

ON SPIRITUAL INDIVIDUALITY

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One of the main things which worries followers of the 'religions of the Book' – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – in relation to the philosophies of both Hinduism and Buddhism is the apparent suggestion that, at the end of the evolutionary line, all human identity is lost. This was one of the main criticisms of Theosophy advanced by Carl Jung (1875-1961) as described by Stephan Hoeller in his book *The Gnostic Jung & the Seven Sermons to the Dead*, where he says:

“Unlike many (although not all) the spiritual systems of the East, especially of India, the Western tradition has never envisioned a permanent dissolution of human individuality in Divinity. The West knows and desires no dewdrop-like slipping into the shining sea. Instead, Jung states here that the principle of individuation is the essence of every created being and that the undifferentiated principle and our own lack of discrimination are great dangers to us.”¹

Unfortunately, Western tradition has not properly understood the Eastern philosophy purely because it has focussed on the purely exoteric aspects of it. Vedic philosophy and Esoteric Buddhism – as described and clarified by modern Theosophy – provide us with a somewhat different viewpoint. However, before going into further detail on that score, let us first look at the somewhat common angle of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to establish the basis of their belief system in a Creator-God to be worshipped by all. Unfortunately, by reference to all the ancient traditions, the ultimate 'God' was not the Creator, per se. The creation of the objective universe was left to a deputised second 'God', often described (as in Freemasonry) as 'the Great Architect', or 'Great Artificer'. The problem for the Western religions is that this latter creative Deity was referred to by Gnostics as the mere 'Demiurge', thereby generating a common fear and hatred of all Gnostics by the theologians of these same religions, plus Zoroastrianism as well.

The Gnostics of the first century CE developed a curious system of belief – one that most theosophists should understand in principle – involving a kosmic Spiritual Ego named ABRAXAS (of Persian origin). This deity was regarded as the first and only emanation of the Pleroma, the supposedly ultimate state of absolute perfection from which everything was emanated and to which everything eventually had to return – although theosophically speaking, the Pleroma has seven sub-states and is itself only the fourth of seven major kosmic states. Abraxas, however, was symbolically described as a triple being having serpents as legs, a human body and the head of a cockerel, whilst holding in his hands a shield and a whip.² He was regarded as the Logos, but one that contained both 'Good' and 'Evil' within his nature as a complementary duality. He was also supposedly the parental originator of all human 'divine sparks' which, on completing their homeward spiritual journey, would be reabsorbed into his nature. In the meantime, these same human spirits were held in bondage by the Demiurge who was thus (misguidedly) regarded as a figure of evil.

The triple nature of Abraxas is, however, representative of the three lowest kosmic states. The serpents represent the cycles of the kosmic physical plane; the human body represents the desires of the kosmic astral plane; the cockerels' head represents the kosmic mental

principle. The shield and whip then symbolise the principles of protection and driving force needed to spur onwards the team of white horses which pulled the chariot of Abraxas (himself akin to the Sun), like the chariot of the Greek god Helios.

The spiritual ambition of the Gnostic was to overcome the cyclic (hence reincarnatory) nature engendered by the Demiurge, thereby escaping from this world altogether. The spiritual ambition of the Judaic, Christian and Islamic religions, however, was (and still is) to remain within the influence of this same Creator-God, enjoying a spiritualised existence in a heaven world which was in effect merely an etherealised version of the physical world of Nature devoid of all evil yet self-indulgently full of 'harmless' pleasures. This the Gnostics regarded as an altogether ludicrous proposition with which they desired no association whatsoever. Not surprisingly, they found enemies all around them.

It is slightly surprising that the Hebrews took quite the same view because kabbalistic philosophy draws very clear parallels which both sides could have understood (with the benefit of some prior metaphysical training). However, to be fair, orthodox Judaism at that stage was itself still singularly undeveloped. Judaic kabbalism had then not even nearly reached the level of symbolic representation with which we are familiar today. Had the Zohar been available at the time, it should have become obvious that the Gnostic Pleroma was exactly the same as the Ain Soph (Aur), the Boundless Divine Light of kabbalism. It would further have become evident that the Gnostic Abraxas, as the first emanation from Pleroma, was equivalent to the kabbalistic Keter (the Crown of Existence); that the Gnostic Sophia was the same as the kabbalistic Hokmah (originally meaning 'Divine Magic') and that the gnostic Demiurge found its correspondence in the kabbalistic Binah, (the World's Mother) the latter containing all the lesser seven sephiroth.³ In making these suggestions, one should otherwise bear in mind that the inverted kabbalistic 'Tree of Life' was a historically much later graphic image.

Modern Theosophy – following in the footsteps of Esoteric Buddhism – helps to clarify the overall picture even further. Here, the fourth cosmic plane or state (the Ain-Soph -Pleroma) is also that of the Amitabha Buddha hierarchies and is again referred to in connection with them as the state of 'Boundless Light'. The other descriptions of it as 'Maha-Buddhi' and 'Mahat' help us even further because the equivalent fourth state in the lesser, sevenfold solar scheme is that of our own buddhi, also described as 'the cosmic etheric double' of the Logos. It is the Amitabha Buddhas who are referred to in the biblical Old Testament as 'the Watchers', who are also responsible for emanating from themselves the Seven Rays, which are in turn the seven groups of self-born (Sanskrit 'anupadaka') Monads to be found on the second solar plane. These are our own Divine Sparks the (atmic) emanations of which are to be found within the state of buddhi as the seven Ray Groups which form the chakra system of the Planetary Logos.⁴ It is then from these that the Spiritual Egos of humankind are emanated as 'daemons' into the state of solar manas immediately 'below'.

The three lower world states beneath the consciousness of the 'Watchers' are those of the cosmic mental, cosmic astral and cosmic physical. These are themselves controlled by three hierarchies of Dhyani-Buddhas – the Dharmakaya, Saboghakaya and Nirmanakaya respectively.⁵ These are all fully liberated interplanetary spirits which have all passed through the human state. In their totality they represent the evolutionary aspect of Logoic consciousness. However, we also need to understand the function of their involutory counterparts, within the deva hierarchy of our planetary scheme.

It becomes much easier to understand the nature of the deva kingdoms if we first understand that Logocic consciousness – like our own – comprises a duality of memory and imagination. In the greater scheme of things, the devas represent the Divine Memory and therefore have no sense of choice because their only concern is with its repetition and qualitative improvement in terms of form. As such they are the proponents and instigators of Divine Law. Man, on the other hand, represents the Divine Imagination and it is because of his efforts towards change that the whole evolutionary process takes place – as a result of an impulse originating within the Pleroma. However, this too must be put into perspective. Plato reminds us that “All is remembrance”.⁶ In other words, all consciousness – at all levels of being, no matter how high or how low – comprises the spectrum of Universal Mind. But the latter is necessarily segregated into qualitatively separate fields of knowledge. Hence that which is an expression of terrestrial or solar being must exit that field of consciousness in order to rise to and experience a yet higher (kosmic) field of being and consciousness which already pre-exists. It follows quite logically, therefore, that any ‘memory’ which falls from the higher field into the lower field is doing so in order to transmit the apparently concealed Higher Purpose of the Logos around His lower system or scheme of being.

Now the deva kingdom comprises the involutory upper part of the sevenfold solar-terrestrial scheme which comprises the totality of the kosmic physical organism of our Logos. Thus it is to be found ‘inhabiting’ the first three planes. From this we can see that the deva kingdom is itself made up of Archons, Archangels and Angels, the Archons comprising what the Gnostics referred to as the ‘Demiurge’ – that which (necessarily) contains the whole of the lower world scheme within its own nature, albeit under the greater controlling influence of the Dhyani-Buddhas. The highest state is known as a veritable ‘sea of divine flame’ whereas the second state is that otherwise known to us as the ‘Akas(a)’, that in which the Monads become primordially visible as ‘the myriad Sparks within the One Flame’. Hence monadic consciousness is akasic. The third state is then that of Atma – the ‘Divine Breath’ or ‘Aether’ which is emanated by the Monads down into the field of buddhi (the kosmic etheric double) there to generate the cycle of elemental (or daemonic) existence involving the principles of Fire-Air-Water-Earth which give rise to fully objective compound expression in physical form.

It is then in the fourth upper involutory stage that the process of differentiation is initiated. Thus it is from here that the buddhi (or to put it more precisely, one of the group centres in the kosmic etheric double of the Logos) is forced to emanate down into the next lower world that ‘foetal’ organism which modern theosophy describes as the ‘Causal Soul’ or ‘Causal Body’. Into this the Jiva or lesser ‘spark’ is then duly impregnated. This then is the true body of reincarnation in which human consciousness evolves. It is from here that the eventually evolved consciousness of the Adept passes back into the fourth (buddhic) plane to join the higher evolutionary cycle. As he subsequently establishes his consciousness within the third (atmic) level, he becomes a full Master and then, progressing much later to the second (akasic) level he becomes a Chohan. Then advancing to the highest of the seven levels of solar being he becomes a ‘Manushi’ or human Buddha ‘sitting at the right hand of the Father-Creator’. It appears to be to this state that Judaism, Christianity and Islam aspire. For the Gnostic, however, it is not enough. His aim is far higher still and although Gnosticism does not use the same terminology, it follows that the initiate of the eighth and higher degrees becomes a Dhyani-Buddha, or liberated interplanetary spirit, like Gautama.

Now the Dhyani-Buddha (so we are told) can no longer take human form, his power as one of the driving psychic energies of the Logos being so vast. Yet, he can by force of will generate a separate human form and endow it with the consciousness of what is known as a Bhodisattva. However, until he himself becomes a Dharmakaya Buddha (established in

the field of kosmic mental consciousness) he may also apparently retain some degree of contact with our planetary world, via the raised consciousness of the Adept Hierarchy. However, this takes us back to the original theme of this paper – that pertaining to the question of a continuing individuality. The fact that the advanced initiate of this degree is re-becoming an increasingly powerful part of the kosmic consciousness of the Logos might suggest to some that, in order to do this, he must give up all his human spiritual attributes. But as these are themselves merely sub-aspects of the already existing and greater kosmic faculty of the Divine Man, it would seem that the question is itself misguided.

The Adepts themselves tells us that self-consciousness is the crown of the whole evolutionary process and it seems quite clear that this applies to whatever state of being and consciousness we care to choose. However, self-consciousness must itself be relative by virtue of the fact that it involves a simultaneous, perceptual awareness of more than one triune field of existence. In other words, it must involve a septenary consciousness and function. The Monad within the lesser sevenfold system is thus correspondingly but a partial expression of the Kosmic Monas (or Manas) which is itself but the partial projection of a being or intelligence far higher in the yet greater scheme. However, as HPB confirms, the individualised Monad possesses more spiritual consciousness than the Monad itself on its own plane.⁷ That Abraxas, although yet still higher in the evolutionary scale, is itself merely an interim projection of a far more evolved (Solar) Logos might be staggering in its conceptual immensity. Perhaps, however, that is why the old saying assures us: “It is better to travel than to arrive.”

References:

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