 130.
- <sup>56</sup> John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, 90-96.
- <sup>57</sup> Theresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 15.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ezekiel* 10:1 referred to “a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.”
- <sup>59</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 74, 76-78.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.
- <sup>61</sup> See for example Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York: Lucis, 1925), 538ff.
- <sup>62</sup> Thomas à Kempis (attributed to), *The Imitation of Christ*, book 4, §7. Online at <http://www.leaderu.com/cyber/books/imitation/imitation.html> (accessed June 21, 2011).
- <sup>63</sup> Theresa of Ávila, *The Way of Perfection*, trans. E. A. Peers (New York: Doubleday, 1964/2004), 22.
- <sup>64</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing*, §28, 88.
- <sup>65</sup> Jamison, *Finding Sanctuary*, 42.
- <sup>66</sup> Not all ecstatics are mystics. Ecstatic experiences are common at Pentecostal churches.
- <sup>67</sup> *Psalms* 47:2.
- <sup>68</sup> Theresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 108.
- <sup>69</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. C. Hart & J. Bishop (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1990), 59.
- <sup>70</sup> See for example Marie-Louise von Franz (ed.), *Aurora Consurgens* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 2000), 425. The *Aurora Consurgens* bears signs of Thomas’ authorship, though the work is anonymous.
- <sup>71</sup> Clemens Brentano, Introduction to Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, trans. anon. (Charlotte, NC: Tan Book, 1983), 19.
- <sup>72</sup> Some of the material has been published. In addition to *The Dolorous Passion*, an interesting book is *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Charlotte, NC: Tan Book, 1970).
- <sup>73</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 237.
- <sup>74</sup> P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, trans: G. Vann (London: Collins, 1965), 45. De Chardin attributed the experience to “a friend,” but it is generally assumed to have been his own.
- <sup>75</sup> For discussion of the effects of LSD see Walter N. Pahnke & William A. Richards, “Implications of LSD and Experimental Mysticism,” *Altered States of Consciousness* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1969), 409-439.
- <sup>76</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 93. Emphasis added.
- <sup>77</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing*, §4, 55.
- <sup>78</sup> *The Book of Privy Counsel*, §2.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, §1.
- <sup>80</sup> Not surprisingly, suggestions that an individual soul could become the “bride of Christ” raised the Inquisition’s hackles; that accolade was normally reserved for the church.
- <sup>81</sup> Theresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, 147
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-95.
- <sup>84</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon 52, *Bernard of Clairvaux on the Song of Songs*, vol. 3 (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 1979), 50.
- <sup>85</sup> John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, trans. E. A. Peers, 3/e (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2008), 10.
- <sup>86</sup> John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 80.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.
- <sup>88</sup> *1 Corinthians* 13:12; *1 Timothy* 6:16.
- <sup>89</sup> *Isaiah* 64:4. See also *1 Corinthians* 2:9.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 87. Catherine of Genoa is not to be confused with her more-famous namesake from Sienna.
- <sup>91</sup> John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 82.
- <sup>92</sup> Physicians examined Padre Pio’s stigmata, verifying the symptoms but finding no physical cause. Yet the wounds completely healed on his deathbed, leaving no scars.
- <sup>93</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain: an Autobiography of Faith*, San Diego (CA: Harcourt Brace, 1948), 462. Merton’s master’s thesis was concerned with the art of William Blake.
- <sup>94</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Climate of Monastic Prayer* (Shannon: Irish Univ. Press, 1969), 123.
- <sup>95</sup> Daniel Andreev, *Rose of the World* (Moscow: Andreev Charity Foundation), 1997.
- <sup>96</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim* and *The Pilgrim Continues his Way*, trans. R. M. French (Harper-Collins, San Francisco, 1991). Some commentators claim that the sequel was written by a different author.
- <sup>97</sup> King, *Christian Mystics*, 196.
- <sup>98</sup> Solovyov provided the model for Alyosha.

- <sup>99</sup> Stephen Muse (ed.), *Raising Lazarus* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), 8-9, 38, 68-83, 102-104.
- <sup>100</sup> Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation* (New York, Continuum, 2010), 90.
- <sup>101</sup> Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham MD: Cowley Publications, 2004), 32-33.
- <sup>102</sup> John Main, *Moment of Christ: The Path of Meditation* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 21. The word *Maranatha* appears in *1 Corinthians* 16:22 and *Revelation* 22:20.
- <sup>103</sup> Main, *Moment of Christ*, 21-22.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>105</sup> William Johnston, *Christian Zen* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1997), 46.
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 23.
- <sup>107</sup> The present author participates in a Centering Prayer group at an Episcopal church. Contemplative practices are still controversial, and a few vocal critics can be found in every major denomination.
- <sup>108</sup> *The Way of a Pilgrim*, 4.
- <sup>109</sup> Underhill, *The Mystic Way*, 25.
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.
- <sup>111</sup> Carthusian Rule, Statute 34.2.
- <sup>112</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing*, §3, 53.
- <sup>113</sup> *The Pilgrim Continues his Way*, 199.
- <sup>114</sup> Quoted in Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, 156.
- <sup>115</sup> Geoffrey Hodson. *Call to the Heights* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1976), 77. The *Bhagavad Gita* identifies several yogas, including *karma yoga*, the yoga of work; *jnana yoga*, the yoga of knowledge; *bhakti yoga*, the yoga of devotion; and *raja yoga*, the integrative, “kingly” yoga.
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.
- <sup>118</sup> Sandra Hodson (ed.), *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition* (Manila, Philippines: Theosophical Publishers, 1992), 218.
- <sup>119</sup> Sandra Hodson (ed.), *Light of the Sanctuary* (Manila, Philippines: Theosophical Publishers, 1988), 162, 174.
- <sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.
- <sup>121</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. 1, 11.
- <sup>122</sup> Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 12.
- <sup>123</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. 1 (New York: Lucis, 1944), 312.
- <sup>124</sup> Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, 81. Bourgeault is referring here to the lower ego, the focus of identity in the personality.
- <sup>125</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York: Lucis, 1920), 10.
- <sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>127</sup> Annie W. Besant, *Esoteric Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1901/1953), pp. 201-202.
- <sup>128</sup> Helena I. Roerich, *Heart* (New York: Agni Yoga Society), §1, 7. Roerich served as amanuensis to the Master Morya.
- <sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, §106, 72.
- <sup>130</sup> Rudolf Steiner, lecture, 1905. Reproduced in *Start Now* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2004), 59.
- <sup>131</sup> Rudolf Steiner, lecture, May 1908. Reproduced in *The Gospel of St. John* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 1940), 172.
- <sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 172. When Steiner spoke of the “astral body” it is not always clear whether he was referring to the emotional/sentient body, considered in trans-Himalayan teachings, or to the more inclusive astral body of the western mystery tradition; the latter extends up to mental levels.
- <sup>133</sup> Percussive breathing, which can prematurely stimulate the kundalini, is carefully avoided.
- <sup>134</sup> Sandra Hodson, *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*, 192.
- <sup>135</sup> See for example Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. 2 (New York: Lucis, 1942), 69-74.
- <sup>136</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 399. “Antaskarana,” the spelling used in Bailey’s books, is replaced here by the more-familiar “antahkarana.”
- <sup>137</sup> See for example John F. Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny* (Bloomington, IL: Authorhouse, 2004), 201-204. Higher mind extends over the first three mental subplanes, lower mind over the latter four. Note that the subplanes conventionally are numbered from above.
- <sup>138</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (New York: Lucis, 1927), 308.
- <sup>139</sup> The triad, consisting of higher mind, *buddhi* and *atma*, is the vehicle of the monad, while the personality, consisting of body (dense physical and etheric), emotions, and lower mind, is the vehicle of the soul.
- <sup>140</sup> See for example Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny*, 254-257.



# The Bhagavad Gita Compared to Bailey's Technique of Integration for the First Ray

Zachary F. Lansdowne

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## Summary

The Bhagavad Gita, which means the “Lord’s Song” in Sanskrit, is popularly known as the Gita, and is a Hindu scripture that is considered to be among the most important texts in the history of religion and philosophy. The Gita’s initial chapters are concerned with karma yoga. The Sanskrit word *karma* means “action,” and the word *yoga* means “union,” so karma yoga can be translated as the path of union through action. Alice Bailey’s “Technique of Integration for the First Ray” is a modern text written with abstruse symbols, so it is difficult to understand. This article clarifies Bailey’s Technique by showing that it is similar to verses on karma yoga found in the first five chapters of the Gita.

## The Bhagavad Gita

The Gita is embedded as an episode within the much longer *Mahabharata*, which is one of the major Sanskrit epics of ancient India. The initial portion of the *Mahabharata* describes the events that led up to the Gita, resulting in the assembly of two antagonistic armies on the battlefield at Kurukshetra. One army is led by the Kaurava brothers who are one hundred in number, the eldest of which is Duryodhana. The other army is led by the Pandava brothers who are just five in number, one of which is Arjuna. Both sides asked for the support of Krishna, a leading prince of the realm, because he possessed a vast army and was revered as a wise teacher. Krishna responded by offering to give his army to one side and to become a charioteer for the other side, but he refused to touch any weapon or to fight in the battle. Duryodhana chose Krishna’s army, but Arjuna preferred to have Krishna as his charioteer.

The Gita begins with the two armies standing poised for battle. After Arjuna tells Krishna to drive their chariot into the space between the two armies, and Krishna does so, they have a dialog that lasts for the rest of the Gita’s 18 chapters. Arjuna has misgivings about his role in the coming battle, so Krishna explains various Hindu concepts and practices to him. Because of these explanations, the Gita is a practical, self-contained guide to daily living. The actual battle of Kurukshetra occurs after their dialog is completed, and it is described in the subsequent portion of the *Mahabharata*.

Swami Nikhilananda (1895-1973), founder of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, characterizes the Gita’s content:

The Gita is a yogashastra, a scripture on yoga. The word “yoga” ... denotes the union of individual soul with Universal Soul, and also the means to such union. Hence yoga is the goal of all religions and the basis of all religious practices. It implies much more than religion in its usual sense. Instead of laying down creeds and doctrines for acceptance by religious aspirants, it emphasizes the psychological approach to self-unfoldment. Thus yoga takes into consideration the different types of human minds—the active, the philosophical, the emotional,

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## About the Author

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and the psychic—and expounds for them, respectively, the path of work (karmayoga), the path of knowledge (jnanyoga), the path of love or devotion (bhaktiyoga), and the path of concentration and self-control (rajayoga). Each of these paths opens upon the infinite horizon of Truth and effects the union of man with God. The Gita describes them all.<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing quotation describes a key feature of yoga philosophy: aspirants are regarded as belonging to different psychological types, and a system of yoga, which is a line of self-development, has been devised for each psychological type.

How are the Gita's chapters organized? Swami Prabhavananda (1893-1976), founder of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, writes:

The Gita is divided into eighteen chapters, which can be grouped into three sections, or books. The first of these three books deals with karma yoga, the path of work, and here the insistence is upon action. The second book is an exposition of jnana yoga, the path of knowledge, and here the insistence is upon knowledge of the Self. The subject of karma is not entirely dismissed, but is harmonized with the path of knowledge. The last of the books discusses bhakti yoga, or the path of love and devotion, and the insistence here is on worship and love of the one Supreme Lord. Jnana (knowledge) and karma (work) do not disappear, but are both harmonized with devotion.<sup>2</sup>

Other commentators have also noted that the Gita's chapters can be grouped into three sequential sections on karma yoga, jnana yoga, and bhakti yoga, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Although the Gita as a whole has something to teach every type of aspirant, a given chapter's system of yoga is primarily intended for aspirants belonging to the corresponding psychological type.

In Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita is considered to be a direct message of the Hindu god Vishnu, who is said to be the preserver and protector of creation, because Krishna is con-

sidered to be an incarnation, or avatar, of Vishnu. Consequently, millions of Hindus have esteemed this text over the centuries. Theosophical writers also have a high regard for the Gita. For example, Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), co-founder of the Theosophical Society, states: "Since the birth of the Theosophical Society ... it is being repeated daily that all the Esoteric Wisdom of the ages lies concealed in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gita*."<sup>4</sup> Alice Bailey (1880-1949), founder of the Arcane School, states, "There are three books which should be in the hands of every student, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *New Testament*, and the *Yoga Sutras*, for in these three is contained a complete picture of the soul and its unfoldment."<sup>5</sup>

### Technique of Integration for the First Ray

Teachings on the seven rays are contained in both the ancient Hindu *Rig Veda* and modern Theosophy.<sup>6</sup> Bailey provides a modern theosophical account:

A ray is but a name for a particular force or type of energy, with the emphasis upon the quality which that force exhibits and not upon the form aspect which it creates. This is a true definition of a ray.<sup>7</sup>

Every human being is swept into manifestation on the impulse of some ray, and is colored by that particular ray quality, which determines the form aspect, indicates the way he should go, and enables him (by the time the third initiation is reached) to have sensed and then to have cooperated with his ray purpose.<sup>8</sup>

In Theosophy, an "initiation" is said to be a milestone on the spiritual journey. Thus, according to Bailey's account, every human being is connected to a specific ray and can receive guidance on the spiritual journey from that ray.

Bailey claims that her "Seven Techniques of Integration" depict "the pattern of the thought and the process of the life" of aspirants guided by each of the seven rays.<sup>9</sup> She admits that her techniques are written in such a way that they are difficult to understand: "It is difficult

to make easily comprehensible the nature and purpose of these techniques”; “Our study of the Techniques of Integration was definitely abstruse and couched in language quite symbolic.”<sup>10</sup> She also says, “these ray techniques are imposed by the soul upon the personality after it has been somewhat integrated into a functioning entity and is, therefore, becoming slightly responsive to the soul, the directing Intelligence.”<sup>11</sup> In this context, the term “soul” denotes the “superconscious self,”<sup>12</sup> and “personality” denotes the mental, emotional, and physical bodies.<sup>13</sup>

If Bailey’s claim is correct, then her techniques depict the archetypal patterns that underlie all inspired methods of integration. For example, the written esoteric teaching of any religion might be a verbal expression of one of these archetypes, but with some distortions due to the limitations of words. Different esoteric religions might be expressions of the same archetype but with varying distortions. Thus, if her claim is true, it should be possible to show that her techniques, in part or in whole, are similar to various recorded methods of integration that are thought to be inspired.

This article is concerned only with the First Ray. Bailey’s Technique of Integration for the First Ray is as follows:

*The love of power* must dominate. There must also be repudiation of those forms which wield no power.

The *word* goes forth from soul to form; “Stand up. Press outward into life. Achieve a goal. For you, there must be not a circle, but a line.

Prepare *the form*. Let the eyes look forward, not on either side. Let the ears be closed to all the outer voices, and the hands clenched, the body braced, and mind alert. Emotion is not used in furthering of the Plan. Love takes its place.”

The symbol of a moving point of light appears above the brow. The keynote of the life though uttered not, yet still is clearly heard: “I move to power. I am the One. We are a Unity in power. And all is for the power and glory of the *One*.”<sup>14</sup>

The teachings on the seven rays are comparable to those on yoga philosophy, because both sets of teachings regard aspirants as belonging to different psychological types and regard each type as having its own system of self-development. In the teachings on the seven rays, the various systems of self-development are depicted by Bailey’s Techniques of Integration. In the teachings on yoga philosophy, the various systems of self-development, called “yogas,” are outlined by the Bhagavad Gita and other Hindu scriptures. How closely do Bailey’s Techniques resemble the yogas?

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that Bailey’s Technique of Integration for the First Ray is similar to verses on karma yoga in the first five chapters of the Bhagavad Gita. Unless mentioned otherwise, Swami Nikhilananda’s English translation of the Gita is used.<sup>15</sup> *Time Magazine* (July 3, 1944) gives the following review of this translation:

The first really readable, authoritative English translation of one of the world’s oldest and greatest religious classics was published last fortnight. It is The Bhagavad Gita (The Song of the Lord), often called the Hindu New Testament, translated by Swami Nikhilananda.<sup>16</sup>

In a few instances, Charles Johnston’s translation is used for verses in which his language is closer to that in the corresponding sentences within Bailey’s Technique.<sup>17</sup> Johnston (1867-1931) founded the Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society, was a student of Madam Blavatsky, and married her niece.

Bailey states that each of her techniques can be divided into five phases: “The words, covering the process in every case, are *Alignment, Crisis, Light, Revelation, Integration*.”<sup>18</sup> In what follows, our commentary is also divided into these five phases.

## Alignment

**I**n the first phase of the integration process, the aspirants bring their mental, emotional and physical bodies into increased *alignment* with their soul. How is this phase treated by our two texts?

The First Ray is called the “The Ray of Will, or Power.”<sup>19</sup> This grammatical construction suggests that will and power are treated as synonyms. Bailey says that “purpose and truth, when grasped, brings into direct conflict the will of the personality (the separative individual, governed by the concrete, analytical mind) and the will of the soul.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, an aspirant has two different wills, or powers, that may oppose each other: the will of the personality, and the will of the soul. The Technique of Integration for the First Ray depicts the evolutionary stages in the expression of these wills.

*Righteousness* is the English translation of the Greek word *dikaosune*, which is used in the original language for Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”<sup>21</sup> In theosophical terminology, *righteousness* can be defined as the will of the soul. Bailey gives a similar account: “Physical plane methods, when motivated by unchanging love of humanity and under the direction of an enlightened soul, become agents of righteousness.”<sup>22</sup> Commentators on the Gita often translate the Sanskrit words *dharma* and *adharma* as righteousness and unrighteousness, respectively. For example, Albert Randall, professor of philosophy, states:

In Hinduism, and especially the Bhagavad Gita, *dikaosune* is understood as *dharma*. *Dharma* is often translated as “righteousness” or “righteous duty.” Because Arjuna’s spiritual distress at the destructiveness of the ensuing battle causes him to collapse on the floor of his chariot, the remainder of the Gita is Krishna’s educating him about *dharma* ... While there is no word for sin in the Gita, the term *adharma* is the Hindu equivalent of what monotheisms mean by

sin. Because Sanskrit is Indo-European based ... a word can be negated by adding the indefinite article, “a.” Thus, *adharma* means “unrighteousness,” the opposite of righteousness.<sup>23</sup>

The Technique’s first sentence treats the alignment phase: “*The love of power* must dominate.” Here, “*power*” is interpreted as righteousness, or the will of the soul. Thus, for an aspirant to complete this phase, his or her appreciation of righteousness must become greater than that of any possession or pleasure. Such appreciation is the result of the aspirant becoming aligned with what Bailey calls “the unalterable fact of his essentially divine nature or being, which cannot remain satisfied with the gaining of power in a personality sense and in a material world.”<sup>24</sup>

Next, let us examine how the alignment phase is treated in the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, at the beginning of which the two opposing armies are already assembled at Kurukshetra. Arjuna tells his charioteer, who is Krishna, to draw his chariot between the opposing armies in verses 1:21-23, using Nikhilananda’s translation:

*Arjuna said:* O Achyuta, between the two armies draw up my chariot, that I may behold those who stand there eager to fight, and may know, on the eve of battle, with whom I must contend. I would observe those who are gathered here to fight, desiring on the field of battle the welfare of the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra.

Here, Achyuta, which literally means the “Changeless One,” is an epithet of Krishna, and “the evil-minded son of Dhritarashtra” denotes Duryodhana. Krishna responds to

Arjuna's request by moving the chariot in verses 1:24-25:

Krishna drew up the excellent chariot between the two armies, facing Bhishma, Drona, and all the rulers of the earth, and said, "Behold, O Partha, all the Kurus here assembled!"

Here, Partha is an epithet of Arjuna, the Kurus refer to Arjuna's enemies, and Bhishma and Drona are leaders of the Kurus.

Both Krishna and Arjuna are symbols. Bailey speaks of "The battle of Kurukshetra, with Krishna, the soul, heartening Arjuna, the aspirant, on to steady and continuous effort."<sup>25</sup> The Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), in his commentary on the Gita, speaks of "Krishna the divine Soul" and "Arjuna, the human soul."<sup>26</sup> Bailey also uses the terminology of divine and human souls: "Thus gradually, and with infinite pain, the human soul learns to function first as a member of the human family, and, secondly as a spiritual entity, the divine soul."<sup>27</sup> "Soul" and "divine soul" appear to be synonymous, and "aspirant" and "human soul" also appear to be synonymous, so Aurobindo provides independent support for Bailey's premise that Krishna symbolizes the soul and Arjuna symbolizes the aspirant.

The *pairs of opposites*—such as good and evil, pleasure and pain, as well as victory and defeat—play a key role in both the Technique and Gita. Human beings make sense of and organize their experiences by constructing concepts out of pairs of opposites, so they confuse the actual world with their concepts of the world, and tend to think of the world as divided into separate and independent parts rather than as a unitary and interdependent whole. To avoid being misled by dichotomous conceptualization, human beings need to, in the Gita's words of verse 2:43, "Be free from the pairs of opposites."

Bailey speaks of "the Kurukshetra of the 'pairs of opposites,' wherein Arjuna sits in the middle and seeks to balance the warring forces."<sup>28</sup> Thus, the two opposing armies symbolize the pairs of opposites. In verses 1:21-23, Arjuna characterizes the leader of

the opposing side as "evil-minded," so he must think of his side as "good-minded." The movement of Arjuna's chariot to midway between the opposing armies symbolizes, in Bailey's words, "that mental illumination which will reveal the 'middle way' between the pairs of opposites."<sup>29</sup> Given the premise that Arjuna symbolizes the aspirant and Krishna symbolizes the soul, verses 1:21-23 depict the aspirant as invoking assistance from the soul, and verses 1:24-25 depict the soul as responding by illuminating the aspirant's mind so that the middle way is revealed.

What is the effect of the soul's illumination on the aspirant? After Krishna places Arjuna's chariot between the two armies, Arjuna sees his situation in a new way in verses 1:26-40:

Then Partha saw, arrayed in both the armies, fathers and grandfathers, maternal uncles and brothers, sons and grandsons, comrades and friends, fathers-in-law and teachers. Casting his eyes on all these kinsmen stationed on opposing sides, the son of Kunti was overcome with deep pity and sorrowfully spoke.

*Arjuna said:* O Krishna, at the sight of these my kinsmen, assembled here eager to give battle, my limbs fail and my mouth is parched. My body is shaken and my hair stands on end ... Nor do I perceive, O Krishna, any good in slaughtering my own people in battle. I desire neither victory nor empire nor even any pleasure ... Though they, their understanding overcome by greed, perceive no evil in the decay of families and no sin in hostility to friends, why, O Janardana, should not we, who clearly perceive the evil in the decay of families, learn to refrain from this sin? With the decay of a family, perish its dharmas, which have existed from time out of mind. With the ending of the dharmas, adharma overwhelms the whole family.

Here, Kunti denotes Arjuna's mother; Janardana means "the Destroyer of the demon Jana," and it is another epithet of Krishna. As discussed earlier, dharma can be taken as

righteousness, and both sin and adharma as unrighteousness.

According to the foregoing verses, the effect of the soul's illumination is that the aspirant desires "neither victory nor empire nor even any pleasure." Instead, the aspirant prefers to "learn to refrain from this sin" and to avoid "the ending of the dharmas," showing that his or her appreciation of righteousness dominates that of any possession or pleasure.

Thus, the Gita's treatment of the alignment phase is a symbolic elaboration of the Technique's concise initial sentence.

### Crisis of Evocation

Bailey writes, "The soul is a unit of energy, vibrating in unison with one of the seven ray Lives, and colored by a particular ray light."<sup>30</sup> In other words, each soul has the quality of a particular ray, which is called its "soul ray." In the second phase of the integration process, the aspirants sense intuitively their soul ray, which in this case is will, or power, because they have increased their alignment with their soul. The inconsistency between their sensed potential and their daily life brings them to an inner *crisis* in which they begin to bring forth the guidance of their soul.

The Technique's second sentence mentions "forms." In this context, "forms" are taken as referring to the vital body, because Bailey says that the "vital body is the true form from the standpoint of the occultist and not the dense tangible sheath."<sup>31</sup> Bailey also describes the role of the vital body:

When you remember that the vital body is the recipient of the streams of energy, and is in fact composed and formed of such streams, and that the physical body is driven into activity by these streams, it is apparent that that stream which is the most potent is the one which will control the action of the physical body upon the physical plane.<sup>32</sup>

If "power" denotes righteousness, or the will of the soul, then "no power" denotes unrighteousness, or the self-centered will of the personality. Unrighteousness can form a stream

of energy in the vital body, which in turn can drive the dense physical body into activity. Thus, "those forms which wield no power" are taken simply as unrighteous, or self-centered, motivations.

Bailey characterizes First Ray aspirants who have integrated their personalities but have unrighteous motivations:

Such integrated personalities are frequently ruthless at first, selfish, ambitious, self-centered, cruel, one-pointed, implacable, undeviating, aware of implications, of significances, and of the results of action but, at the same time, unalterable and undeviating, moving forward to their purposes. They destroy and tear down in order to rise to greater heights upon the ruin they have wrought. They do thus rise. They trample on other men and upon the destinies of the little person.<sup>33</sup>

The Technique's second sentence treats the crisis phase: "There must also be repudiation of those forms which wield no power." Repudiation can mean "the exposure of falsehood or pretensions." Accordingly, for this phase to be completed, there must be the exposure of unrighteous motivations to the soul's illumination.

The Gita gives its treatment of the crisis phase in verses 2:4-7, in which "Destroyer of Madhu" is another epithet of Krishna, and Madhu is another demon:

*Arjuna said:* But how, O Destroyer of Madhu, O Slayer of enemies, can I fight with arrows on the battlefield against Bhishma and Drona, who are worthy of my worship? It would be better, indeed, to live on alms in this world rather than to slay these high-souled teachers. But if I kill them, even here I shall enjoy wealth and desires stained with their blood. We do not know which would be the better for us: that we should conquer them or they should conquer us. Arrayed against us stand the very sons of Dhritarashtra, after slaying whom we should not wish to live. Overpowered in the very essence of my being by this evil of commiseration, my mind confused about dharma, I

supplicate You: tell me in sooth which is the better. I am Your disciple. Instruct me, who have taken refuge in You.

These verses show that Arjuna is “confused about dharma” and asks Krishna to tell him “in sooth which is the better” action. Given the premise that Arjuna symbolizes the aspirant and Krishna symbolizes the soul, these verses have the following meaning: the aspirant evokes the soul’s illumination to discriminate between dharma and adharma, or righteousness and unrighteousness. Thus, these verses illustrate the treatment of the crisis phase by the Technique’s second sentence.

### Light

**B**ecause of their crisis of evocation, the aspirants take stock of their situation and search within themselves. Eventually they enter the phase of *light* and see clearly their need to change their direction, method, and attitude.

Bailey says, “Hold the mind steady in the light and thereby discern the basic principles,”<sup>34</sup> and speaks of “the First Ray capacity to take a stand upon principle.”<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, in the Technique’s second paragraph, “the *word*” is taken as a principle that is discerned during the light phase. The term “form” can be used in various ways. In the Technique’s second sentence, “forms” refers to the vital body, as already discussed. Bailey, however, speaks of “the personality or form,”<sup>36</sup> which shows that these two terms can be synonyms. In the second and third paragraphs, “form” is taken to mean personality.

The Technique’s second paragraph treats the light phase, and it depicts four principles that are conveyed by the soul to the aspirant’s personality (“The *word* goes forth from soul to form”). Each principle describes a change that needs to be made.

The first principle is “stand up.” “Stand” signifies alignment, as in Romans 5:2, “this grace wherein we stand,” so “stand up” signifies the effort of achieving alignment. Thus, the first principle means: align your physical, emotional, and mental bodies, which brings

your personality into alignment, and then align your personality with the soul. Bailey describes a First Ray aspirant who is applying this principle:

Standing thus in quietness at the center, and searching within himself for responsiveness to his environment, he thus loses sight of self and the light breaks in. It is as if a curtain were raised. In that light, the first thing which is revealed to him is the devastating sight of that which he has destroyed. He is subjected to what has esoterically been called “the light which shocks.”<sup>37</sup>

Here, “center” is taken as the highest point of mental consciousness, because Bailey says, “This the disciple must also do, gathering his forces (to use a common expression) into the highest point of his mental consciousness and holding them there in a state of absolute tension.”<sup>38</sup> “Standing thus in quietness at the center” is equivalent to establishing and maintaining the alignment of the personality, and “searching within himself for responsiveness to his environment” brings about alignment with the soul.

The second principle is “press outward into life,” and it means: use the power of your aligned personality and soul to work in the external world. Bailey describes a First Ray aspirant who is applying this second principle:

Slowly and laboriously, using every power of his aligned personality and, in his realized desperation, calling in the power of his soul, he proceeds one-pointedly to rebuild that which he has destroyed. In rebuilding, he lifts the entire structure on to a higher level than any he has hitherto touched.<sup>39</sup>

The third principle is “achieve a goal.” This goal is taken as detachment, because Bailey tells a First Ray aspirant, “a finer and more clear-cut and clearly realized detachment is for you, therefore, a major objective.”<sup>40</sup> She later tells the same aspirant:

You are learning the lesson of detachment with rapidity, and you are gradually standing free from the clinging hands of

others ... The many acts of spiritual detachment lead eventually to the severing of that final thread which involves the death of all personality attachments.<sup>41</sup>

The fourth principle is “there must be not a circle, but a line.” Here, the “circle” is taken as the swing of the pendulum between the pairs of opposites, and the “line” as the points of equilibrium, or the middle way, between the pairs of opposites. For example, Bailey speaks of “the swing of the pendulum between these pairs of opposites gradually adjusted until the point of equilibrium is reached, and man acts rightly because the law of love or of the soul, directs from above, and not because either good or bad desire attract him on either hand.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, the fourth principle is interpreted as follows: there must not be the swing of emotional reactions, such as between pride and depression, to the outcome of any work, whether judged success or failure, but instead there must be spiritual balance. Bailey characterizes a First Ray aspirant who is applying this fourth principle: “he can function safely ... without losing his spiritual balance, if we might use such a phrase.”<sup>43</sup>

Next, let us examine the Gita’s treatment of these principles in verse 2:48, but using Johnston’s translation:

Standing in union with the Soul, carry out thy work, putting away attachment, O conqueror of wealth; equal in success and failure, for equalness is called union with the Soul.

This verse is spoken by Krishna to “O conqueror of wealth,” which denotes Arjuna, so it represents instruction given by the soul to the aspirant. It consists of the same four principles depicted in the Technique and in the same order.

## Revelation

By applying their principles to themselves, the aspirants enter the fourth phase and receive the *revelation* of the path and what they need to do in connection with it. Each aspirant receives the revelation of only his or her next step ahead, which, when

taken, enables the subsequent step to be revealed.

During the revelation phase, the effort is to “Prepare *the form*.” Bailey speaks of “the man upon the First Ray who is seeking first of all to control his personality, and then to dominate his environment.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, the effort is to prepare the personality for effective service. The Technique indicates that there are five main steps in the revelation phase, and that each step is given by the soul to the aspirant’s personality. The Bhagavad Gita contains the same steps and indicates that each step is given by Krishna, who symbolizes the soul, to Arjuna, who symbolizes the aspirant.

## Work without attachment to its fruit

The first step in the revelation phase is to “Let the eyes look forward, not on either side,” and it means: press forward to the accomplishment of your next duty, without caring for the fruits of your previous efforts. Bailey comments:

The perfect server is he who does to the utmost of his ability what he believes to be the Master’s will, and the work to be done by him in co-operation with God’s plan. Then, having done his part, he passes on to a continuance of the work, and cares not for the result of his action. He knows that wiser eyes than his see the end from the beginning; that insight, deeper and more loving than his, is weighing up the fruit of his service; and that judgment, more profound than his, is testing the force and extent of the vibration set up, and is adjusting that force according to the motive. He does not suffer from pride over what he has done, nor from undue depression over lack of accomplishment. At all times he does his very best, and wastes not time in backward contemplation, but steadily presses forward to the accomplishment of the next duty.<sup>45</sup>

The Gita makes a similar point in verse 2:47, returning to Nikhilananda’s translation:

To work, alone, you are entitled, never to its fruit. Neither let your motive be the fruit of action, nor let your attachment be to non-action.

### **Ignore public opinion**

The second step is to “Let the ears be closed to all the outer voices,” and it means: ignore public opinion and instead depend on the conclusions that you have reached during moments of illumination. Bailey describes an aspirant learning this step:

It will be needful for him to run counter consistently to the world’s opinion, and to the very best expression of that opinion, and this with frequency. He has to learn to do the right thing as he sees and knows it, irrespective of the opinion of earth’s greatest and most quoted. He must depend upon himself and upon the conclusions he himself has come to in his moments of spiritual communion and illumination. It is here that so many aspirants fail. They do not do the very best they know; they fail to act in detail as their inner voice tells them; they leave undone certain things which they are prompted to do in their moments of meditation, and fail to speak the word which their spiritual mentor, the Self, urges them to speak.<sup>46</sup>

The Gita makes a similar statement in verse 2:52:

When your mind has crossed the slough of delusion, you will achieve indifference regarding things already heard and things yet to be heard.

“The slough of delusion” consists of the entanglements of illusion, so crossing this slough means that the mind is illumined by the soul. The task here is to follow that illumination rather than the opinions of other people who are or will be heard.

### **Overcome cowardice**

The third step is to have “the hands clenched, the body braced, and mind alert.” These symbols are descriptive of someone who is preparing for a fight, such as a boxing match. Their meaning is that aspirants must over-

come any cowardice and instead confront their problems and difficulties, as Bailey explains:

He is the best exponent of the Ageless Wisdom who lives each day in the place where is the life of the disciple; he does not live it in the place where he thinks he should be. Perhaps after all the quality which produces the greatest number of failures among aspirants to adeptship is cowardice. Men fail to make good where they are because they find some reason which makes them think they should be elsewhere. Men run away, almost unrealising it, from difficulty, from inharmonious conditions, from places which involve problems, and from circumstances which call for action of a high sort and which are staged to draw out the best that is in a man, provided he stays in them. They flee from themselves and from other people, instead of simply *living the life*.<sup>47</sup>

The Gita also says to prepare for a fight in verse 2:38:

Regarding alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, success and defeat, prepare yourself for battle. Thus you will incur no sin.

Cowardice can arise when we feel exalted by pleasure, gain, and success, but feel depressed by pain, loss, and defeat. We can overcome any cowardice by regarding those outcomes as being alike.

### **Overcome desire**

The fourth step is to apply the idea that “Emotion is not used in furthering of the Plan.” Here, “the Plan” refers to the divine plan, which can be defined as the “blueprint of the evolutionary development of consciousness.”<sup>48</sup> Bailey discusses the relationship between emotion and desire, using the term “astral body” as a synonym for “emotional body”:

All feeling-emotion inevitably evokes desire. If the emotion evoked by the mind’s recognition of the feeling (registered in the astral body) is pleasurable,

then desire is evoked for the continuance or the repetition of the experience. If it is not pleasurable, but painful, then the reaction is desire for the cessation of the experience and therefore liberation from it.<sup>49</sup>

The Gita gives a similar account in verse 2:62:

When a man dwells on objects, he feels an attachment for them. Attachment gives rise to desire, and desire breeds anger.

Thus, this step's idea can be amplified as follows: striving to fulfill a personal desire may continue or repeat a pleasurable emotion, but such activity does not further the evolutionary development of consciousness and so is in vain.

Bailey gives related instructions to a First Ray aspirant:

It is, for instance, your personality fanaticism and your personality devotions (both to people and to ideas) which need *tempering* if your First Ray power is to manifest. Your fanatical devotee *will* must be superseded by the *purpose*, ordered and steadfast, of your First Ray soul ... In conformity to soul impulse mold your life and shift out of the realm of high desire and aspiration into that of settled purpose and an undeviating attachment to reality.<sup>50</sup>

The Gita considers desire to be the enemy and describes how to overcome it in verses 3:39-43, using Johnston's translation:

Wisdom is enveloped by that eternal enemy of the wise, whose form is Desire, O son of Kunti, an insatiate fire. The sense-powers, the emotions, the understanding are its dwelling place; through them Desire deludes the lord of the body, enveloping wisdom. Therefore in the beginning restraining the sense-powers, O bull of the Bharatas, do thou put away this evil, destroyer of wisdom and knowledge both. They say the sense-powers are higher than objects; than the sense-powers emotion is higher; than emotion understanding is higher; but higher than understanding is

He. Thus awaking to Him who is above understanding, establishing thy soul on the Soul, slay the enemy, O mighty armed one, whose form is Desire, who is hard to overcome.

Here, "O bull of the Bharatas" denotes Arjuna, "soul" denotes the human soul, and both "He" and "Soul" denote the divine soul. The foregoing quotations from both Bailey and the Gita say that personal desire needs to be overcome through the power of the divine soul.

### Express love

The fifth step is to apply the idea that "Love takes its place." Bailey describes a First Ray aspirant who has taken this step: "A change of attitude can be noted, for he reaches out his arms to his fellow men—to the greater whole—and thus becomes inclusive."<sup>51</sup>

The Gita also describes this change of attitude in verse 3:25, returning to Nikhilananda's translation:

As the ignorant act, attached to their work, O Bharata, so should an enlightened man act, but without attachment, in order that he may set people on the right path.

Here, Bharata denotes Arjuna. Just as ignorant people act zealously for their personal pleasure, an enlightened person needs to act with the same zeal but for the welfare of other people.

### Integration

*I*ntegration is the fifth and final phase, and refers to uniting personality with soul so that they act in unison and function as a single organism. Such integration is the goal of both the Technique and the Bhagavad Gita.

The final paragraph of the Technique gives a description of an aspirant who has reached the integration phase, as seen from the vantage point of an observer who is both clairvoyant and telepathic. A clairvoyant is able to perceive symbols representing the inner state of consciousness of the one being observed. Here, a clairvoyant is able to see that "the symbol of a moving point of light ap-

pears above the brow.” This symbol shows that the aspirant is actively utilizing the ajna center, because, in Bailey’s words, “This is the center between the eyebrows and is found in the region of the head just above the two eyes.”<sup>52</sup> This symbol also shows that the ajna center is receiving illumination from the soul, because, again in Bailey’s words, “As a recipient of mental energy or of energy from the soul, the ajna center becomes the directing agency.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, a clairvoyant can discern that the aspirant knows the soul’s illumination, which consists of inspiration, higher knowledge, and intuitions.

Afterward the aspirant’s mind becomes active, and a telepathic observer is able to register the following sequence of thought (“The keynote of the life though uttered not, yet still is clearly heard”). First, “I move to power,” which means that the aspirant realizes that he or she acts in a righteous way, which in turn means that he or she expresses the will of the soul rather than the gratification of personal desire. Bailey makes a similar point: “The long journey ends thus, in the glory of the renunciation of personal desire, and in the dedication to living service.”<sup>54</sup> Second, “I am the One,” which means that the aspirant realizes that his or her self is the Self of all beings. Bailey suggests that we ask ourselves the following question: “Can I recognize the One Self in all selves?”<sup>55</sup> Third, “we are a Unity in power,” which means that the aspirant realizes that the various parts of his or her constitution act together to express the will of the soul. Bailey speaks of “The disciple, whose integrated personality is now being rapidly integrated into and absorbed by the soul.”<sup>56</sup> Fourth, “all is for the power and glory of the *One*,” which means that the aspirant’s actions are for the sake of the One Self. Bailey speaks of “The sacrifice of the personal self for the good of the One Self.”<sup>57</sup>

**[Bailey’s] “Seven Techniques of Integration” depict “the pattern of the thought and the process of the life” of aspirants guided by each of the seven rays... “these ray techniques are imposed by the soul upon the personality after it has been somewhat integrated into a functioning entity and is, therefore, becoming slightly responsive to the soul, the directing Intelligence.”**

Next, let us consider verses 5:7-11 in the Gita:

He who is devoted to yoga and is pure in mind, who has conquered his body and subdued his senses, who has realized his

Self as the Self of all beings—he is undefiled though he acts. “I do nothing at all,” thinks the yogi, the knower of Truth; for in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting; in walking, breathing, and sleeping; In speaking, emitting, and seizing; in opening and closing the eyes, he is assured that it is only the senses busied with their objects. He who works without attachment, resigning his actions to Brahman, is

untainted by sin, as a lotus-leaf by water. Only with the body, the mind, the understanding, and the senses do the yogis act, without attachment, for the purification of the heart.

Nikhilananda, as part of his commentary, states that the “yoga” and “yogi” mentioned in these verses are “karmayoga, or selfless action” and “the karmayogi, who is devoted to selfless action,” respectively.<sup>58</sup> The yogi’s characteristics listed in these verses are similar to those in the Technique’s final paragraph. To highlight this similarity, let us examine the yogi’s characteristics while following the Technique’s order:

The appositive phrase, “the knower of Truth,” which is translated by Johnston as “who truly knows,” suggests that the yogi knows the soul’s illumination rather than mere intellectual knowledge.

The adjectival phrase, “untainted by sin,” means that the yogi expresses the will of the soul without the interference of personal desire.

The adjectival clause, “who has realized his Self as the Self of all beings,” shows

that yogi recognizes the One Self in all selves.

The sentence, “Only with the body, the mind, the understanding, and the senses do the yogis act, without attachment, for the purification of the heart,” indicates that the various parts of the yogi’s constitution act together to express the will of the soul.

The participial phrase, “resigning his actions to Brahman,” means that the yogi works for the sake of the Supreme Reality, because Brahman is the Supreme Reality of Vedanta philosophy.

What is the role of a First Ray aspirant during the integration phase? Bailey provides this answer: “The time eventually comes when the First Ray man can be trusted to be God’s Destroying Angel—the Angel who brings life through the destruction of the form.”<sup>59</sup> In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna to perform a similar role in verses 11:32-34:

*The Lord said:* I am mighty, world-destroying Time, now engaged in slaying these men. Even without you, all these warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall not live. Therefore stand up and win glory; conquer your enemies and enjoy an opulent kingdom. By Me and none other have they already been slain; be an instrument only, O Arjuna. Kill Drona and Bhishma and Jayadratha and Karna, and the other great warriors as well, who have already been killed by Me. Be not distressed by fear. Fight, and you shall conquer your foes in the battle.

## Conclusion

Professor G. K. Devanand—who is recognized as a vedacharya, or teacher of the ancient Vedic wisdom—provides the following summary of karma yoga:

Karma Yoga is consecration of all actions and their fruits unto the Lord. Karma Yoga is performance of actions dwelling in union with the Divine, removing attachment and remaining balanced ever in success and failure. Karma

Yoga is selfless service unto humanity. Karma Yoga is the Yoga of action which purifies the heart and prepares the *Antahkarana* (the heart and the mind) for the reception of Divine Light or attainment of Knowledge of the Self. The important point is that you will have to serve humanity without any attachment or egoism.<sup>60</sup>

Devanand’s summary of karma yoga is also a summary of the previously cited verses from the Bhagavad Gita that were taken from its first five chapters. Thus, Devanand’s summary confirms what various commentators have claimed: the Gita’s initial chapters are concerned with karma yoga.

Bailey’s Technique of Integration for the First Ray must also be concerned with karma yoga, because the prior sections demonstrated that it is similar to the cited verses from the Gita’s initial chapters. This demonstration clarifies the Gita’s treatment of karma yoga, because we can see how its verses embody a coherent technique. This demonstration also clarifies the Technique, because we can see how its abstruse symbolic statements can be expressed in a more comprehensible way and be applied.

Hindu scriptures are traditionally divided into two categories: *scruti* (often spelled *sruti* or *shruti*)—“that which is heard,” which consists of texts that are thought to be directly received through inspiration or revelation from a divine origin; and *smrti* (often spelled *smriti*)—“that which is remembered,” which consists of traditions, or memories of wisdom, that sages have passed on to their disciples over the years. What is the appropriate category for the Bhagavad Gita? Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta (1896-1977) gives his answer in a letter:

Regarding your philosophical question, if the Bhagavad Gita is part of Mahabharata which is considered *smrti*, how can we claim Bhagavad Gita to be GITOPAN-ISAD, or one of the Upanishads which are *scruti*? Actually because the Gita is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead it is *sruti*. But people take it as *smrti*

because it is part of the Mahabharata. We take it as scruti as far as we are concerned.<sup>61</sup>

Many other people think of the Gita as an inspired, or revealed, text, because Swami Bhaktivedanta founded, taught, and led the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which is a worldwide confederation that currently has more than 400 centers, including 60 farm communities, 50 schools, and 90 restaurants.<sup>62</sup>

Can the teachings on the seven rays be transformed into a science? In other words, can these teachings be tested in a scientific way, so that they can be accepted on the basis of empirical evidence rather than a belief in the authority of an external source of information? Any scientific test entails formulating a hypothesis, collecting evidence, and analyzing results, although procedures vary from one field of inquiry to another.

Let us consider the following hypothesis: Bailey's "Techniques of Integration" for the seven rays depict symbolically the archetypal patterns of integration that aspirants are intuitively directed to apply to themselves. This hypothesis can be tested by comparing Bailey's ray techniques with various recorded methods of psychological or spiritual integration that are thought to be inspired. The foregoing demonstration, which shows the similarity between the First Ray technique and the Bhagavad Gita's treatment of karma yoga, supports this hypothesis, because of the widespread belief that the Gita is an inspired text.

Our analysis of the Gita's treatment of karma yoga is based on its first five chapters. Other chapters of the Gita are said to be concerned with other yogas, such as jnana yoga and bhakti yoga. According to the above hypothesis, the Gita's chapters that treat those other yogas ought to be similar to other ray techniques. If such similarity is demonstrated by subsequent research, then that demonstration would provide additional empirical support for the above hypothesis.

Previous articles show that the *Second Epistle of Peter* is similar to the Second Ray

technique,<sup>63</sup> the *Tao Te Ching* is similar to the Fourth Ray technique,<sup>64</sup> chapter 10 of the *Revelation of St. John* is similar to the Third Ray technique, the *Myth of Isis and Osiris* is similar to the Fifth Ray technique,<sup>65</sup> and *Ecclesiastes* is similar to the Sixth Ray technique.<sup>66</sup> Thus, there is increasing evidence that the above hypothesis is correct, namely, that Bailey's ray techniques do symbolically depict the archetypal patterns of integration.

<sup>1</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, *The Bhagavad Gita* (1944; reprint; New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1969), 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Swami Prabhavananda, *Spiritual Heritage of India* (Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Press, 1979), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Eknath Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Tomalas, CA: Nilgiri Press, 2007), 49; Varghese Malpan, *A Comparative Study of the Bhagavad-Gita and the Spiritual Exercises of Loyola on the Process of Spiritual Liberation* (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical BookShop, 1992), 101.

<sup>4</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. X (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Society in America, 2002), 177.

<sup>5</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (1927; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), xii.

<sup>6</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Vedic Teachings on the Seven Rays," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 316.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>9</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II (1942; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1981), 345, 352.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 346-347, 378.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>13</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 339.

<sup>14</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 351-352. Nikhilananda, *The Bhagavad Gita*.

<sup>15</sup> "The Gita," *Time Magazine*, July 3, 1944, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,852089,00.html> (accessed July 21, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Charles Johnston, *Bhagavad Gita* (New York: J. J. Little, 1908).

<sup>17</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 347.

- <sup>19</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1974), 224.
- <sup>20</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 346.
- <sup>21</sup> All biblical quotations in this article come from the King James Version.
- <sup>22</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (1957; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 311.
- <sup>23</sup> Albert B. Randall, *Strangers on the Shore: The Beatitudes in World Religions* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 95.
- <sup>24</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 353.
- <sup>25</sup> Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 61.
- <sup>26</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* (1916-1920; reprint; Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), 156.
- <sup>27</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 52.
- <sup>28</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I (1944; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 179.
- <sup>29</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 115.
- <sup>30</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I, 42.
- <sup>31</sup> Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 281.
- <sup>32</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (1953; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1978), 34.
- <sup>33</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 352.
- <sup>34</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 500.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 630.
- <sup>36</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 187.
- <sup>37</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 353-354.
- <sup>38</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 487.
- <sup>39</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 354.
- <sup>40</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 310.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 311-312.
- <sup>42</sup> Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 391.
- <sup>43</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 354.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.
- <sup>45</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York: Lucis Publishing, 1922), 348-349.
- <sup>46</sup> Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 586.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 586-587.
- <sup>48</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 456.
- <sup>49</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. II (1955; reprint. New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1972), 624.
- <sup>50</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 243.
- <sup>51</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 353.
- <sup>52</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 146-147.
- <sup>53</sup> Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 432.
- <sup>54</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *From Bethlehem to Calvary* (1937; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1989), 228.
- <sup>55</sup> Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age*, vol. I, 399.
- <sup>56</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 498.
- <sup>57</sup> Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 349.
- <sup>58</sup> Nikhilananda, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 149-150.
- <sup>59</sup> Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, 352.
- <sup>60</sup> G. K. Devanand, *Teaching of Yoga* (New Delhi, India: APH Publishing, 2008), 131.
- <sup>61</sup> Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, 1974 Correspondence, [http://www.vaniquotes.org/wiki/Regarding\\_our\\_philosophical\\_question,\\_if\\_the\\_Bhagavad\\_gita\\_is\\_part\\_of\\_Mahabharata\\_which\\_is\\_considered\\_smriti,\\_how\\_can\\_we\\_claim\\_Bhagavad\\_gita\\_to\\_be\\_GITOPANISAD,\\_or\\_one\\_of\\_the\\_Upanisads\\_which\\_are\\_srutis%3F](http://www.vaniquotes.org/wiki/Regarding_our_philosophical_question,_if_the_Bhagavad_gita_is_part_of_Mahabharata_which_is_considered_smriti,_how_can_we_claim_Bhagavad_gita_to_be_GITOPANISAD,_or_one_of_the_Upanisads_which_are_srutis%3F) (accessed March 19, 2011)
- <sup>62</sup> International Society for Krishna Consciousness, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Society\\_for\\_Krishna\\_Consciousness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Society_for_Krishna_Consciousness) (accessed March 19, 2011).
- <sup>63</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Second Epistle of Peter compared to Bailey's Technique of Integration for the Second Ray," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2011.
- <sup>64</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Tao Te Ching compared to Bailey's Technique of Integration for the Fourth Ray," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Winter 2010.
- <sup>65</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Use of Ancient Texts to Test Hypotheses on the Seven Rays," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2010.
- <sup>66</sup> Zachary F. Lansdowne, "Ecclesiastes compared to Bailey's Technique of Integration for the Sixth Ray," *Esoteric Quarterly*, Summer 2011.

# The Origin and Nature of Human Consciousness, Part Four: An Alternate Model of the Higher Dimensional Structure of Human Existence

Christopher P. Holmes

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*'material points without extension' are Leibnitz's monads,  
and at the same time the materials out of which the 'Gods'  
and other invisible powers clothe themselves in bodies.*

*Whence the substance that clothes them—the apparent organism  
they evolve around their centers? H. P. Blavatsky, 1888<sup>1</sup>*

*The Swift and Radiant One  
Produces the Seven Laya centers... and Seats  
the Universe on these Eternal Foundations.  
(Stanzas of Dzyan, VI 2)<sup>2</sup>*

*the heart is truly a wonder, for its creative action  
mirrors the original act of Creation. Chaim Kramer, Kabbalist<sup>3</sup>*

## Abstract

An alternate model of the higher dimensional structure of human existence is proposed based upon the archaic teachings of Helena Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* and the *Stanzas of Dzyan* and synthesized with emerging ideas in physics concerning the information-processing and holographic paradigm. Specifically, it is proposed that the living entity within a human being is a monadic essence which exists within a seven-fold hyperspace dimension—or Parent Space. This Monad, or God Spark, has seven interior *holes dug in space* and these have inherent spin properties as manifestation of the “Ceaseless Breath” and its circumgyrating motion. These spin properties manifest as “spin energy” or “spinergy” and act upon the sevenfold Aether of Space to precipitate varied matters upon successive planes of being; hence, to clothe the divine source emanation within spiritual, psychical and material bodies. The Sons or “winks in the Eye of Self-Existence,” which we are, expand and contract through their own hearts and Self within such a higher dimensional universe of unspeakable subtlety and beauty. Ultimately,

every man and woman is a Star, a point source light emanation existing within higher dimensional space.<sup>4</sup> Seven *holes dug in space* serve as mini-white/black hole information processors and are the basis for such a higher dimensional magic and existence, weaving webs through spirit and matter. This is a theoretical attempt to synthesize ancient mystical axioms with emerging concepts in holographic physics.<sup>5</sup>

## Cosmic Evolution

Book I of Helena Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), *Cosmogogenesis*, deals with the “genesis” of the “Cosmos”—the

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## About the Author

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origin and creation of the universe. *Cosmogogenesis* outlines the laws of cosmology, physics and metaphysics from an esoteric and occult perspective, based upon Stanzas from the *Book of Dzyan*, an ancient poetic text of Tibetan origin, which apart from Blavatsky's writings, seems largely unknown to modern scholarship.<sup>6</sup> The *Stanzas of Dzyan* are referred to as "the heart of the sacred books of Kiu-ti," once known only to Tibetan mystics. Blavatsky describes a "very old Book" originally recorded in Senzar—the "sacred sacerdotal tongue" and derived from "the words of the Divine Beings, who dictated it to the sons of Light, in Central Asia, at the very beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> (our) race."<sup>7</sup> Certainly, these are unusual claims and the origin of the Stanzas seems largely lost in antiquity. Blavatsky explains that the *Stanzas of Dzyan* provide an "abstract algebraic formula of ... Evolution," which can be applied to "all evolution." There are "seven terms of this abstract formula, related to the seven great stages of the evolutionary process, as described in the Puranas as the 'Seven Creations,' and in the Bible as the 'Days of Creation.'"

Within *The Secret Doctrine*, the Universe is claimed to have emerged from a zero point or singularity condition, out of a seeming void and plenum—a seven dimensional hyperspace or "Eternal Parent Space" with an underlying fundamental holomovement or "Eternal Ceaseless Breath." These primordial Mother and Father principles are the basis for the material and spiritual worlds. A Kosmos<sup>8</sup> grows from a zero point source within-without to become a world and will eventually contract without-within back to a final zero point—to return into the sevenfold hyperspace of the Divine Mother. As early as 1888, Blavatsky regarded our Kosmos as a point center rooted into an underlying Ceaseless Breath within a Parent Space!

The two primary root principles of creation are the higher dimensional seven-skinned Eternal Parent Space and the Eternal Cease-

less Breath. The *Stanzas of Dzyan* begin before the big bang when the world was empty and void during the "Nights of Brahma," and the Spirit (Breath) moves across the face of the Waters (of Space). The Stanzas then depict the dynamic emergence of a Kosmos, the dropping of a world egg, the emergence of the seven divine intelligences or Luminous Sons, and the unfurling of varied cosmic processes through different hierarchies of creation. These abstract causes and root principles "phenomenalise in the form of the material Universe, by a process of conversion of metaphysics into physics, analogous to that by which steam can be condensed into water, and the water frozen into ice." Blavatsky states, "metaphysical abstractions ... are the only conceivable cause of physical concretions."<sup>9</sup>

In modern terminology, the Eternal Parent Space is the seven-dimensional hyperspace of the *quantum vacuum*—the quantum ether with its zero point fields as postulated within models of physics including: Superstring and M-theory—the supposed "Mother" of all theories. A modern physicist declares: "All of physics is in the vacuum" and this is quite consistent with the viewpoint elaborated by Blavatsky. Blavatsky's seemingly bizarre descriptions of metaphysical processes have anticipated the essential concepts of modern physics: including vacuum genesis, creation from a singularity condition, 11 dimensional string theory and M-theory, quantum information theory and the holographic principle. Further, they shed a wholly different light on the enigmas of the "uncertainty principle" and the "baffling holism" of quantum physics. Blavatsky's perspectives on the mysteries of creation are ever more intelligible in light of the theories and findings of modern science.<sup>10</sup>

Monads can similarly be regarded as "winks in the Eye of Self-Existence." Of course, since a human embodies the Universe, as a microcosm of the macrocosm, then the same abstract numerical and symbolic formulas applied to understanding the zero point dynamics underlying the creation

of the Universe can also be applied to understanding the emergence of the Monad. A *Stanza of Dznyan* states:

THE SONS EXPAND AND CONTRACT THROUGH THEIR OWN SELVES AND HEARTS; THEY EMBRACE INFINITUDE. (III, 11)

The nature of the “I AM,” the Monads, the individual living beings, the “winks in the Eye of Self-Existence” can be considered according to the same formula of the Stanzas for Cosmic Evolution. A monadic essence existent within a seven dimensional hyperspace, by some hidden inner magic, becomes “clothed in different bodies” based upon zero point *laya centers*. Blavatsky offers a higher dimensional model of human existence within holographic Space, in comparison with which 20<sup>th</sup> century psychology looks meagre indeed.

### Zero Point Foundations and the Role of Fohat

*The seven Laya centers are the seven Zero points, using the term Zero in the same sense that Chemists do, to indicate a point at which, in Esotericism, the scale of reckoning of differentiation begins.*<sup>11</sup>

**T**he *Secret Doctrine* maintains that the universe is founded upon an original zero point *laya center* which further differentiates into *seven zero point centers*. Seven minute *holes dug in space* are the means by which higher dimensional forces sculpt the void through the processes of creation. Blavatsky offers this explanation of the “Forces of Nature:”

... all the so-called Forces of Nature, Electricity, Magnetism, Light, Heat, etc., etc., far from being modes of motion of material particles, are *in esse*, i.e., in their ultimate constitution, the differentiated aspects of that Universal Motion. ... When Fohat is said to produce ‘Seven Laya Centers,’ it means that for formative or creative purposes, the GREAT LAW (Theists may call it God) stops, or rather modifies its perpetual motion on

seven invisible points within the area of the manifested Universe. ‘*The great Breath digs through Space seven holes into Laya to cause them to circumgyrate during Manvantara.*’ (Occult Catechism). We have said that Laya is what Science may call the Zero-point or line; the realm of absolute negativeness, or the one real absolute Force ... the neutral axis, not one of the many aspects, but its center ... ‘Seven Neutral Centers’, then are produced by Fohat ....<sup>12</sup>

The Ceaseless Breath or Universal Motion “digs holes in Space” to channel intelligence and influences into the material realm. Any Cosmos, Universe, Monad, atom or quantum is thus “worked and guided from within outwards” through the dynamics of such zero point centers. Life within a living being thus originates within/without, out of higher space dimensions through the dynamics of a multi-dimensional heart.

Within *The Secret Doctrine*, understanding the role and significance of *Fohat* is a key to the mysteries of cosmogenesis and the relationship of the laws of physics to ancient metaphysics:

But just as the opposite poles of subject and object, spirit and matter, are but aspects of the One Unity in which they are synthesized, so, in the manifested Universe, there is “that” which links spirit to matter, subject to object.

This something, at present unknown to Western speculation, is called by the occultists Fohat. It is the “bridge” by which the ‘Ideas’ existing in the ‘Divine Thought’ are impressed on Cosmic Substance as the ‘Laws of nature.’ Fohat is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, the ‘Thought Divine’ transmitted and made manifest through the Dhyana Chohans, the Architects of the visible World. ... Fohat, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the ani-

mating principle electrifying every atom into life.<sup>13</sup>

Just as a human has a body, soul and spirit, so also does the Cosmos. Fohat is that agent of spirit which ensouls the material body of the Cosmos: “the animating principle electrifying every atom into life.” Fohat is the “dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation” and embodies the intelligence of the spiritual builders or the Seven Luminous Sons.

THE PRIMORDIAL SEVEN, THE FIRST SEVEN BREATHS OF THE DRAGON OF WISDOM, PRODUCE IN THEIR TURN FROM THEIR HOLY CIRCUMGYRATING BREATHS THE FIERY WHIRLWIND. V. 1

The PRIMORDIAL SEVEN entail modifications of the fundamental Ceaseless Breath. These are the first born from the Darkness and Matrix of Non-Being. The Seven Breaths are circumgyrating, indicating vortices spinning around a center. These, in turn, produce “the Fiery Whirlwind,” which is Fohat. Fohat links the seven primary realms of spiritual creation above to the seven realms of material nature below. The Stanzas declare: “SEVEN INSIDE; SEVEN OUTSIDE.”

Fohat is the energetic principle, the fundamental cosmic electromagnetism and it conveys the influence of divine and spiritual intelligences to impress upon matter.

It is through Fohat that the ideas of the Universal Mind are impressed upon matter. Some faint idea of the nature of Fohat may be gathered from the appellation ‘Cosmic Electricity’ sometimes applied to it; but to the commonly known properties of electricity must, in this case, be added others, including intelligence.<sup>14</sup>

According to Blavatsky, Fohat is the Messenger of the Primordial Sons of Light and Life, the Dhyān-Chohans, running their errands and impressing their divine thoughts and intelligence into the seven realms of material creation below. Further, just as there are seven Luminous Sons or seven circumgy-

rating Breaths and seven primordial matters latent in the Eternal Parent Space, Fohat is also sevenfold having seven sons:

Fohat ... is One and Seven, and on the Cosmic plane is behind all such manifestations as light, heat, sound, adhesion, etc., etc., and is the ‘spirit’ of ELECTRICITY, which is the Life of the Universe. ... Thus, while science speaks of its evolution through brute matter, blind force and senseless motion, the Occultists point to *intelligent* LAW and *sentient* LIFE, and add that Fohat is the guiding Spirit of all this. ... the ‘Messenger of the primordial Sons of Life and Light.’<sup>15</sup>

Fohat is Cosmic Electricity, the energetic and vivifying principle linking Cosmic Spirit (Intelligence) to Cosmic Matter. Fohat is “metaphysically” the “objectified thought of the gods” and “the transcendental binding Unity of all Cosmic Energies.”

Fohat is also a source of gravitational influence established within higher dimensional Space of one’s heart, holding it all together. Fohat binds living Cosmoses together and conveys the influences of higher dimensional dynamics into the manifest realm below. The Hearts of living beings are their LIFE centers, wherein we might find Deity, as within “every point of the universe.” Fohat is also the “vital electric force that leaves the body at death,”<sup>16</sup> whether a Kosmos or Son.

The *Stanzas of Dzyan* depict the formation of the Laya Centers which serve as the foundations for the universe:

VI: 2. THE SWIFT AND RADIANT ONE PRODUCES THE SEVEN LAYA CENTERS ... AND SEATS THE UNIVERSE ON THESE ETERNAL FOUNDATIONS .... 3. ... SEVEN SMALL WHEELS REVOLVING; ONE GIVING BIRTH TO THE OTHER. 4. ... FOHAT ... MAKES BALLS OF FIRE, RUNS THROUGH THEM, AND ROUND THEM, INFUSING LIFE THEREINTO, THEN SETS THEM INTO MOTION; SOME ONE WAY, SOME THE OTHER WAY.

The laya centers, the eternal foundations for the Universe, are “revolving” and “set in motion” in different directions. They differentiate through sequential symmetry breaking; “ONE GIVING BIRTH TO THE OTHER.”<sup>17</sup> Imagine such wheels within wheels, through different generations of causes and effects originating from a dynamic zero point center established within the transcendental hyperspace of the Eternal Parent Space!

The Eternal Ceaseless Breath, which is infinitely energetic, manifests as the Primordial Seven – the Seven “HOLY CIRCUMGYRATING BREATHS” which produce “THE FIERY WHIRLWIND,” the “MESSENGER OF THEIR WILL,” Fohat and his seven Sons, the *Lipika*. Fohat “RUNS CIRCULAR ERRANDS” and forms seven “WHEELS” in the six directions of space and one in the middle—depicted in Figure 1 by the *flower of life* symbol of ancient Egypt with a central seventh point. A certain “spinergy” or “spin energy” is thus inherent to the zero point foundations of a Cosmos.

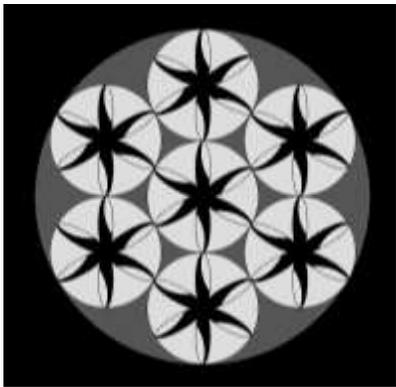


Figure 1

The Seven Sons of Fohat link Spirit above to Matter below and spin their magic through “seven holes dug in space,” invisible centers within the Eternal Parent Space. Any living Cosmos is set upon such a foundation. These “holes dug in space” might be regarded as seven mini white or black holes, according to whether we are speaking of the emergence or dissipation of a Cosmos. The seven holes dug in space are “whirlwinds” of activity—modifications of the Ceaseless Breath—which just like black holes, may have mass, rotational and spin properties. These meta-

physical processes in a higher dimensional space are rendered equivalent to outward worlds of seemingly separate energies and material particles manifesting within external four-dimensional spacetime. The central point is thus “clothed” in different bodies.

In Blavatsky’s view, there are varied external four-dimensional spacetime realms—physical, astral and mental worlds on a lower level, and corresponding Atmic, Buddhic and Manas planes on higher levels. Each of these is a projection of dynamics founded upon holographic boundaries or shells surrounding the central holes dug in space. Living beings have such LIFE Centers, as Monads existing within the Eternal Parent Space, and the outward physics of life is created as a great Chain of Being surrounding the higher dimensional metaphysics of a Monad in Hyperspace.

It is from such mysterious zero point conditions that the differentiation of a Cosmos, a quantum or Monad begins. Such dynamics are reiterated through interior dimensions. Modern scientist, Paul Davis, described such a model of 11 dimensional theory in modern physics where seven “compacted dimensions” are rolled up into elements at zero point levels. Davis explained, “think of the extra dimensions as somehow inside the atom.”<sup>18</sup> Remarkably, Blavatsky explained exactly this type of peculiar inner dimensionality to “atoms,” quanta, Monads and Cosmoses over a century ago. Accordingly, Blavatsky’s model suggests that there is a complex metaphysics to reality at zero point levels.

Helena Blavatsky offers modern science profound gems of insight into the possible mechanisms of Divine and Spiritual Intelligences in creating, maintaining and dissolving any finite holographic Cosmos. Instead of a bearded patriarch sitting on a throne, the Divine Workmen carry out the Will of the Dhyana Chohans and spin their magic through the seven dynamic vortex action centers established within higher dimensional Space. The Gods “micro-intervene” within the laws of nature with such holes dug in Space functioning as information micro-processors!

## The Universe as a Hologram

In 2003, *Scientific American* published an issue posing the question “ARE YOU A HOLOGRAM? Quantum physics says the entire universe might be.” In a fascinating article, *Information in the Holographic Universe*, J. Bekenstein discussed some of the unusual features of modern information and holographic theory and the physics of black holes. The holographic principle is being proposed as the possible Holy Grail of physics as it unifies the quantum field theories of physics with an account of gravity.

Bekenstein regards “information” as a third force underlying the manifestations of matter and energy within time and space. This is similar to Bohm’s “pilot waves” and the “quantum potential” permeating space, as information fields of the implicate orders that inform transformations of matter and energy.<sup>19</sup>

“Ask anybody what the physical world is made of, and you are likely to be told “matter and energy.” Yet if we have learned anything from engineering, biology and physics, information is just as crucial an ingredient. ... a century of developments in physics has taught us that information is a crucial player in physical systems and processes. Indeed, a current trend, initiated by John A. Wheeler of Princeton University, is to regard the physical world as made of information, with energy and matter as incidentals.<sup>20</sup>

In *Black Hole Computers*, Lloyd and Ng similarly emphasize “information” as third force in the new physics:

... to a physicist, all physical systems are computers. Rocks, atomic bombs and galaxies may not run Linux, but they, too, register and process information. Every electron, photon and other elemen-

tary particle stores bits of data, and every time two such particles interact, those bits are transformed. Physical existence and information content are inextricably linked. As physicist John Wheeler of Princeton University says, “It from bit.”<sup>21</sup>

The statement “it from bit”, suggests that “it,” meaning a material and energetic system, comes from “bit,” meaning bits of information. Some modern physicists now regard information as a primary element in nature. From this perspective, everything is a computer, as everything processes bits of information—whether an electron, a black hole, a cell or a human heart. Thus, a trinity of intelligence, energy and matter is basic to the new science—as it is to mystical orientations and *The Secret Doctrine*. According to Lloyd and Ng, the uni-

verse itself is a giant computer and not only that, but a quantum computer. They quote physicist Zizzi, “It from qubit,”—or quantum bit, as a variation on Wheeler’s “It from bit.”

Bekenstein explains aspects of information theory as they apply to black holes and the emerging holographic theory and suggests that: “Theoretical results about black holes suggest that the universe could be like a gigantic hologram.” The reasoning that leads to such a concept concerns modern views of the laws of entropy and how this relates to the entropy of information. The *law of entropy*, traditionally applied to material and thermal processes, can also be applied to information processes. In 1877, physicist Ludwig Boltzmann defined *thermodynamic entropy* as the number of distinct microscopic states that particles in a body of matter could be in: For example, consider all the possible arrangements of the gas molecules in the room around you and their possible positions and momentum. It was in 1948 that Claude

**Blavatsky’s seemingly bizarre descriptions of metaphysical processes have anticipated the essential concepts of modern physics: including vacuum genesis, creation from a singularity condition, 11 dimensional string theory and M-theory, quantum information theory and the holographic principle.**

Shannon defined entropy in terms of information theory. The *Shannon entropy* is the number of binary bits needed to decode the information content within a message. The two measures and concepts of entropy are *conceptually equivalent* (under higher degrees of freedom), although they are expressed in different units—either “units of energy divided by temperature” for thermal entropy, or as “bits” which are *essentially dimensionless* for information entropy. The conservation of information is also demanded within quantum mechanics.

According to the *Generalized Second Law of Thermodynamics*, the loss or gain of entropy in a material/energetic system must be compensated for by changes in the entropy of information as one balances the other in order to maintain an overall GSL. Bekenstein explains a consequence of this principle as applied to the physics of black holes:

... when matter falls into a black hole, the increase in black hole entropy always compensates or overcompensates for the “lost” entropy of the matter. More generally, the sum of black hole entropies and the ordinary entropy outside the black holes cannot decrease. This is the generalized second law—GSL for short.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 2<sup>23</sup>

This implies that when the matter and energy of a quantum system are absorbed into a black hole, huge amounts of information should spew out. *Scientific America* (November 2004) featured an article on *Black Hole Computers*, which suggests: “*Stephen Hawking was Wrong. Matter goes in. Answers come out.*” The loss of entropy which occurs as matter and energy are absorbed into a black hole is compensated for by an increase of the entropy of the information—thus, answers come out—like the 0 and 1 sequences illustrated in Figure 2 as emerging from a mini black hole processor.

In *Black Hole Computers*, Lloyd and Ng explain that in the 1970s, Hawking proposed that when matter fell into a black hole the radiation produced was simply random. However, the newer view now endorsed by Hawking is that the outgoing radiation is not simply random but “a processed form of the matter that falls in.” The authors thus declare: “Black holes, too compute.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the authors note: “... a black hole is nothing more or less than a computer compressed to its smallest possible size.” Thus, when matter falls into a black hole past the event horizon, it cannot leave but the “information content can.”

The total storage capacity of a black hole is proportional to its surface area. Susskind (2008) states this principle: “The entropy of a black hole, measured in bits, is proportional to the area of its horizon, measured in Planck units.”<sup>25</sup> Figure 3 depicts a black hole as having its surface or horizon divided into bits, triangular sections containing 0’s or 1’s. This is counter-intuitive, as one might have expected that the information content of the black hole would be related to its interior volume. However, this is not so and instead the information is encoded on the surface of the black hole—on a two dimensional surface instead of in the 3-dimensional interior volume.

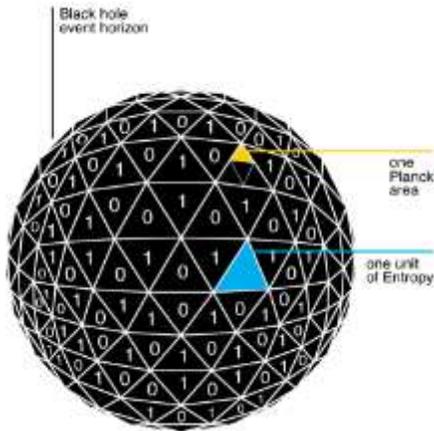


Figure 3

Paradoxically, the physics of black holes suggests that as a physical system of matter and energy collapses down to the level of Planck units at  $10^{-33}$  cm and beyond, the amount of information potentially contained within a volume of space becomes huge. Bekenstein considers the amount of information contained within “a Planck area” which is the square of two Planck lengths of  $10^{-33}$  cm—or  $10^{-66}$   $\text{cm}^2$ . At Planck’s level, at zero point levels in the quantum vacuum or aether, the information content and capacity is potentially huge. Bekenstein states:

The entropy of a black hole one centimetre in diameter would be about  $10^{66}$  bits, roughly equal to the thermodynamic entropy of a cube of water 10 billion kilometres on a side.<sup>26</sup>

Bekenstein argues that there seems “to be no limits to how densely information can be packed—and that our universe might be like a giant hologram.” In Bekenstein’s model, the more we penetrate into the heart of being, the more vast amounts of information might be contained within the seeming emptiness and there might be such complex inner worlds and black hole dynamics. Furthermore, black holes have both mass and rotational or spin properties and could function as the ultimate mini-computers, processing immense amounts of information at Planckian levels. Everything computes in the new science of information theory, including mini-black holes.

Diverse new views of black holes suggest also that they are not such simple structures as once conceived. In string theory, they are regarded as composite bodies made of multi-dimensional structures called branes. Information falling into the black hole is stored in waves in the branes and can eventually leak out. Black holes have also been described as “a giant tangle of strings,” a “fuzzyball” which can act as a repository of the information carried by things that fall into the black hole. Information has another “escape hatch” out of a black hole through “entanglement,” whereby the properties of two systems inside and outside of the black hole remain correlated across spacetime. Entanglement is thought to possibly enable teleportation, in which information is transferred from one particle to another with such fidelity that the particle has effectively been beamed from one location to another. The annihilation of an infalling photon acts as a measurement, transferring the information contained in the matter to the outgoing Hawking radiation. Scientists are arriving at complex views of reality at zero point levels, looking at the information processor capacities of black holes and other structures at Planck’s levels.

Physicist L. Smolin describes the world according to the holographic model:

The world must be a network of holograms, each of which contains coded within it information about the relationships between the others. In short, the holographic principle is the ultimate realization of the notion that the world is a network of relationships. Those relationships are revealed by this new principle to involve nothing but information. Any element in this network is nothing but a partial realization of the relationships between the other elements. In the end, perhaps, the history of a universe is nothing but the flow of information.<sup>27</sup>

Smolin describes the atomic or quantized structure of space in terms of spin networks, information and relationships. Certainly, these are profoundly alternative models of deep reality at zero point levels!

Bekenstein comments on the direction of modern physics towards finding deeper and deeper levels of structure at zero point levels:

There could be more levels of structure in our universe than are dreamt of in today's physics. ... the deepest level of structure I shall refer to as level X. ...<sup>28</sup>

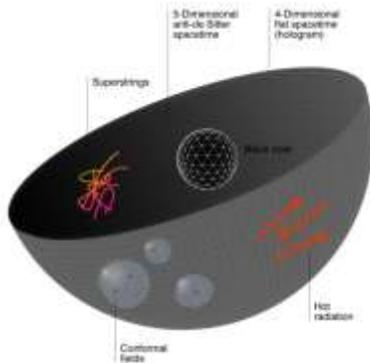


Figure 4

## Black Holes & Alternate Space Dimensions

Figure 4 depicts one of the most unusual ideas of the holographic model in physics. The interior of this sphere represents a “5 dimensional anti-de Sitter spacetime” and the circumference of the sphere, the shell, represents the “four dimensional flat spacetime (hologram).” Bekenstein explains that if the physics of the universe is holographic, then different sets of physical laws that apply in the de-Sitter spacetime (the shell surrounding the black hole) and the anti-de Sitter spacetime (within the sphere) are rendered equivalent. Thus, the “conformal field theory of point particles” applies on the two dimensional surface of the sphere (the holographic boundary or shell) and it is rendered equivalent to a physics of superstrings elements and black holes within the 5 dimensional anti-de Sitter spacetime (within the interior of the sphere). Thus, what manifests in the physical realm is rendered equivalent to metaphysical processes in an alternative higher Space dimension. Figure 5 depicts how the activities of a black hole in the interior of the anti-de Sitter space is rendered equivalent to swarms

of particles on the boundary surface of the spacetime sphere.

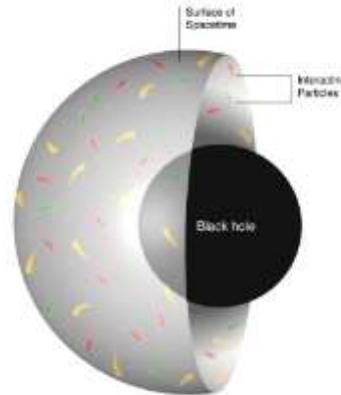


Figure 5

Thus, quantum field theories and point particle interactions might apply on the outer shell, but inside, we have the physics of superstrings and black holes. The holographic principle renders these two theories equivalent. The outer shell or surface of the sphere is compared to a two dimensional holographic plate which records or embodies processes occurring within the interior space. Bekenstein writes:

Creatures living in one of these universes would be incapable of determining if they inhabited a 5-D universe described by string theory or a 4-D one described by a quantum field theory of point particles.<sup>29</sup>

Bekenstein suggests that in this case, the three dimensional physical world is projected from a flat boundary or screen, the shell of the sphere, just like a holographic image is projected into space from a flat two dimensional holographic plate. In Figure 6, clouds of quarks and gluons on the boundary surface describe related complex objects such as an apple within the interior of the sphere. The object in the interior is subject to gravity even though such a gravitational attraction does not exist on the surface. It turns out that the mathematics of particle physics are almost the same as the mathematics of string theory. What is so startling about this is the fact that these phenomena are on such diver-

gent orders of scale. The protons and neutrons can be  $10^{20}$  times larger than the fundamental strings and they vibrate  $10^{20}$  times more slowly.

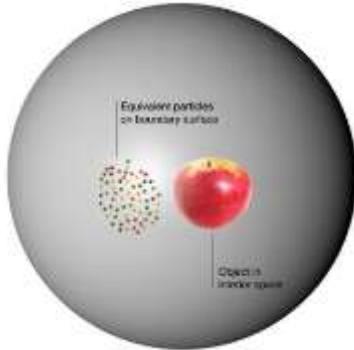


Figure 6

Scientist L. Susskind similarly concludes:

... the three-dimensional world of ordinary experience—the universe filled with galaxies, stars, planets, houses, boulders, and people—is a hologram, an image of reality coded on a distant two-dimensional surface. This new law of physics, known as the Holographic Principle, asserts that everything inside a region of space can be described by bits of information restricted to the boundary. ... everything inside this giant shell is an image of microscopic bits spread over the shell. ... everything taking place in the interior of the region is a holographic image of the pixelated boundary. ... the world ... is pixelated, and all information is stored on the boundary of space.<sup>30</sup>

Susskind notes that of this most peculiar holographic principle:

Getting our collective head around the Holographic Principle is probably the biggest challenge that we physicists have had since the discovery of Quantum Mechanics.<sup>31</sup>

On the surface of the sphere, quantum theories and point particle analysis applies, but these reflect a deeper metaphysics of membranes and strings, matrices and spin networks in higher dimensional space. Finally, at the centre of the holographic system is a black hole information processor in this al-

ternate space dimension. This is quite analogous to how Blavatsky depicts material/energetic processes as based upon zero point foundations—*holes dug in Space*—established within an underlying seven skinned Eternal Parent Space. Further, from the perspective of Blavatsky, we would consider there to be seven such shells instead of simply one, as related to the sevenfoldness of the Eternal Parent Space, the Akasha or Aether.

Of course, Bekenstein and Susskind do not consider that a holographic model might be applicable to human beings—as their focus is on the black holes, information theory and the holographic principle within physics. It is not immediately evident how one might jump from the levels of Planckian units and elementary quanta in physics to the dimensions of human existence. However, the mystical idea—that the microcosm embodies the nature of the macrocosm based on seven holes dug in space—suggests the rationale for applying these concepts to the inner cosmos of consciousness. These concepts are all particularly significant in light of Blavatsky’s description of seven such “holes dug in space” as the means by which the Gods and other invisible powers “clothe themselves in bodies.”

### The Illusion of Gravity<sup>32</sup>

A holographic view of physics offers an alternative perspective on the nature of “gravity.” In *The Illusion of Gravity*, theoretical physicist Juan Martin Maldacena explains:

... the theories predict that the number of dimensions in reality could be a matter of perspective: physicists could choose to describe reality as obeying one set of laws (including gravity) in three dimensions or, equivalently, as obeying a different set of laws that operates in two dimensions (in the absence of gravity). ... A hologram is a two-dimensional object, but when viewed under the correct lighting conditions it produces a fully three-dimensional image. ... Gravity ... would be part of the illusion: a force

that is not present in the two-dimensional world but that materializes along with the emergence of the illusory third dimension.<sup>33 34</sup>

Maldacena describes a quantum theory of gravity as the “holy grail for a certain breed of physicist” and explains that string theorists have developed such a “complete, logically consistent, quantum description of gravity in what are called negatively curved spacetimes—the first such description ever developed. For these spacetimes, holographic theories appear to be true.”<sup>35</sup>

The anti-de Sitter space is the simplest of such negatively curved spaces. They neither expand nor contract, but look the same at all times. Maldacena explains the equivalency of the physics of these alternative dimensions in the interior of the sphere to those upon its boundary:

... the boundary of four-dimensional anti-de Sitter space at any moment in time is a sphere. This boundary is where the hologram of the holographic theory lies. Simply stated, the idea is as follows: a quantum gravity theory in the interior of an anti-de Sitter spacetime is completely equivalent to an ordinary quantum particle theory living on the boundary. If true, this equivalence means that we can use a quantum particle theory (which is relatively well understood) to define a quantum gravity theory (which is not). (2005, p. 61)

Thus, gravity can be accommodated within string/M-theory in the interior of the sphere and be unified with particle theories on the holographic boundary. Maldacena explains:

... gravity in four dimensions is an emergent phenomena arising from particle interactions in a gravityless, three dimensional world. ... physicists have known since 1974 that string theory always gives rise to quantum gravity. The strings formed by gluons are no exception, but the gravity operates in the higher-dimensional space.<sup>36</sup>

According to this formulation, “gravity operates in the higher-dimensional space.” This is in accord with H. P. Blavatsky who argued that the underlying causes of gravity lay within the higher seven dimensional Eternal Parent Space and within the ethers of the Solar system—the electromagnetic ocean of life. Gravity is not simply due to non-sentient physical mass but has an underlying metaphysical nature, one of the variants of Fohat, as all things adhere within the Aether of Space.

In physics, the holographic principle is a primary contender for the ultimate theory of everything—incorporating gravity with quantum field theory. Gravity is incorporated within the alternate spacetime within superstring/M-theory (and black holes physics), while quantum theory (involving the triune electro-weak and strong forces) applies on the flat holographic boundary. Although there are many unresolved issues to be faced in understanding this paradigm, it is a rich alternative model of how lower dimensional physics could be an outward manifestation of a higher dimensional metaphysics in alternative Space dimensions. This is the basic premise of *The Secret Doctrine* with its zero point holes dug in space as the foundations for the laws of nature.

The conjunction of an anti-de Sitter spacetime to accommodate string theory and black holes and to produce the phenomena of gravity, and the de Sitter spacetime to accommodate the three other quantum forces of nature—produces a profound model of higher dimensional holographic physics. It certainly seems that it is a strange universe we live in, wherein such vast amounts of information might be available at sub-atomic or zero point levels, which might surround a mini-black hole or spinning *holes dug in space*. Further, there exists an alternative higher dimensional Space, whether or a 5-dimensional anti-de Sitter space—or some other formulation, such as a 7 dimensional Eternal Parent Space. This is exactly what Blavatsky was articulating, that the laws of physics evident within the material world are

the end products of a higher dimensional metaphysics in an underlying hyperspace and this includes gravity.

The authors of these scientific articles do not really elaborate upon the implications and applications of their theories as they might apply to understanding our familiar reality—although they use human examples to depict the themes. The physics within the interior of this realm of the anti-de Sitter space has other “strange properties” according to Maldacena, depicted in Figure 7. If you were freely floating anywhere in anti-de Sitter space, you would feel as though you were at the bottom of a gravitational well. Any object that you threw out would come back like a boomerang. Surprisingly, the time required for an object to come back would be independent of how hard you threw it. The difference would just be that the harder you threw it, the farther away it would get on its round-trip back to you. If you sent a flash of light, which consists of photons moving at the speed of light, it would reach infinity and return within a finite time. This can happen because the object experiences a time contraction of ever greater magnitude as it gets farther from you.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 7

Within the anti-de Sitter space, the person is at the *centre of a gravitational well* and anything thrown out eventually returns to the source within a finite period of time. The negative space-time curvature in the anti-de Sitter space creates a gravitational field that pulls objects to the center, whether or not

there is anything there. If a mass is displaced towards the boundary, it is eventually drawn back.

Certainly, since the outward physics on the holographic boundaries reflect that of the hidden inner metaphysics, then we would predict that any effects produced in the physical world would similarly return to their source, as occurs within the interior space. As above, so below. This might indeed lead us to hypothesize that the universe similarly will follow this boomerang principle and return to its source or gravitational well. In *The Secret Doctrine*, it is the “Breath of the Mother” or a movement in hyperspace which ingathers the Kosmos to the Divine Bosom at the end of time. A Stanza of Dzyan notes: “IT EXPANDS WHEN THE BREATH OF FIRE IS UPON IT; IT CONTRACTS WHEN THE BREATH OF THE MOTHER TOUCHES IT.” (III, 11) This same logic might actually support another fundamental teaching of *The Secret Doctrine*, the law of Karma. Karma is just such an inevitable cosmic law, whereby the results of actions and inactions come back upon us. It is only a matter of time.

All of these concepts from modern holographic theory are helpful in trying to understand Blavatsky’s archaic teachings about invisible zero point centers, circumgyrating holes dug in an Eternal Parent Space, information emerging from zero point levels and the principle of Karma as an intrinsic cosmic law, a metaphysical principle of higher dimensions.

## Comparative Comments

According to Blavatsky, the influx of formative forces manifests from within the higher realms into the lower through *holes dug in Space –invisible points or zero-points*. The Seven Builders or Divine Workmen *dig holes in Space* to channel their intelligence/influences into the material realm. Thus, seven invisible zero points holes dug in space are established as a foundation for physical manifestation and the laws of nature.

In terms of the holographic paradigm, a seven white hole—black hole zero point elements is established within a seven-dimensional Eternal Parent Space. The whirlwind activities emanating from this center might appear as a radiant sun on the surfaces of the boundary spaces and give rise to energetic and material particles of different densities on different holographic shells. The modern physical concepts of mini-black holes as having mass and spin properties, and spewing out information, are all quite consistent with Blavatsky's archaic teachings. Divine Mind acts through such zero point centers and dynamics, which might manifest as hot radiations and materials on successive holographic shells, the ethers of space. A web of interrelationship is spun of Spirit and Matter through levels of a multi-dimensional holographic universe. Each Star, each Universe, each Son or Monad, embodies such a higher dimensional geometry and metaphysics emerging within-without from zero point centers.

Such zero point centers might be nested one within another and act as portals between worlds established within different levels of the Aether, as illustrated in figure 8. Each of these levels corresponds to a different holographic shell, as they surround the seventh element.

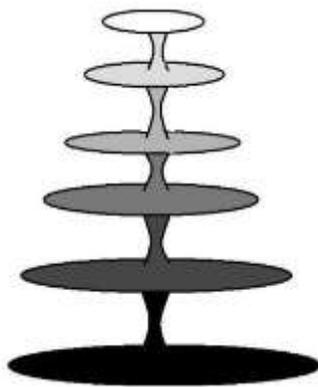


Figure 8<sup>38</sup>

Modern physical concepts actually illustrate such fantastic possibilities and make them more intelligible, rather than discrediting them as invented or exaggerated. In fact, *The*

*Secret Doctrine* postulates a holographic universe with a higher seven dimensional *Eternal Parent Space* underlying familiar reality, instead of the 5 dimensional *anti-de Sitter space* postulated within contemporary science. Further, instead of there being a singular black hole processor, there are seven interrelated processors and seven surfaces or shells surrounding the central element—as layers of the Aether. Actually, we might consider there to be six surrounding surfaces while the seventh layer is the foundation of the central element. These dynamics are multiplied within without through various levels of higher dimensional space within the hierarchies of creation.

The newest physical models of seven dimensional Calabi-Yau elements with multiple interior holes,<sup>39</sup> of quantum information theory and the baffling holism of quantum theory, the manner in which “It” comes from “Q-bit” (a unit of quantum information), the physics of black hole information processors—all of these concepts combined with those of singularities and vacuum genesis, illustrate the profound secret doctrines explained by Blavatsky. While the scientists of her day conceived of solid material particles bouncing around in empty space and influencing each other through only local effects, Blavatsky was elaborating a holographic model of holes dug in higher dimensional Space as the basis for the manifestation of Kosmos, Atoms and Man. In Blavatsky's view, there are no phenomena due simply to ‘local effects’ because all manifest phenomena are produced by this inner hierarchy of effects reiterated through higher space dimensions.

Remarkably, modern physics is arriving at such zero point levels of creation and now posits just such a new “metaphysics” to supplement the familiar physics of matter and energy within time and space. Of course, scientists would declare that there is nothing “mystical” about holographic theory, information theory, black holes in alternative space dimensions, singularities, hyperspace or the quantum ether, or any of their theories and concepts, but that assessment is simply

an expression of their assumptions and biases and not based upon any factual evidence and considered argument.

Varied concepts from *The Secret Doctrine* are illustrated by modern physical theories and speculations. Consider for instance how physicists suggest that a string might be expanded from essentially a point size at Planckian levels into any possible size according to the amount of energy added which expands the string structure. L. Susskind notes:

Strings that are highly excited are bigger on average than their ground state counterparts; the additional energy whips them around and stretches them to a longer length. If you could bombard a string with enough energy, it would spread out and become as big as a violently jittering, tangled ball of yarn. And there is no limit; with even more energy, the string could be excited to any size. ... black holes—even those giants at the centers of galaxies—are enormously large, tangled “monster strings.”<sup>40</sup>



Figure 9

Might similar dynamics occurring through zero point centers lead to expanding structures within both hyperspace and then physical space dimensions within human beings as well as within a Kosmos? Multidimensional holes dug in space could be the basis of expanding structures through dimensions of hyperspace and these dynamics could produce an expanding Kosmos with different materialized dimensions of existence—upon

varied holographic shells or boundaries, the veils of nature. As theosophist L. Maurer maintains:

... the essentially circular spin momentum of the zero-point ... contains the holographic information for the evolutionary construction of the entire Universe ....<sup>41</sup>

An equivalence is established between *the spinergy of a Monad in hyperspace* with various levels of the physics of M-theory (Matrix or Membrane), string theory and quantum field theory, on increasingly material dimensions of existence. The holographic boundaries are the seven-fold ethers of an expanding or contracting spherical spacetime. On these boundary conditions, the electro-weak-strong forces are unified and can account for the material-energetic processes but “without gravity.” Gravity, in this case, involves the interior dynamics of the zero point centers within the Eternal Parent Space, through which the inner influences and Fohat serve to bind it all together. The Cosmos contracts when the “Breath of the Mother,” a modification of the “Ceaseless Breath,” touches it. This suggests that a movement within hyperspace will bring about the eventual dissolution of the Kosmos and not simply gravity acting upon blind matter. Through generations of causes and effects, the Breath of the Mother, adheres in all things. It is as if the love of the Divine Mother holds everything in Creation together as gravity and at the end of time, ingathers the Sons or Kosmos to her Bosom.

A human being in the material body is a quantum system based primarily upon the electrodynamics of a multidimensional heart. The heart functions essentially as a quantum computer and exists within invisible quantized information and zero point fields. Ultimately, there is an underlying Unified Intelligence—or Omniscience which “thrills throughout every atom and infinitesimal point of the whole finite Cosmos.”<sup>42</sup> Human consciousness emerges through the dimensions of the heart as the living entity is expanding and withdraws back into the heart at moments of death when it is contracting. The

Dalai Lama describes life as entering and withdrawing from the planetary body through the “indestructible drop within the heart.” From the heart, according to Tibetan and yogic teachings, the vital and consciousness principles circulate through a system of three channels and seven centers or chakras—each with zero-point centers and dynamics. According to the Dalai Lama, as consciousness and the vital principle withdraw into the heart at death, this induces memories of all of the events of one's life, as if one's life is a unified quantum field at some lower level of articulation within the zero point fields of the heart.

The process of life review which can occur at death follows the same dynamic as that conceived in black-hole computer physics—wherein immense amounts of quantum field information is available within inconceivably small spaces—at zero point or Planckian levels. The multidimensional heart essentially functions as a white hole computer in its role in life generation and a mini-black hole computer at death. The withdrawal of human consciousness into the mini black hole computer of the heart at death is followed by the reawakening within further virtual realities, as the living entity is already clothed in other bodies within other projected virtual realms involving other holographic shells and shifts in the angle of the light. Alternatively, an individual might pass through a seeming tunnel and emerge into a super-symmetrical realm of being—a spiritual world within higher dimensions of space related to the Sun, the central quantum computer within the Solar system, or beyond.

Similarly, might the ingathering of the light of consciousness and vitality to the heart at death serve to illuminate the complex pat-

terns and webs, plots and tales of one's life adventures, all maintaining some wholeness through the superstring and membrane structures of higher dimensional space? Perhaps all the details of one's life still adhere together within the vast zero point information realms of this holographic quantum system,

and so can be reviewed and re-experienced through death and after-life states by such a Mind of Clear Light—illuminating such a gravitational well at the Heart of being with its seven hole mini-processor within the Parent Space!

Complex virtual realities are spun around a central “I” creating varied planes of being and life dramas that the “I” might experience as the Web or matrix of life. The Monad is more and more seemingly removed and obscured as consciousness is stepped down through interior dimensions of being and

conditioned within varied subtle and material bodies. The metaphysical dynamics of the monadic essence within hyperspace underlie the electrodynamics of the heart and the influx of the breath and oxygenation which ensoul the living being. There is a body, soul and spirit and ultimately a divine element within higher dimensional Space.

## Concluding Remarks

Esoteric elements within *The Secret Doctrine* provide a way of interpreting modern scientific theories and applying them to develop a physics and metaphysics of consciousness and the heart. Certainly, such a model of higher dimensions, Monads and such, provides an intriguing alternative view of the origins and nature of human existence and it raises many questions and issues which

**The Ceaseless Breath or Universal Motion “digs holes in Space” to channel intelligence and influences into the material realm. Any Cosmos, Universe, Monad, atom or quantum is thus “worked and guided from within outwards” through the dynamics of such zero point centers. Life within a living being thus originates within/without, out of higher space dimensions through the dynamics of a multidimensional heart.**

might be explored. The vast evidences for psychical and spiritual phenomena, life after death and such, all suggest a need to consider what higher dimensional processes could enable and account for such phenomena. The aim of this concluding article has merely been to offer some speculative concepts of how such things might work.

This perspective is not intended to suggest that the Monad, with its interior holes dug in space, actually causes the formation of the physical body. The chakra system involves a sevenfold zero-point dynamic, as Blavatsky describes, and this organization underlies or interpenetrates the physical and subtle bodies. However, Blavatsky regards the “lunar pritis” or intelligences as fashioning the material body, while the “solar pritis” participate in the formation of the inner man. The inner living entity “inhabits” the material body but can also exist independently of it.

When physicists arrive at the holographic paradigm, higher dimensions, mini-black hole processors, and holographic boundaries, they do not provide a philosophy or perspective on what such concepts might mean to us in regards to the phenomena of life and our own existence. In contrast, a mystical perspective allows us to understand that such ideas of higher dimensional metaphysics might not simply be a matter of interest for the physicists but also for us as beings living within a multidimensional universe. Science has yet to begin to explain the many states of afterlife existence, the mechanisms of coincidences, the vast evidences for paranormal phenomena, reincarnation, other worlds and the like. Modern science has few if any models to allow us to understand the mysteries of such things.

Blavatsky’s doctrines provide a legitimate scientific model and theory as regards the existence of such LIFE centers and the mechanisms by which Universes might expand and contract through such zero point dynamics. She provides an alternative model of the fate of the universe, the mechanism of cosmic dissolution and a valuable perspective on the illusions of gravity, space and location. Certainly this comparative study does not

allow us to prove or document such peculiar claims of esotericism, but we have simply tried to draw these analogies in a speculative manner.

These teachings provide an esoteric holographic model of the Microcosm and Macrocosm. Perhaps human beings have such higher dimensional origins emerging within/without from point sources, to eventually withdraw at the end of time without/within into other dimensions supported by hyperspace dynamics and zero point metaphysics. Human beings could have white hole origins and black hole disappearances through varied realms of existence. The Monadic essence spins another tale and the heart functions as a black hole computer remembering everything that happens since an “I” emerged out of the nothingness at the Heart of Being.

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<sup>1</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, 1888), 489 & 632.

<sup>2</sup> Capitals are used when quoting from the *Stanzas*, as this practice is used within the *Secret Doctrine*.

<sup>3</sup> Chaim Kramer, *Anatomy of the Soul*, (Jerusalem: Breslov Research Institute, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Aleister Crowley states that the first principle of *magick* is that: “*Every man and every woman is a star.*” In a similar vein, Shirley MacLaine comments in *Going Within*, 1989, p. 108, that “*we each contain and hold the God-spark within us.*” To suggest that an individual *is a Star* is to reference such a divine source emanation or God-spark within.

<sup>5</sup> This article is the concluding section of a four part series. To some extent, it presupposes reader familiarity with concepts previously introduced: including the argument that human consciousness and the “I” experience originate out of the depths of the heart; that living beings have dynamic “zero point” centers rooted into the grounds of Being/Non-Being; and that there is reason to explore the possibility of a higher dimensional holographic metaphysics to the heart, as the possible basis for states of Samadhi and Cosmic Consciousness. This concluding article is the most speculative in nature, proposing a higher dimensional model of human

- existence based on archaic elements from *The Secret Doctrine* and emerging concepts in holographic physics.
- 6 Alice A. Bailey (and Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul) provides a detailed study of the Stanzas in—*A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. (New York: Lucis Trust Publishing Company, 1951.)
- 7 Ibid., xliii.
- 8 “Kosmos” (spelt with a K) was used by Blavatsky in the sense of Manvantaric manifestation as a whole. She often uses “Cosmic” (with a C) to refer to a Solar Systems and speaks of that system as a Cosmos and the Universe.
- 9 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 45.
- 10 These parallels are spelt out in detail in *God, Science & The Secret Doctrine* by Christopher Holmes (Canada: Zero Point Publications, 2010.)
- 11 Ibid., 138-9.
- 12 Ibid., 147-8.
- 13 Ibid., 16.
- 14 Ibid., 85.
- 15 Ibid., 139.
- 16 Ibid., 673.
- 17 Before creation occurs and the universe is absorbed in Non-Being, there is a state of “perfect symmetry.” The initiation of creation with the emergence of a first point is the first act of symmetry breaking, which leads to the sequential symmetry breaking within higher dimensional space and the differentiation of the laws of nature and the precipitation of varied quanta or matter/energetic elements on different vibratory levels, all out of the seeming void. The modern concept of symmetry breaking in physics is aptly depicted by the descent of the Line of Light through the *Tree of Life* of the Kabbalist. As symmetries are broken, different worlds are made manifest. In the Vedas, before creation occurs, the three modes of nature, *sattva, rajas and tamas* representing intelligence, energy and matter are in a state of perfect symmetry, hence are unmanifest and described as “signless.” When the Light of Brahma penetrates the void and breaks the symmetry, each of the three modes of nature manifests at three levels of vibratory existence; just as in physics, each class of particles (hadrons, leptons and gluons) is described as having three generations.
- 18 Paul Davis, *Superforce: The Search for a Grand Unified Theory of Nature* (New York: Touchstone Book, 1984), 160.
- 19 This is explained in Part Three of this series, (*Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2011), 56-58.
- 20 Jacob Bekenstein, Information in the Holographic Universe (*Scientific American*, August, 2003), 59.
- 21 Seth Lloyd & Y. Jack Ng, Black Hole Computers (*Scientific American*, November, 2004). Seth Lloyd is a professor at MIT and Y. Jack Ng a physics and astronomy professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- 22 Bekenstein, *Information in the Holographic Universe*, 62.
- 23 Illustrations 2, through 7 were created by graphic designer Zeljka Zupanic of Croatia, based upon similar illustrations from the *Scientific American* articles referenced.
- 24 Lloyd and Ng, *Black Hole Computers*, 54.
- 25 Leonard Susskind, *The Black Hole War: My Battle with Stephen Hawking to Make the World Safe for Quantum Mechanics* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2008) 155.
- 26 Bekenstein, *Information in the Holographic Universe*, 62-3.
- 27 Lee Smolin, *Three Roads to Quantum Gravity* (Great Britain: Basic Books, Perseus, 2001), 178.
- 28 Bekenstein, *Information in the Holographic Universe*, 60.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Susskind, *The Black Hole War*, 298-299.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Blavatsky denies the existence of gravity as commonly understood, regarding it as a variant of the electromagnetic force with its seven variants conveyed by Fohat and due to the electromagnetic influences of the sun, earth, moon and planets as propagated through the Aether of Space: “Thus the Occultists are not alone in their beliefs. Nor are they so foolish, after all, in rejecting even the “gravity” of modern Science along with other physical laws, and in accepting instead attraction and repulsion. They see, moreover, in these two opposite Forces only the two aspects of the universal unit, called “MANIFESTING MIND”; in which aspects, Occultism, through its great Seers, perceives an innumerable Host of operative Beings; Cosmic Dhyān-Chohans, Entities, whose essence, in its dual nature, is the Cause of all terrestrial

phenomena. For that essence is cosubstantial with the universal Electric Ocean, which is LIFE ....” (*Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 604). These explanations suggest that it is the presence of the “Manifesting Mind” conveyed through Fohat and operative at zero point levels within a universal Electric Ocean, which accounts for the phenomena attributed to the mysterious force of gravity. Blavatsky states: “Occultists ... see in gravity only sympathy and antipathy, or attraction and repulsion, caused by physical polarity on our terrestrial plane, and by spiritual causes outside of its influence ....” (p. 513). Similar views are also emerging within physics, regarding gravitational effects as due to electromagnetic fluxes within ethers of space.

<sup>33</sup> Juan Maldacena, *The Illusion of Gravity* (*Scientific American*, November, 2005), 57.

<sup>34</sup> Note that this author is talking of two and three dimensions, whereas the previous quote referenced 3 and 4 dimensions, as time was included.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

<sup>38</sup> Illustrator, Sharon Field.

<sup>39</sup> Wikipedia: “A Calabi-Yau space is a mathematical construction used by physicists to describe parts of nature that are too small to see with the human eye. Most people know that there are three space directions and one time direction in the universe – these directions are called dimensions. Physicists use Calabi-Yau spaces in studying high energy physics of which string theory is a part, to add 6 or 7 or other numbers to build up more dimensions to the universe.” The most advanced M-theory posits eleven dimensions, with a seven dimensional hyperspace existing at every point underlying the four large dimensions of space-time. Scientist P. Atkins explains: “there are seven dimensions compacted ... at each point ... Calabi-Yau spaces ... in seven dimensions ... the strings wind round them and through their holes...” Part Two of this series, *Esoteric Quarterly*, Winter 2011, elaborates in more detail on these concepts, pp. 30-31.

<sup>40</sup> Susskind, *The Black Hole War*, 337-8.

<sup>41</sup> Leon Maurer’s work has been available through Internet discussion groups at [theos-talk@yahogroups.com](mailto:theos-talk@yahogroups.com), [MindBrain@yahoo-groups.com](mailto:MindBrain@yahoo-groups.com) and [www.blavatsky.net](http://www.blavatsky.net).

<sup>42</sup> Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 277.

# Seven Ray Manifestations of the Will

## A Student

*The signs of the zodiac are concerned primarily with the life expression of the Heavenly Man...and therefore with the destiny and life of the planetary Logos....*

*It is the work of the zodiacal influences to evoke the emergence of the will aspect of the Heavenly Man and of all...who constitute the planetary body of expression. Alice A. Bailey<sup>1</sup>*

There is so much to say that it seems that a good place to start is simply to list the Seven Rays and the triangles of constella-

tions that transmit the ray energies into our solar system and onto our planet. A deeper understanding may be built from there.

Ray I	<b>Aries</b>	Leo	<b>Capricorn</b>
Ray II	<b>Gemini</b>	Virgo	<b>Pisces</b>
Ray III	<b>Cancer</b>	Libra	<b>Capricorn</b>
Ray IV	<b>Taurus</b>	Scorpio	<b>Sagittarius</b>
Ray V	<b>Leo</b>	Sagittarius	<b>Aquarius</b>
Ray VI	<b>Virgo</b>	Sagittarius	<b>Pisces</b>
Ray VII	<b>Aries</b>	Cancer	<b>Capricorn</b>

What I have to say could be the basis of a lengthy article or perhaps even a book on esoteric astrology and the Path, but for these purposes I will limit my remarks primarily to a discussion of Ray I, its constellations, and the process of synthesis that appears to underlie our planetary evolution.

This paper presents part of a theory that I am developing on how the primary energies expressive of the First Ray of Will or Power are synthesized in Shamballa. This theory is based on the recognition that, of the seven trinities in the table above, all of the triangles, contain “pairs of opposites” (highlighted and bolded in blue), except for the triangle of Aries, Leo, Capricorn, which transmits Ray I, the Ray of Will or Power.

A quick look at the table will show another interesting fact. With the Ray I triangle highlighted in red, and the “pairs of opposites” marked in blue, it becomes clear that only *four other signs* remain (un-highlighted). These are *two pairs* of signs: *Aries-Libra* and *Gemini-Sagittarius*. The

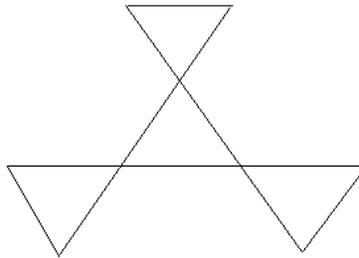
significance of this is profound and this esoteric fact begs for further discussion. For now, let me simply point out that Aries and Libra form the vertical arm of the cardinal cross (symbolizing Spirit-Matter perhaps), the ever-present, unchanging primary duality that underlies all manifestation. These two signs (Gem-Sag) form the pivot around which a great balancing process is taking place on the planet. A brief quotation from *Esoteric Astrology* emphasizes this fact:

The Earth itself is, on a small scale, also an intermediary or a relating planet, because it is found ruling both Gemini and Sagittarius and is potent, therefore, only within the line of this dual relationship, existing between this particular pair of opposites. In the Earth *a great balancing process* (emphasis added) is going forward between two great streams of cosmic energy, emanating the one from Sagittarius and the other from Gemini. This condition...produces the somewhat unusual situation in our planet.<sup>2</sup>

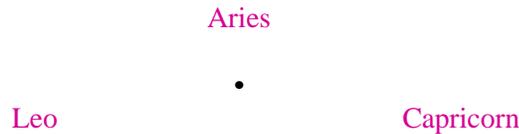
The signs of the zodiac are being balanced through a “line of dual relationship” between Gemini and Sagittarius, both of which are ruled by planet Earth. As I stated earlier, a whole book could be written here, but, for the moment, let me return to my basic theory—the process of synthesis of First Ray energy that appears (to my limited consciousness at least) to be going on in Shamballa.

Shamballa transmits the First Ray energy of

will. First Ray energy, as we have seen, enters the solar system through a triangle of constellations: Aries-Leo-Capricorn. How might we best relate these two ideas for better understanding? It occurred to me, when reading *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*—in the section describing the patterning of the etheric body of the planet<sup>3</sup>—that the diagram which pictures three triangles in formation, might prove to be a useful in understanding the process of synthesis of First Ray energy.



This image shows (if we use our imaginations) a central triangle through which three triangles pour “triple energies” into a central point.



Each of the angles in the central triangle is an entry point for energy from “outer” triangles that transmit energy along the First Ray line.

From above....Leo-Capricorn- <b>Aries</b>	transmits 1 <sup>st</sup> Ray energy (through Aries).
From the left....Aquarius-Sagittarius- <b>Leo</b>	transmits 5 <sup>th</sup> Ray energy (through Leo).
From the right....Cancer-Libra- <b>Capricorn</b>	transmits 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ray energy (through Capricorn).

The three “groups of three” are:

Leo-Cap-**Aries**  
(1)

Aqu-Sag-**Leo** (5)

**Cap**-Lib-Can (3)

Aries, Leo, and Capricorn mark the central triangle...with Aries forming the apex of the central trinity—representing Shamballa—the entry point for First Ray energy. Leo (on the left) is the entry point for Fifth Ray en-

ergy (signifying Hierarchy). Capricorn (on the right) brings in the energy of the Third Ray triangle (corresponding to Humanity).

Each of the *entry points* in the central triangle corresponds to a major planetary center.

Aries  
Shamballa (1)

Leo  
Hierarchy (5)

Capricorn  
Humanity (3)

Three ray energies along the First Ray line, Ray 1 (Shamballa), Ray 5 (Hierarchy), and Ray 3 (Humanity) meet, fuse and blend at a central point—the triple center of planetary will—showing the “grand and applied” process of synthesis that transpires in the center where the will of God is known.

The nine points of the diagram portray symbolically what DK calls “the result of evolution” (as far as the etheric body is concerned) in this solar system. In this, the 2<sup>nd</sup> system of *consciousness evolution*, Sanat Kumara (with the aid of Hierarchy and Humanity) is actively processing the pattern of “the city foursquare” (left over from the previous incarnation of the Logos) into a city of light and living synthesis. As DK puts it:

In this present system, the result of evolution, as far as the etheric body is concerned, will be the contact established between all three points of each triangle, making a nine-fold contact and a nine-fold flow of energy; this is consistent with the fact that nine is the number of initiation, and by the time the destined number of disciples have taken the nine possible initiations, this triangular formation of the planetary etheric body will be complete.<sup>4</sup>

It becomes clear that the Lord of the World is engaged in a dramatic process of synthesis of three triangular constellations of energy. We, who are disciples on the Path of Return, play an integral role in this process.

Statements made by DK (shown one page earlier in *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* on page 162) give us a clue as to the way in

which disciples (actively engaged in the transmutation of force into energy in the etheric body) can consciously participate in this planetary process of synthesis. DK states:

Progress and initiation have been presented to us mainly in terms of character-building and of service to humanity. This approach most surely also produces conflict and the personality fights the soul. But paralleling this well-known conflict, *another battle goes on between the ethers composing the disciple's etheric body and the downpouring higher ethers.* (emphasis added) Of this a man is not so conscious, but the battle is a very real one, affecting primarily the health of the physical body, and falls into five natural stages which we call initiations. The symbolism of the Rod of Initiation teaches us that (during the initiatory process) this Rod, directed by the Christ or by the Lord of the World, as the case may be, is used to stabilize the higher ethers within the personality by an access of applied energy which enables the initiate to retain that which is from above, in order that “as above, so below.”<sup>5</sup>

The paragraph that precedes this one provides a practical example of how the process of *dynamic substitution* that characterizes initiation actually works.

The first initiation is purely the concern of the man's own soul, and the moment that that initiation has been taken, a measure of *buddhic energy* can enter and the process of transference of the higher ethers and their substitution for

the lower can go forward. This, as you may well imagine, produces conflict; the personality etheric body rejects the incoming higher ether, and thus crises are produced in the initiate's life.<sup>6</sup>

It is most illuminating to realize that the process of initiation involves the substitution of COSMIC SUBSTANCE (buddhi, in this case) for *physical etheric substance* (in the initiate's own body), and that this process begins the minute that the first initiation is undergone and continues until the process of substitution is complete.

We, who are on the path, undergoing initiation, stage-by-stage, are actively engaged in

Leo	Sagittarius	Aquarius
Self-consciousness	Focused consciousness	Group consciousness.
Integrated man	Aspiring man	Intuitive mental man.
Human soul	Spiritual human soul	Spiritual soul.
Selfishness	Struggle	Service.
Evolution	The final path	Liberation.

In addition, the triangle on the right of the diagram above (representing Humanity and Ray Three energies) holds further symbolic meanings.

Cancer	door into Humanity (incarnation).
Capricorn	door into Hierarchy (initiation).
Libra	door into Shamballa (the final point of balance).

I could go on, but the point should be clear. A *great balancing process* is going forward on this planet and a great process of synthesis. The center where the will of God is known plays a pivotal role in the process. And we who tread the Path of Return (particularly those of us who are consciously striving to develop and understand the nature of the Seven Ray-wills) are active and conscious participants in the process.

**Note:**

The diagram above is intriguing from many perspectives. There is much significance, for example, in the numbers involved. All three triangles (along the Ray 1 line) point inwards towards "the center where the will of God is known." The top triangle (Aries-

the process of substitution that contributes to the greater process of synthesis that underlies all evolutionary progress on the planet. As we meditate and lift up energies to the higher centers, the process of dynamic substitution (on etheric levels) goes forward.

The details of this process are hidden symbolically in the meaning of the constellations involved. For example, the three constellations that transmit 5th Ray energies (through Leo) into the central triangle are Leo-Sagittarius-Aquarius and are all tied integrally to the path of discipleship. A quick look at excerpts from the table on page 174 of *Esoteric Astrology* reveals the nature of the struggle.

Notice for example that the three signs in the Ray Three triangle represent the three "doors" into the three higher kingdoms of nature:

Leo-Capricorn—Ray 1) was the first to be formed by Sanat Kumara. The other two triangles (Hierarchy – Ray 5 and Humanity – Ray 3) are being unfolded as time goes on. The Fifth Ray triangle is being unfolded by Hierarchy—governed by Ray 5. The Third Ray triangle is being unfolded and completed by Humanity (the third planetary center). These numbers combine as follows: 1 + 5 + 3 = 9, the number of initiation. Nine plus one (the point at the center) equals 10, the perfect number at the center of the circle of creation and synthesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1951), 21-22.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 362. The line of energy linking Gemini to Sagittarius...passing through the solar system (including Earth)...comes into new alignment on December 21, 2012. Gemini, the center through which cosmic love pours into our system stands in *fresh alignment* with Sagittarius pointing to the center of the galaxy. Gemini is ruled by Mercury (signifying body-soul dualism—consciousness “focused on the mortal brother”). Sagittarius is ruled by Jupiter (signifying a fundamental *spiritual dualism*—“focused on the immortal

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*brother*”). The balancing of opposites that is producing (over lifetimes) the “waning of the power of form and the waxing of the life of the soul” is coming to a crisis point. [See *EA*, pp. 368-69.]

<sup>3</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York: Lucis Trust Publishing Co., 1950), 163

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## Behind the Mask

Donald Craig

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What lies behind the mask we call the persona? What mysteries does it hide? What secrets does it hold? Does the mask conceal but one face or a thousand? These questions call for answers, not to quench our curiosity but to cast light on who we are, why we're here, and where we're headed.

The Law of Rebirth posits that we live many lives in many cultures, clothed in many costumes. It also states that at the time of so-called "death," the basic thought-form of that particular personality stays with us. This means that behind the mask—behind the "I" consciousness focused in the brain—dwells a complex of disparate and, at times, conflicting entities. These are not ghosts but our own discarnate identities held captive by assorted attachments.

Attachment occurs when the magnetic power of our thoughts and emotions draws us into a vortex of illusion and glamor. This closes the "space" between the Observer and the observed, causing us to forget our spiritual heritage and to believe the fiction that "we are what we feel and think." Remnants of these false beliefs, attached to particles of consciousness, live on in the afterlife where each is a viable entity, and each has a separate existence. In toto, however, they comprise a *group life*, a group life that not only forms the bedrock of each incarnation, but also colors the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the present persona.

Since the newborn infant has yet to form a persona, it comes in carrying certain dominant energies and features of the many entities that consciousness has identified with in the past. In addition, the nascent persona also bears the weight of the collective wish life—the long-

ings, ambitions, and hopes—trapped in astral substance.

Now, it has to tailor a garment that suits the new environment. So the child grows and, as it does, responds to the stimuli of its surroundings. Each reaction triggers a reaction from the

hidden group life. The relationship of these psychic shadows both to one another and to the incarnate persona, is what sculpts character.

Reflections of these unseen companions can be life. How, for example, do we handle failure? Do we crumble or carry on? How do we face crises? Are we rattled or calm? How do we relate to others? Are we timid or bold?

And how do we react when deceived? Are we spiteful or forgiving? Implicit in each of these questions is a clash between positive and negative impulses.

But, there's more *behind the mask* than clashing impulses between the persona and its psychic shadows. There is also a contest between the incarnate Soul and the Overshadowing Spiritual Soul. Unlike that portion of consciousness we call the human soul, imprisoned in the persona's brain by the illusion that it is a separate being, the Over-Soul identifies with Being itself and is a functioning part of the One Life. Since the consciousness within the persona does not know itself to be a Soul, it must be awakened to its true identity and function.

This is accomplished by transferring our consciousness from its identification with the persona back to its own spiritual reality. We begin the process by detaching ourselves from the persona's innate drive to survive. For where there is contentment, the persona seeks more

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contentment; where there is comfort, there must be more comfort, where there is convenience, there must be more convenience. Rather than commanding the form that substance has built for it, consciousness, which is the master of form, becomes the persona's slave.

But consciousness also has the power to free itself. With help from the Over-Soul, we build a new image of ourselves within the cave in the center of the head. Carefully, and ever so slowly, we construct an image that reflects the highest qualities of the Soul: compassion, forgiveness, inclusiveness, and loving understanding.

As that image takes shape, and its magnetic field strengthens, it attracts consciousness away from its attachments with form into the light of the Spiritual Soul focused in the cave. In that light, consciousness casts aside the illusion of life and death that identity had created and gradually incarnates into a vehicle cogni-

zant of the difference between consciousness and persona.

When we look at the face of a loved one or anyone, for that matter, we're not only looking at a face but at the history of an evolving consciousness or Soul. For behind the mask, engraved on the etheric template that underlies the physical form, are those planetary influences that give us our unique contour and look. And behind that—behind all of the psychic shadows and karmic blunders of the past—gleams a glorious future.

This future lies not in the distance but in a higher octave of consciousness, waiting for humanity to awaken from its slumber, so that, at last, we recognize who we are, why we're here and where we're headed. And knowing that, knowing our purpose—*the purpose which the Masters know and serve*—we can set about our assigned task guided by the light of the One Life.

## Book Review

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*The Cipher of Genesis: The Original Code of the Qabala as applied to The Scriptures*, by Carlo Suarès. Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, 1978. Paperback, 227 pages

Nearly every culture has a creation myth that attempts to describe the mysterious existence of the Universe. Although other creation stories predate the *Book of Genesis*, it remains one of the most intriguing, controversial and perhaps the least understood symbolic narratives describing the origins and peopling of the world.

In this exegesis, Carlo Giuseppe Suarès, (1892-1976) an Egyptian born writer, painter and Qabalist, provides an alternative re-reading of Genesis based on the Qabalistic code of Hebrew number-letters in which the Old Testament was written. These twenty-two glyphs, which were used as letters in the biblical Hebrew alphabet, are the twenty-two proper names originally used to designate different states or structures of the One cosmic energy. Though the number-letters correspond to various symbols, and have qualitative and quantitative meaning and values, they are not symbols in and of themselves, nor are they the by-product of sensory impression; rather, “they factually are what they designate.”

According to Saurès, Genesis was originally a cabalistic script that cannot be translated into ordinary language or read in its native tongue like most other sacred texts. To complicate matters further, the first five chapters of Genesis have been tampered with and rewritten by countless translators, belonging to at least four different traditions. Furthermore, the original texts were “written in code and cannot be deciphered without the knowledge of the number code,” and without an innermost comprehension of the Qabala.

Suarès believes that the original tradition was “a correct presentation of a certain train of thought, but that it was subsequently lost.” However, the font of revelation and knowledge, never really disappeared, but was concealed or secreted. Abraham (he who possess Ram or the universal esse-

ence) and Mosheh or Moses (whose name means the cosmic breath, the originator of existence) possessed it, along with other archetypal figures mentioned in the Bible. This secret font of revelation also exists in certain gnostic teachings and other schools of thought. Yhshwh or Jesus knew it, along with various cabalists and Jewish Mystics who tried unsuccessfully to expound its truths.

Suarès judges that “things have come to such a point in our present juncture of historical and psychological events, that it is necessary to restore the basic key.” His primary objective is to show that all the versions of the Bible, including the Hebrew, are in substantial error, and that the exact meaning of the text, which is a dynamic psychological experience, can be made apparent for each and every one of us today.

The “revived” Qabala used to decode Genesis represents a clear break from the Qabala that most people are familiar with. We learn for example, that “the Qabala is not a formulation but cosmic energy imparted to the mind by the number-letters.” In order to experience the presence of the Qabala directly, we must free our minds of all outworn myths and legends, speculations and creeds: Saurès goes on to say that:

The Qabala—which among thousands of scripts, includes Genesis and scattered fragments of other biblical sources—stands unremittently against every projection of thought concerning the essence of life, because projections are but images, symbols and vagrant words. Qabala existed even before Abraham and therefore does not belong to any specific tradition. It is not—as so repeatedly stated by so-called experts—a mysticism or any system of occultism. It is a way of thinking based on unitive postulates and analogical developments.

Both the Qabala and Genesis are concerned with the interplay and structuring of abstract creative energies and states of consciousness as revealed by the Hebrew number-letter code. The first nine

letters are the archetypes of numbers from Aleph to Tayt or 1 to 9. (Aleph, no. 1, is life-death, the pulsation of creative life, the abstract principle of all that is and all that isn't, while Bayt, no. 2 is the archetype of all containers, the physical support without which nothing is.) This elucidation of the nine archetypal numbers is followed by a brief explanation of the letters from Yod, no. 10 (continuity), to Tsadde, no. 90 (feminine structural energy), which depict the process of the nine archetypes in conditioned existence. The next nine numbers (multiples of 100) are said to express the exalted archetypes in their cosmic states.

Saurès provides the reader with the basic tools for working with the code, but he emphasizes that:

The decoding of Genesis and of any other cabalistic text is ... not a mere matter of transposing from A-B-C to Aleph-Bayt-Ghimel, but a process of penetrating an unknown world by means of a manner of thinking which has to be experienced by the very use of the language which must be learned in order to understand it. However paradoxical and perhaps difficult this may appear, it stands to reason that were the Revelation a matter of ordinary words, it would be an obvious fact prone to superficial observation.

We might add here that the full comprehension of Saurès interpretative analysis also demands some prior knowledge of Hebrew, the Yetziratic Qabala, Gematria and the first book of the Bible. Nevertheless, the average reader should be able to extract the broad principles from what the author presents in his decoding of the scriptures.

Based on Saurès construal of the original Hebrew text, it becomes clear that there exists a level of meaning in Genesis that completely transcends the concept of a personal or anthropomorphized God; YHWH is not a Deity but “an active immanence which can become alive when the two vitalities in us, the container and the contained, fecundate each other.” Existence involves the interplay of Aleph (life-death) and Yod, no. 10 (Aleph’s projection into the time-space continuum.) “The winner,” in this game, as Saurès says, “is always Aleph, because all

that exist must of necessity come to an end.” Humanity’s role, therefore, is to “change sides in the game and to be Aleph against” or instead “of Yod.”

Saurès further describes this interplay in terms of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action and as “biologically-structured energies in different states of organization.” Life begins when Elohim (demiurgic powers or agents) is entwined with YHWH. Creation does not take place in six days, but outside of time and space. It is a simultaneous, perpetual, ever-present action of various number-letter archetypes.

Adam and Eve or Esha along with Cain, Abel, Noah and Ham are “the fundamental ideas of consciousness offering a choice.” In the allegory of Adam within the *Gan Eden*, for example, the Garden is revealed as the dangerous birth place of prenatal humanity, a place of great activity and testing where obsolete structures are destroyed. Adam, who is created male and female, comes into play as energetic existence that upsets the mechanical repetitions of nature, where every pattern is a fixed prototype and “limited to the capacity of its own seed.” Eve or Esha is the feminine psyche or fire who becomes initiated to the indwelling sexual polarity and potency and whose role it is to free herself and Adam from the deep sleep of their animal past. Their expulsion from Eden represents the birthing of humankind; a moment when Man is called to conscious life by the Elohim of Wisdom. Yet, the birth of Adam is incomplete as long as humans embrace the fixed continuity of existence as opposed to the creative newness of life-death.

*The Cipher of Genesis* offers a number of deeply original insights into the timeless cosmic principles of the Bible. Informed readers will discover that it contains both Buddhist and Vedantic elements; that it strikes a resonant chord with aspects of Helena Blavatsky’s *Anthropogenesis*, and that it offers a vision of cosmic creative energy that is amenable to modern physics. The book is a must read for those who wish to further penetrate the largely unplumbed depths of meaning about humanity’s transcendent history and role in the Universe as set forth in the *Book of Genesis*.

Donna M. Brown