

## **Hierarchies:**

### **The Ladder of Life**

**Gertrude W. Van Pelt, MD**

*Theosophical Manuals Series*

---

Published as part of a set in the 1930s and '40s by Theosophical University Press; Revised Electronic Edition copyright © 1998 by Theosophical University Press. Electronic version ISBN 1-55700-109-x. All rights reserved. This edition may be downloaded for off-line viewing without charge. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial or other use in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Theosophical University Press. For ease in searching, no diacritical marks appear in the electronic version of the text.

---

## **Contents**

[Chapter 1: Introductory](#)

[Chapter 2: The Human Body](#)

[Chapter 3: Source of These Teachings](#)

[Chapter 4: Man's Composite Nature as a Hierarchy](#)

[Chapter 5: The Infinite and Eternal Cause of Being](#)

## [Section 2](#)

[Chapter 6: The Universe as a Hierarchy](#)

[Chapter 7: Our Solar System as a Hierarchy](#)

[Chapter 8: Cooperation throughout all Hierarchies](#)

[Chapter 9: Involution and Evolution](#)

[Chapter 10: Brotherhood as a Fact in Nature](#)

---

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introductory**

The word *hierarchies* has a very limited application in the English

language, being confined almost entirely to church organization. The dictionary gives as the first meaning "a body of ecclesiastical rulers," and only in the third definition suggests a wider application, such as that of kingdoms, classes, orders, families, genera, and species. Practically, the word is of ecclesiastical association. The reason for this is no doubt due to the fact that during the dark ages it was only in the ancient Mystery schools that the real teaching of hierarchies was given, as the fundamental, universal scheme of nature. These secret schools dealt with the problems of life and death, and were known as the highest court of authority. But as they declined, due to the prevailing social conditions, and were finally closed in the sixth century, certain teachings in a limited and restricted form remained in the public mind associated with the religions, which were really the degenerated shadows of the Mystery schools.

During the early centuries of this era, several religions were contending for general acceptance. When finally the Christians gained supremacy, their religion was naturally colored with the old beliefs and forms familiar to and loved by many of the people. The influence of the Stoics, the Neopythagoreans, and Neoplatonists was evident, but especially the last named left its mark. This was largely due to certain writings which appeared in the fifth or sixth century purporting to have been written by Dionysius the Areopagite — a man who, according to the Christian legend, was one of the first converts of Paul when he preached on Mars Hill in Athens. The real author was evidently a man of that later time who was in sympathy with the Neoplatonists' teachings, but who for some reason, possibly social or financial, worked under the banner of the dominant Church. At heart he was a Greek pagan, and perhaps wishing to save Christianity from pure exotericism and to illuminate it, he seems to have adopted a method of introducing some of the old

teachings in a modified form which would influence the people in their favor. His effort was reinforced through the influence of schools of learning active at that time in Alexandria, the great center of Hellenistic culture. However this may be, these writings profoundly influenced the Christian Church about the fifth or sixth century, and to this day are found among the canonical works. Among them was a treatise on the Divine Hierarchies, which taught that God, being infinite, worked through lesser divinities of graded development, each lower being derived from the one above it, thus following in a general way the Kabbala and the Neoplatonists — only instead of using their terms, he adopted names more congenial to Christian thought. These terms were: God, as the Summit; then Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, forming the first triad; then Dominations, Virtues, Powers, as the second triad; and Principalities, Archangels, Angels, as the third triad; making ten stages or grades. And this, in substance, is the fifth definition in the dictionary.

The essence of the meaning of this teaching has long since passed out of the Christian religion, and probably was clearly grasped only in the very early years of our era by a relatively limited number of people. Esoterically the term has a special significance which we will try to develop. Exoterically it applies to any organized combination held together by a head, having under him a graded series of subordinates, each of them being responsible to the one directly above him. The army of a nation is an excellent example of a hierarchy, being organized generally in corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, companies, and other units, on a descending scale.

Human life even on this physical plane is only possible when it is organized after this fashion. Every country has its government, and whatever subordinate divisions of the country may exist, such as states, counties, or what not, all have their rulers and

under-rulers. Within these are the cities, with a head manager controlling departments which are under the authority of one of still lower rank. Every business enterprise is carried on in a similar manner. Human activities cannot function otherwise, and there is peace, happiness, and harmony to the degree that the state or any other body is able to preserve these various relationships without friction. On the other hand, there is insecurity, confusion, unrest, social disease, exactly in proportion as the links weaken or become ineffective. In any combination or group of people there must be a central authority which has the confidence and respect of the units if life is to proceed normally. Let this weaken or cease to be present and, in the case of a country, the horror of a revolution is imminent. The climax of terror comes when human passions are let loose in a mob.

All these facts are so common that their deep significance is overlooked. Human beings direct their own lives along such grooves because they cannot do otherwise. Their minds are part of cosmic mind and they must follow nature's pattern or be torn to pieces. This is nothing which has to be learned any more than babes have to learn to breathe. Primitive people follow and keep to the pattern more perfectly than do their so-called civilized brothers. The necessity for organization is innate.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM NATURE

We see the same thing in the lower kingdoms, especially developed in bees and ants. The bees have their queen with her enormous family of sons or drones and daughters or workers. The latter are divided further into nurses for the young, maids-of-honor to the queen, builders, gatherers of pollen and of nectar for honey-making, and still another group to air and heat or cool the hive, etc. All know and fulfill their various duties. Some are watchers at the door to guide the timid young ones to their hive

and to guard the door from enemies. All these together form a harmonious community working under the great law.

The ants represent another organized society. This principle of organization is universal throughout the kingdoms. Botanists see plainly the division of plants into families. Mineralogists see the mathematical precision of nature in the marvelous formation of crystals. But in the ant and bee families we can see nature's plan actually at work. In some ways the ants are even more wonderful than the bees. In the Alleghany Mountains there are 1700 ant mounds covering a space of fifty acres and they are all of one commonwealth. There is a similar division of labor as in the case of the bees: major and minor workers, sentinels for hostile approach, masons, builders, foragers, nurses, queen's bodyguard, and even harvesters and gardeners. These duties are mostly interchangeable, rather more so than in the bee communities. But in the case of the termites, perhaps the most wonderfully organized of all insect communities, there is a very definite division of duties and even a very great modification of the bodily structure into several classes. Yet there is never confusion, never disturbance unless an enemy appears in the fold. The citizens of this commonwealth seem to be so perfectly self-controlled, so absolutely free from any desire to violate law or swerve from duty, that this community of millions thread their ways through innumerable labyrinths as if dominated by some secret and occult guide, infallible and sure.

It is indeed the teaching that the lower kingdoms are informed by higher beings — through remote control, we might say — and they reflect as in a clear surface the harmony above. In the human kingdom we find entirely different conditions. Mind has been awakened and self-consciousness has resulted. We must learn to do for ourselves what higher beings are doing for the lower kingdoms. Moral responsibility follows the awakening of

mind, and we must learn through mistakes and suffering to weave the pattern of the gods and make its fabric glow with its own inherent light.

But the human race is young, only a little more than half over its journey on this planet, and it must serve a long, long apprenticeship before it finds itself, and before the units themselves learn each one separately to put its own house in order. Collectively humanity is indeed a child, with all the conceit and self-confidence of childhood, yet instinctively, inevitably it knows that nothing can be carried out, that no project can begin to function, until it is framed in a suitable organization with its central authority.

The animal kingdom, being so closely connected with the human through its bodies of flesh, reflects more of human unrest than do the kingdoms below, but even here we find the hierarchical pattern more or less clearly marked in places. Humans not having overcome the "delusion of separateness" are constantly fighting cooperation through their selfishness, and yet are inevitably drawn into it both by their selfish and their altruistic instincts. Nothing else works. Even criminals are well organized, and have their own codes of honor for self-protection.

These facts are so common that we fail to read their meaning; to see that the innate tendencies in people to shape their lives have their origin in the impulses from higher realms of consciousness, in the vital streams which flow through the natural channels in human nature to the lower planes where the human consciousness is at present functioning. The inevitable, irresistible tendency for human activities to shape themselves into hierarchical formation shows that this is nature's constitution. "As above, so below." The physical plane is the reflection, the shadow, of that which has produced it. The

essential difference, however, between the man-made hierarchies and those existing throughout nature, is that the former are artificial and the latter real. The artificial ones are those upon which the undeveloped human beings are practicing, so to say. They are the means through which the undeveloped parts of the human constitution are being molded, thus fitting the human kingdom to take its place in the living tissue of the universe. With these preliminary remarks, we can consider the most evident example of a *real* hierarchy — the human body.

---

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Human Body**

The human body is a hierarchy in manifestation before our eyes, a little universe in itself on our own physical plane which, could we fathom its meaning, would reveal the mysteries of kosmos. For the human intellect its secrets are a sealed book which only an adept of advanced degree could open. From one point of view it is but a mechanism, a vehicle for the use of higher forces. This is evident, for when these are withdrawn, as at death, it begins at once to crumble, the various entities which have been working together go their own ways, and the hierarchical combination temporarily rests.

When, however, the hierarchy of the body is active, it is the brain which is the dominant factor, the hierarch. But we must understand, of course, that the brain or any other organ is but a transmitter of the energies from entities of higher grades who make up the composite human constitution.

The basis of physical life is the cell, which in manifestation is a sevenfold entity, like man, like the earth, like the sun, like the universe; for every existing form is a reflection of the form above it. The cell contains, among other things, a nucleus, a nucleolus,

and an enveloping membrane, which latter corresponds to the body of a human. It has also kosmic correspondences.

*"The Spheres of Being, or centres of life, which are isolated nuclei breeding their men and their animals, are numberless; not one has any resemblance to its sister-companion or to any other in its own special progeny."*

*"All have a double physical and spiritual nature."*

*"The nucleoles are eternal and everlasting; the nuclei periodical and finite. The nucleoles form part of the absolute. They are the embrasures of that black impenetrable fortress, which is for ever concealed from human or even Dhyanic sight. The nuclei are the light of eternity escaping therefrom."*

*"It is that LIGHT which condenses into the forms of the 'Lords of Being' . . . — The Secret Doctrine 2:33*

All the cells of the body are specialized to fulfill their various functions. For example, a muscle, liver, or blood cell is easily recognized as belonging to its own organ. But there is a further specialization for the different duties of any one organ: the liver, for example, has a variety of functions, and the cells grouped together for any one purpose are presided over and kept in order by their little brain, known as a ganglion. All of these ganglia are coordinated by the nervous apparatus of the liver as a whole, and all the organs of the body united by the central nervous system. There is instant and absolute communication between all the parts of this innumerable host; absolute obedience of each unit to its superior; and when in health, this little world moves in its orbit as serenely as the stars, without jar or friction, which might continue were it not for the discord injected into its ordered life by the unevolved intermediate nature of man, higher up on the



scale. But the cells, basic units of the human body, are by no means the simple things they seem to be under the microscope. Smaller and smaller grows the pattern, but ever the small reflects the great.

Science teaches us that the living as well as the dead organism of both man and animal are swarming with bacteria of a hundred various kinds; that from without we are threatened with the invasion of microbes with every breath we draw, and from within by leucomaines, aerobes, anaerobes, and what not. But Science never yet went so far as to assert with the occult doctrine that our bodies, as well as those of animals, plants, and stones, are themselves altogether built up of such beings; which, except larger species, no microscope can detect. . . . Each particle — whether you call it organic or inorganic — *is a life*. Every atom and molecule in the Universe is both *life-giving* and *death-giving* to that form, inasmuch as it builds by aggregation universes and the ephemeral vehicles ready to receive the transmigrating soul, and as eternally destroys and changes the *forms* and expels those souls from their temporary abodes. It creates and kills; it is self-generating and self-destroying; it brings into being, and annihilates, that mystery of mysteries — the *living body* of man, animal, or plant, every second in time and space; . . . — Ibid., 1:260-1

It is by studying the small that we can infer the great, once we grasp the philosophy that is contained in the idea of analogy; once we realize that the universe is one organism, and that every lesser organism of whatever nature is an integral part of the whole, part of its nature and therefore essential to it. It is thus not a mere figure of speech to compare the human body to a universe, or the "spheres of being" (or stars and planets) to cells

in the human body, for this body is verily an epitome of the whole. Perchance the organs of this whole may be great central suns, controlling lesser suns in an almost infinite series of gradations, whose planets may be atoms of this mighty entity. Analogy would lead us to infer a universal nervous system and circulations of life currents, purifying and rejuvenating every such cell, with its consciousness permeating everywhere.

---

## **Chapter 3**

### **Source of These Teachings**

The foregoing is but a sketchy outline of the hierarchical constitution of the universe, and before proceeding further it is pertinent to answer the question which must arise in the minds of those unfamiliar with these teachings as to the source from which they come. Are they inferences and guesses of some penetrating minds, arguing from particulars to universals? A study of this majestic philosophy will make it quite clear that no human mind could have evolved it. Only those far beyond the ordinary human stage would be capable of studying and recording the workings at the heart of nature.

Theosophy is the majestic wisdom-religion of the archaic ages and is as old as thinking man. It was delivered to the first human protoplasts, the first thinking human beings on this earth, by highly intelligent spiritual entities from superior spheres. This ancient doctrine, this esoteric system, has been passed down from guardians to guardians through innumerable generations until our own time. Furthermore, portions of this original and majestic system have been given out at various periods of time to various races in various parts of the world by those guardians when humanity stood in need of such

extension and elaboration of spiritual and intellectual thought.

Theosophy is not a syncretistic philosophy-religion-science, a system of thought or belief which has been put together piecemeal and consisting of parts or portions taken by some great mind from other various religions or philosophies. This idea is false. On the contrary, theosophy is that single system or systematic formulation of the facts of visible and invisible nature which, as expressed through the illuminated human mind, takes the apparently separate forms of science and of philosophy and of religion. We may likewise describe theosophy to be the formulation in human language of the nature, structure, origin, destiny, and operations of the kosmical universe and of the multitudes of beings which infill it.

It might be added that theosophy, in the language of H. P. Blavatsky (*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 328), is "the substratum and basis of all the world-religions and philosophies, taught and practiced by a few elect ever since man became a thinking being. In its practical bearing, Theosophy is purely *divine ethics*; . . . G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*

The real facts of life included in what is known as the wisdom-religion have been taught again and again in ages past, and as often have been lost and forgotten just as the cities of former civilizations are buried in the earth and lost to sight and memory. Great teachers have come in every age and have given, suited to the molds of minds of that cycle, as much of truth as could be understood and assimilated. The teaching is that in the early ages of humanity on this planet, great beings from other worlds came and impressed the minds of human beings with the facts of life,

leaving a body of adepts referred to in H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* 281-2, as follows:

Alone a handful of primitive men — in whom the spark of divine Wisdom burnt bright, and only strengthened in its intensity as it got dimmer and dimmer with every age in those who turned it to bad purposes — remained the elect custodians of the Mysteries revealed to mankind by the divine Teachers. There were those among them, who remained in their *Kumaric* condition from the beginning; and tradition whispers, what the secret teachings affirm, namely, that these Elect were the germ of a Hierarchy *which never died since that period: —*

*"The inner man of the first \* \* \* only changes his body from time to time; he is ever the same, knowing neither rest nor Nirvana, spurning Devachan and remaining constantly on Earth for the salvation of mankind. . . ." "Out of the seven virgin-men (Kumara) four sacrificed themselves for the sins of the world and the instruction of the ignorant, to remain till the end of the present Manvantara. Though unseen, they are ever present. When people say of one of them, "He is dead"; behold, he is alive and under another form. These are the Head, the Heart, the Soul, and the Seed of undying knowledge (Gnyana). Thou shalt never speak, O Lanoo, of these great ones (Maha . . .) before a multitude, mentioning them by their names. The wise alone will understand. . . ."*  
(Catechism of the inner Schools.)

It is from these that all the great adepts of history have descended. They are the guardians of humanity, and it is from among their number that from time to time in history the founders of the great religions have come among mankind. Referring to the method of studying the framework of nature, H.

P. Blavatsky wrote:

The flashing gaze of those seers has penetrated into the very kernel of matter, and recorded the soul of things there, where an ordinary profane, however learned, would have perceived but the external work of form. . . . It is useless to say that the system in question is no fancy of one or several isolated individuals. That it is the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity. That for long ages, the "Wise Men" of the Fifth Race, of the stock saved and rescued from the last cataclysm and shifting of continents, had passed their lives *in learning, not teaching*. How did they do so? It is answered: by checking, testing, and verifying in every department of nature the traditions of old by the independent visions of great adepts; *i. e.*, men who have developed and perfected their physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual organizations to the utmost possible degree. No vision of one adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions — so obtained as to stand as independent evidence — of other adepts, and by centuries of experiences. -- *The Secret Doctrine* 1:272-3

Such is our authority for the teachings of the hierarchical constitution of the universe, presented not in a dogmatic sense, but as an explanation, the acceptance of which each one must decide for himself. This has been, indeed, prior to the last century, an esoteric teaching for our historical period, and the fact that it is now given on a printed page seems to contain a hopeful promise of present possibilities.

The following definition of a hierarchy from this heretofore esoteric standpoint is quoted from G. de Purucker's *Occult Glossary*:

The name is used by theosophists, by extension of meaning, as signifying the innumerable degrees, grades, and steps of evolving entities in the kosmos, and as applying to all parts of the universe; and rightly so, because every different part of the universe — and their number is simply countless — is under the vital governance of a divine being, of a god, of a spiritual essence; and all material manifestations are simply the appearances on our plane of the workings and actions of these spiritual beings behind it.

The series of hierarchies extends infinitely in both directions. If he so choose for purposes of thought, man may consider himself at the middle point, from which extends above him an unending series of steps upon steps of higher beings of all grades — growing constantly less material and more spiritual, and greater in all senses — towards an ineffable point. And there the imagination stops, not because the series itself stops, but because our thought can reach no farther out nor in. And similar to *this* series, an infinitely great series of beings and states of beings descends downwards (to use human terms) — downwards and downwards, until there again the imagination stops, merely because our thought can go no farther.

The summit, the acme, the flower, the highest point (or the hyparxis) of any series of animate and "inanimate" beings, whether we enumerate the stages or degrees of the series as seven or ten or twelve (according to whichever system

we follow), is the divine unity for that series or hierarchy, and this hyparxis or highest being is again in its turn the lowest being of the hierarchy above it, and so extending onwards forever — each hierarchy manifesting one facet of the divine kosmic life, each hierarchy showing forth one thought, as it were, of the divine thinkers.

Various names were given to these hierarchies considered as series of beings. The generalized Greek hierarchy as shown by writers in periods preceding the rise of Christianity may be collected and enumerated as follows: (1) Divine; (2) Gods, or the divine-spiritual; (3) Demigods, sometimes called divine heroes, involving a very mystical doctrine; (4) Heroes proper; (5) Men; (6) Beasts or animals; (7) Vegetable world; (8) Mineral world; (9) Elemental world, or what was called the realm of Hades. The Divinity (or aggregate divine lives) itself is the hyparxis of this series of hierarchies, because each of these nine stages is itself a subordinate hierarchy. This (or any other) hierarchy of nine, hangs like a pendant jewel from the lowest hierarchy above it, which makes the tenth counting upwards, which tenth we can call the superdivine, the hyperheavenly, this tenth being the lowest stage (or the ninth, counting downwards) of still another hierarchy extending upwards; and so on, indefinitely.

One of the noblest of the theosophical teachings, and one of the most far-reaching in its import, is that of the hierarchical constitution of universal nature. This hierarchical structure of nature is so fundamental, so basic, that it may be truly called the structural framework of being.

Echoes of this ancient teaching can be found more or less plainly stated in India, Japan, and Egypt. The scheme in the Neoplatonic philosophy has just been given in the definition of a hierarchy. This was copied from the Greeks, as taught by Plato, and the Christian scheme which has been alluded to earlier, was patterned after the same with different names. The Syrians had a similar system, using their special terms, likewise the Babylonians. The Kabbala referred to the Ladder of Life. All of these were exoteric inasmuch as the real key to their full meaning was withheld, but they show how widely spread were the ideas, and indicate a common source from which they all sprang. They at least show that a belief in a gradation of power and authority in the inner spheres was general; that there was understood to be a multiplicity of gods working together in their appropriate realms and conducting the affairs of the universe. It took the dark ages to develop the degenerate belief in an extra-cosmic God who personally attended to the affairs of the universe. Now, however, it is being recognized that the God of theology is a logical impossibility. The perfect God premised should have made perfect beings living in a perfect world. But facts, as we know them, indicate that evolving, learning entities are working their way to freedom and knowledge. Every grade or plane or station must have its guides, infallible in relation to the territory they have conquered, but still fallible in their own spheres, while they too must have their guides, infallible to them, and so on infinitely. The ancient wisdom taught constant growth and evolution; imperfection ever working toward perfection, to be attained in the sphere inhabited for the time. Thus we see law and order and design in the universe as a whole, which yet provides the schools in which learning entities can grow through their experience and profit by their mistakes.

The AH-HI (Dhyān-Chohans) are the collective host of



spiritual beings — the Angelic Hosts of Christianity, the Elohim and "Messengers" of the Jews — who are the vehicle for the manifestation of the divine or universal thought and will. They are the Intelligent Forces that give to and enact in nature her "laws," while themselves acting according to laws imposed upon them in a similar manner by still higher Powers; but they are not "the personifications" of the powers of Nature, as erroneously thought. This hierarchy of spiritual Beings, through which the Universal Mind comes into action, is like an army — a "Host," truly — by means of which the fighting power of a nation manifests itself, and which is composed of army corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, and so forth, each with its separate individuality or life, and its limited freedom of action and limited responsibilities; each contained in a larger individuality, to which its own interests are subservient, and each containing lesser individualities in itself. — *The Secret Doctrine* 1:38

---

## Chapter 4

### **Man's Composite Nature as a Hierarchy**

We have spoken of the human body as a hierarchy. This may be more easily grasped than the idea that man as a whole is a larger hierarchy of which the body is the lowest, the simplest, and least important. Christians have been used to the idea that we are composed of body, soul, and spirit, but the real philosophical meaning has been lost to the West for centuries, and the average person has been content to think chiefly of the body, while holding a vague idea that he has a soul as well. While this threefold classification is correct in a general way, for more careful analysis of the human being, the ancient teaching describes us as a sevenfold (or tenfold) entity, or expressed in

another way, as an entity having seven principles or aspects. Each one of these aspects, like the body, is a hierarchical entity, having its own individual system, but working with the larger hierarchy under the hierarch.

These principles or entities are (1) *atman*, the essential self; (2) *buddhi*, the faculty or spiritual organ in man, manifesting itself as intuition, understanding, discrimination, etc.; (3) *manas*, the center or organ of the human ego-consciousness, and therefore the producing cause of the "I am I"; (4) *kama*, the seat of the impulses, desires, aspirations, and therefore the driving force in the human constitution; (5) *prana*, the "electrical field" manifesting in the human as vitality; (6) *linga-sarira*, the astral model body; and (7) *sthula-sarira*, the physical body. Number 3, *manas* or mind, has a higher and lower portion, which latter and the four lower principles have yet to gain their immortality. This word "immortality" is here used in a special sense. Nothing that exists can ever cease to exist, of course, since all units are part of the whole. But the lower principles have not yet evolved to the point of self understanding and mastery, which is their destiny in the eternities to come.

A less analytical classification includes the upper duad, namely, *atman* and *buddhi*, as spirit; the intermediate duad, namely, *manas* and *kama*, as soul; and the lower triad as body.

Here we are only outlining the human constitution from the hierarchical standpoint. Seven parts or principles have been mentioned, but in truth, as has been said, every hierarchy consists of ten, three of which, in our case, are unmanifested, at least so far as we are concerned. Further, there are two more, one connecting any hierarchy with the one above it, and one with the hierarchy below it, making twelve in every system.

A little reflection will reveal that this teaching about human

beings as being many in One is in harmony with universal experience. Impulse, emotion, thought or impersonal love, directs every human act, the motive and quality depending upon the center in which the consciousness is resting, which may be either high or low. Very highly evolved individuals work from their spiritual center, which sends its impulses down through the whole nature eventuating in noble thoughts and deeds. These impulses are felt but feebly in the undeveloped person who more frequently centers his consciousness in his unevolved, uncertain, and vacillating intermediate nature. But whether high or low, every impulse comes to the body from above or within, expressing itself in speech, thought, or action. And the within and the without are evidently one organism, acting together simultaneously.

The Universe is worked and *guided* from *within outwards*. As above so it is below, as in heaven so on earth; and man — the microcosm and miniature copy of the macrocosm — is the living witness to this Universal Law and to the mode of its action. We see that every *external* motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental, is produced and preceded by *internal* feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind. As no outward motion or change, when normal, in man's external body can take place unless provoked by an inward impulse, given through one of the three functions named, so with the external or manifested Universe. The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled, and animated by almost endless series of Hierarchies of sentient Beings, each having a mission to perform, and who — whether we give to them one name or another, and call them Dhyanchohans or Angels — are "messengers" in the sense only that they are the agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws. They

vary infinitely in their respective degrees of consciousness and intelligence; and to call them all pure Spirits without any of the earthly alloy "which time is wont to prey upon" is only to indulge in poetical fancy. For each of these Beings either *was*, or prepares to become, a man, if not in the present, then in a past or a coming cycle (Manvantara). They are *perfected*, when not *incipient*, men; and differ morally from the terrestrial human beings on their higher (less material) spheres, only in that they are devoid of the feeling of personality and of the *human* emotional nature — two purely earthly characteristics. -- *The Secret Doctrine* 1:274-5

---

## Chapter 5

### **The Infinite and Eternal Cause of Being**

The underdeveloped individual has always stood in awe of the mystery of life. Only mystics have found within themselves some answer to the eternal questions, "Whence did I come?" "Whither shall I go?" Exoteric religions of the West have referred the origin of all things to a God — a God colored, of course, by mankind's own various and immature conceptions of perfection. But the ancient wisdom, the fountain-head from which all religions have flowed, in whatever form it has been presented to humanity during all the millions of years since the human host was evolved on this globe, states that this form has always been built around the basic central premises of a boundless principle, which had no beginning and can have no end; in which all beings exist, from which all proceed, and to which all eventually return. It is the eternal IS, and the eternal NOW. All speculation concerning it is impossible, as a part cannot comprehend the whole of which it is a part. It is the one reality, amidst the phantasmagoria of the never ceasing and eternally changing movements of life. It is the

noumenon behind all phenomena.

This principle we know to be true, not only because such is the assertion of the ancient wisdom as it has been presented today, and therefore as it must have been presented in the past, but also because the rational mind accepts it as inevitable. This boundless principle manifests and withdraws, sleeps and wakes. The great universe is active during its day, then darkness and silence reign over space. In the poetical symbolism of the ancients, it is described as the inbreathing and outbreathing of Brahma. In the outbreathing a new universe comes into being, yet it is but the old reborn. In the inbreathing all returns to silence and darkness. So it is with solar systems, so it is with planets, with races of mankind as a whole; with individuals; with atoms.

The formation of crystals from a saturated solution of certain substances may offer a suggestion to some minds. The heated solution is clear and transparent, then quietly as the liquid cools, beautiful starry crystals appear as if by magic, now here, now there, while the liquid is not decreased or diminished. In our undeveloped state and with our finite minds it is not to be supposed that we can grasp these transcendent facts except in broad outline. Yet we can work in the direction of truth and absorb enough to guide us along the path which all must tread.

The universe reimbodies itself . . . following precisely the analogical lines that the soul of man does in reincarnating, making the necessary allowances for varying conditions. As man is the product of his former life, or rather of his lives, so is a universe, a solar system, a planet, an animal, an atom — the very great as well as the so-called infinitesimal — the fruitage, the flower, of what went before. Each of these bears its load of karma precisely as the soul of man does. — G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of*

We have said that this ancient wisdom-religion has been given to every great race, and we may add, to the various subdivisions of such races, in such measure and form as would fit the needs and understanding of these respective eras. There have been greater civilizations in the past than those we know today. There are times when more advanced souls are in incarnation than at other times, and naturally a great teacher would present the teachings about life in a form best fitted to the mental development of those who are to receive them, though basically the teachings would be the same. So it must always be, and the fact that such has been the case is corroborated by a variety of evidence from as far back as our historical records reach. The great religions can be shown to have had a common origin, but even without such overwhelming support from history, the assertion that there must be those advance guards of humanity, equipped to hand down such ancient teachings, is a belief which one cannot escape if evolution be accepted as a fact. And evolution is before our eyes every moment of our lives. We see everything growing in all the kingdoms. Children grow to adult age, and adults often unfold glorious qualities in their natures, showing the possibilities, the trend of human life, and suggesting, almost declaring thereby, that some men, during the long past, must have reached a godlike status, fitted to be great teachers to their younger brothers.

History again confirms this inference in the outstanding figures of Gautama Buddha, Krishna, Lao-Tse, Jesus, Quetzalcoatl, and others. It is true that these teachings invariably degenerate, more or less according to the relative darkness of the cycle in which they were given. Yet even in the Christian childish conception of a personal God — a great cosmic man who is beseeched to grant favors to one over another — even in this travesty of the original teaching it is possible to discern the distorted outlines of the true

picture.

*"Thus there is but one Absolute Upadhi (basis) in the spiritual sense, from, on, and in which, are built for Manvantaric purposes the countless basic centres on which proceed the Universal, cyclic, and individual Evolutions during the active period."*

*"The informing Intelligences, which animate these various centres of Being, are referred to indiscriminately by men beyond the Great Range as the Manus, the Rishis, the Pitris, the Prajapati, and so on; and as Dhyani Buddhas, the Chohans, Melhas (fire-gods), Bodhisattvas, and others, on this side. The truly ignorant call them gods; the learned profane, the one God; and the wise, the Initiates, honour in them only the Manvantaric manifestation of THAT which neither our Creators (the Dhyani Chohans) nor their creatures can ever discuss or know anything about. The ABSOLUTE is not to be defined, and no mortal or immortal has ever seen or comprehended it during the periods of Existence. The mutable cannot know the Immutable, nor can that which lives perceive Absolute Life." -- The Secret Doctrine 2:34*

This fundamental proposition of a boundless underlying principle is recalled here because it must be the real starting point, from within, of our study of hierarchies.

---

[Section 2](#)  
[Contents](#)

---

[Theosophical Society Homepage](#)

## Section 2

[Chapter 6](#): The Universe as a Hierarchy

[Chapter 7](#): Our Solar System as a Hierarchy

[Chapter 8](#): Cooperation throughout All Hierarchies

[Chapter 9](#): Involution and Evolution

[Chapter 10](#): Brotherhood as a Fact in Nature

## Section 1

---

### Chapter 6

#### **The Universe as a Hierarchy**

The universe may be symbolized as the great hierarchical tree. Like a tree it grows, bears its fruit, and dies down. Like a tree it has its roots, which in this case is that boundless underlying principle. So suggestive is this symbol that its use has been universal. The Aswattha tree of India, symbolized as the tree of wisdom and knowledge, whose fruits are immortality, was said to grow with its roots above and its branches below. And the strange Banyan tree of India, whose branches reach down and root themselves so that one tree will cover acres, is an old symbol of life.

The symbol for sacred and secret knowledge was universally a tree, carrying the idea of its being handed in hierarchical form from one adept to another, as the branches of a tree grow from one to another. Then there is the mundane tree of the Norse legends, which cannot die until the last battle of life shall be fought. Again, in the Scandinavian legends, after the darkness during which the great Unknown sleeps, Yggdrasil, the tree of the universe of time and life, grows again and fills all space. The dragons or serpents, symbols for initiates, are said to guard the



tree of knowledge. And there is the story of Eve offering Adam the apple from the tree of knowledge, a variant of that of Juno giving to Jupiter, on her marriage, a tree with golden fruit.

No words can really describe the hierarchical constitution of the universe. They can but hint of it through symbols or by recalling certain observed operations of nature. It might be pictured as one vast organism of living tissue, running the infinite gamut of degrees from spirit to matter; for spirit and matter are essentially one, matter being but the other pole of spirit. This vast organism must further be conceived as not only filling all space, but as *being space itself*. And as this is a living organism, every point of it must be a center of consciousness — in other words, it must be an entity of some degree of consciousness, be it high or low, self-conscious or otherwise. Thus, no speck of dust or grain of sand is without its own quality of consciousness, though, of course, not as human beings understand this word. In this sense every atom is an entity. Every composite being is composed of atoms which obviously could not be used or respond to impulses if they were not themselves alive, having their own degree of consciousness. If there were not this essential unity, there could be no coordination in nature and any broken link would mean chaos. This is a new idea to Western habit of thought, but familiar to the East and common in ancient times.

Planes or worlds exist within each other, invisible to each other, not interfering with each other, yet influencing each other since they are all part of the same organism, compact like the human body, with no point unoccupied, born out of the living matrix of space, the deathless, all-permanent basis. Every entity has grown out of a higher one as literally as a stem grows out of its branch. Humans, like the leaves of the tree, may fancy themselves separate, yet they exist only as part of the whole. In the root from which they spring, they all "live and move and have their being."

## AS ABOVE SO BELOW

This Hermetic saying from the "Emerald Tablet of Hermes" can be, if we know how to use it, a guide to the discovery of nature's inmost secrets. As one studies this all-embracing philosophy of the ancient wisdom, the truth of that wise old saying that one who fully knows himself will know all, begins to be clear. Even in a grain of sand is written the secret of all life for those who have the eyes to see it. The small mirrors the great in broad outline, yet no two atoms are exactly alike. Each one is stamped with its own individuality, which is unfolded through the eternities.

In any one universe, however, the *plan* repeats itself infinitely. Out and out to the remotest confines of that universe the ideal pattern is ever the same, filling all space, though forms vary infinitely. This must be so, because the universe is one organism, a common consciousness pervading the whole. The supreme purpose in nature guides every atom, since every atom is a part of this whole, thus insuring order, stability, harmony, in the grand cosmic operations, and preventing even the mistakes of learning entities from disturbing the plan of the mighty hierarch who directs the forces of the universe. The free will of every lesser hierarch down to and including man, and all entities below him, is exercised only within its own domain and cannot disturb the larger harmony of which it is a part.

In considering the universe as a hierarchy, we used as our point of departure starting from above, the boundless underlying principle. Starting now in thought from below, the electrons are within the atoms; atoms form molecules; molecules, the cells. Cells make the bodies of lower entities; gradually develop, differentiate, forming larger organisms. Finally the complex human body appears, an aggregate of organs, themselves hierarchies of cells working together, a little universe patterned

after the great one. Then the real self using this body repeats on a grander scale the same pattern, that is to say, in its body there is a correspondence, a relation to every part of its constitution as a whole. Otherwise, the person himself could not express himself through his body, nor relate himself to external nature, which is also a part of the whole. The human being in his entirety might be said to be a part of the body of a far greater being, who through man is able to contact the nature of which he also is a part, and so on up it goes over the ladder of life.

Let us start then again in imagination from above, from the inconceivably great hierarch of our universe, bounded by the Milky Way — our universe, which is but one of innumerable universes. Near to it would be the greater solar systems, the spiritual essences of which are on planes far, far beyond the range of our physical vision, like color waves which are octaves upon octaves above visibility for us. Born of these are other solar systems, living their separate lives, yet inescapably, intimately united with their parents. They likewise have their offspring to whom they wing their energies over the secret pathways of space.

Smaller and smaller grows the pattern in spiritual power, though not necessarily in dimension, no two alike as no two human beings are alike, yet all having the same essential elements; all ultimately nourished from the same fountain-head; all interdependent, intermingling, and interblended. Somewhere on the way down, the octave of light becomes *our* octave and we see a few of the starry worlds of which space is compact. Passing us in the octaves below into the darkness for us, into the light for them, are other worlds. But knowing something of our own world, we can form some vague conception of the infinities above and below, which make the spiritual matrix of space.

The universe, as said, is built on the number ten, which means

that there are ten steps or grades in every hierarchy, with one connecting step above and one below, in which both share, making twelve in all. In every case the three upper principles or steps or grades are formless to the seven below. So in our world — manifest to us — we have a constant recurrence of the number seven, for example, in the colors of the rainbow, in the notes of the musical scale, the seven days of the week, our seven senses with two as yet undeveloped, etc.

Reverting to our tree symbol, we can conceive the trunk as one all-embracing hierarchy, and having within itself an infinitude of lesser graded hierarchies, each one complete in itself, that is, having the ten principles common to all more or less developed as the case may be. Every branching starts a new hierarchy, and this process proceeds downwards or outwards to the leaves, which is the ultimate expression of form in that hierarchy, and which is as far as it can go in that particular period of manifestation or day of Brahma. Then one half of the day is over, the life-waves slowly return until finally the night of Brahma closes *that* drama of life. But during this relatively eternal period of time, every being, great or small, from gods to atoms, will have evolved enormously, so that when the next day opens, they will take their places on a much higher rung of the ladder of life than they did on the last. This great day may refer to the universe, to the solar system, or a planetary chain, but each hierarchy and each member of a hierarchy has its own cycle of day and night, long or short, depending upon its scale of development. For instance, a planetary chain reimbodies several times during the life of its solar system. Likewise the atoms in our body may live but a few seconds, while the body as a whole may last seventy years or more.

## Our Solar System as a Hierarchy

Our world is our solar system, and the real sun is a great spiritual being, a god, in whom the innumerable hosts of beings on its own globes and on its planets, move, live, and have their being. It is our own great hierarchy. What we see as the sun is but the aura of its body. It has been said that the greatest adepts cannot send their consciousness beyond our solar system. When the life-term for this great being is ended, and it breaks the cord of life, the whole fabric of worlds crumbles and the spiritual essences are withdrawn into their source, as the sap of the tree returns to its roots. We are told that, after certain premonitory signs, this happens as suddenly as does the death of a human body, when the atoms of the physical body return to the earth, and the higher spiritual elements are withdrawn into their various sources. As above, so below.

When the solar pralaya arrives in the grand fullness of time, there comes a moment, a final instant which is the utter completion or consummation of all things in that system; and in the twinkling of an eye, literally, and instantly, all the planets and the sun itself are "blown out," as it were. The last one of all manifested beings has at that instant gone to higher planes; and there being nothing whatsoever left to hold physical matter together anywhere within the solar system, that system immediately falls to pieces and vanishes away (as I have said before) like an instantaneous shadow passing over a wall. —

*Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, chapter 19

When the great period of the universal kosmic pralaya occurs, and the universe is indrawn (following the Oriental metaphor) into the bosom of Parabrahman, what then happens? The spiritual entities then enter into their

paranirvana, which means exactly for them what is meant for us when we speak of the death of the human being. They are drawn by their spiritual gravitational attractions into still higher hierarchies of being, into still higher spiritual realms, therein still higher rising and growing and learning and living; while the lower elements of the kosmos, the body of the universe . . . follow their own particular gravitational attractions: the physical body to dust; the vital breath to the vital breath of the kosmos; dust to dust, breath to breath. So with the other kosmic principles, as with man's principles at his decease: . . . Then when the clock of eternity points once again for the kosmos to the hour of "coming forth into light" — which is "death" for the spiritual being, as death for *us* is *life for the inner man* — when the manvantara of material life comes around again (the period of spiritual death for the kosmos is the material life of manifestation), then in the distant abysses of space and time the kosmic life-centers are aroused into activity once more: first the stage of the nebular fiery cloud; then the whirling nebula; then the spiral nebula; then the ringed nebula; then the sun and the planets, and finally the human and other beings that grow on the last; each one of these planets having its seven rounds to fulfill in the forthcoming planetary periods, time after time, during endless life. Endless hope and experience lie in this marvelous scheme, but always at every step on the path there is a dividing of the ways for those entities which have attained moral responsibility, an up and a down, for the "moment of choice" is really continuous. — Ibid., chapter 15

Every sun and every planet consists of ten globes, though the inhabitants of these globes can only see the globe or globes on the

same plane as that on which they are themselves for the time being. Seven of these are manifest and three unmanifest (to us). The sun then itself would compose one hierarchy, and branching from it, to use the tree analogy, would be its planets, only six of which in our system are known to modern science. The other four are not on our plane of visibility and cannot be discovered by any telescope, however large.

Uranus belongs to our universal solar system, of which we are one branch, so to speak, but not to our own individual solar system. This is a mystery which is more fully explained in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, [chapter 41](#). Neptune, however, generally supposed to be part of our solar system, is what is known as a "capture," a foreign body, one might say, and in the process of time it will leave us. Thus we have as the branches from our Sun, six major hierarchies, or six planets that we see — Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn — and four that we cannot see. Further, every globe of every planet, though part of one being — the planet as a whole — is a smaller hierarchy within the greater, for every globe has its own ten principles or aspects, its own hierarch or ruler. As above, so the below is patterned after its progenitor.

A hierarchy implies a hierarch, and in the case of worlds, it means gods, of whom they are the bodies. A planet, therefore, would have a supreme hierarch, under whom would be the hierarchs over each globe all bound together by unbreakable ties, all working together to a common end. Also, inseparably united with each planet are the beings who inhabit it and derive from it their physical life. All of these great rulers belong to the hierarchy of compassion, to which also belong the buddhas and adepts who work under them and guard our humanity.

We are taught that there exists a Hierarchy of Compassion,

which H. P. Blavatsky sometimes called the Hierarchy of Mercy or of Pity. This is the light-side of nature as contrasted with its matter-side or shadow-side, its night-side. It is from this Hierarchy of Compassion that came those semi-divine entities about the middle period of the third root-race of this round, and incarnated in the semiconscious, quasi-senseless men of that period, those advanced entities otherwise known as the solar Lhas, as the Tibetans call them, the solar spirits, who were the men of a former kalpa who during the third root-race thus sacrificed themselves in order to give us intellectual light; incarnating in those senseless psychophysical shells in order to awaken into a divine flame of egoity and *self*-consciousness the sleeping egos which we then were. They are ourselves because belonging to the same spirit-ray that we do; yet we, more strictly speaking, were those half-unconscious, half-awakened egos whom they touched with the divine fire of their own being. This our "awakening" was called by H. P. Blavatsky the *incarnation of the manasaputras*, or "sons of mind" or light. Had that incarnation not taken place, we indeed should have continued our evolution by merely "natural" causes, but it would have been slow almost beyond comprehension, almost interminable; but that act of self-sacrifice, through their immense pity, their immense love, though, indeed, acting under karmic impulse, awakened the divine fire in our own selves, gave us light and comprehension and understanding. So from that time we ourselves became the "Sons of the Gods"; the faculty of self-consciousness in us was awakened, our eyes were opened, responsibility became ours, and our feet were set then definitely upon the path, that inner path, quiet, leading inwards back to our spiritual home. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric*



The hierarch of our order of adepts is described in *The Secret Doctrine* as a "Wondrous Being" who descended from a high region in the early part of the third age.

The "BEING" . . . which has to remain nameless, is the *Tree* from which, in subsequent ages, all the great *historically* known Sages and Hierophants, such as the Rishi Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc., etc., have branched off. As objective *man*, he is the mysterious (to the profane — the ever invisible) yet ever present Personage about whom legends are rife in the East, especially among the Occultists and the students of the Sacred Science. It is he who changes form, yet remains ever the same. And it is he again who holds spiritual sway over the *initiated* Adepts throughout the whole world. He is, as said, the "Nameless One" who has so many names, and yet whose names and whose very nature are unknown. He is *the* "Initiator," called the "GREAT SACRIFICE." For, sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know — aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in

short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE.

It is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHA — (great) — GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. It is through these "Sons of God" that infant humanity got its first notions of all the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge; and it is they who have laid the first foundation-stone of those ancient civilizations that puzzle so sorely our modern generation of students and scholars.  
-- *The Secret Doctrine* 1:207-8

There is a tradition, and our Teachers tell us that it is a tradition founded on truth, that even unto this day there exists in Central Asia a certain mystical and mysterious land, or district if you like. It is called Sambhala. This is a word known in Sanskrit literature, but because the sayings and legends regarding it are connected with what our self-sufficient European Sanskritists and Orientalists call "pagan superstition" and the "love of the Orientals for imagery," and so forth, our European scholars say that it is a myth. Blind men! It is an actual district on earth, in a certain part of Tibetan territory, and has been for ages the subject of much mystical speculation, and remains so to this day. It is the "home" of our exalted Teachers. It is likewise the "home" of the Wondrous Being considered as man, or in his racial aspect. This Wondrous Being incarnates himself from age to age at will and at pleasure, but never leaves the duty he has taken upon himself, nor will he ever drop it until his work is done. He is the spiritual bond and link of the various bodhisattvas and buddhas of the Hierarchy of Compassion with superior

worlds and with us and the lower beings of our round. This land of Sambhala is described as a place of great beauty, surrounded by a high range of mountains. It is said that no human eye will ever see it unless permitted to see it. It is said that to this land of Sambhala go those who are "called" there, sometimes to return and sometimes to remain; and that there, supreme over all the Masters, reigns the human aspect of this Wondrous Being, the Great Initiator, the Great Sacrifice.

These are the teachings; and it is further said that from this land, spiritually, continually, and also in actual physical shape at cyclical critical periods, go forth Masters into the world. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, chapter 22

---

## Chapter 8

### **Cooperation throughout All Hierarchies**

As has been expressed in several ways, there must be intelligent coordination of the most perfect kind of all the forces working through a universe, otherwise there would be confusion and destruction on a kosmic scale. Everyone knows that there is, on the contrary, the most absolute harmony reaching to a mathematical precision; for example, astronomers can compute, centuries in advance, where one or another star will be; when comets will return; what was our relation to the zodiac thousands upon thousands of years ago, etc. Consciously or unconsciously everyone rests in absolute confidence upon the reliability of the eternal order of things, in spite of the false theories, dogmas, and creeds to shake such confidence. No one who thinks could offer the puerile theory that such coordination could exist by accident. It is but too plain that only through a partnership transcending

human consciousness could it prevail. The ancient wisdom explains this great ordered system through a kosmic hierarchy.

The kosmic work is accomplished, speaking in broad terms, by two classes of beings — the architects and the builders of the universe. The architects, relative to the others, represent the spiritual, the divine side of nature. They might be called the supernal planners and thinkers of the kosmos. In the Buddhist system they are called the dhyani-buddhas. They may be said to form the habits of nature which we ignorantly call the laws of nature; or we might say that these so-called laws are the wills of the great architects. Yet these, however great, are subject to the wills of beings higher yet on the ladder of life than are they themselves, for nature is conscious from beginning to end, and being one great organism, all its parts work together harmoniously. So these laws are the action and interaction of consciousness and wills in the kosmos, and they emanate from the overseers, the higher gods.

The builders or masons of the world belong to an inferior hierarchy spiritually, yet they have relative dominion over their subhierarchies. Actually all these interblend, of course, but broadly speaking there are these two great classes. The Greeks called these world builders *kosmokratores*, those who receive the creative impulses from a higher class and carry them out. As we should expect, the seven grades or classes exist among both the architects and builders as in everything else, related in every case to the seven grades respectively below them. The pattern, the plan, is the same from god to atom. As an example of this cooperative division of labor, each globe of our planetary chain is under the guidance of a special class of architects, who work through a special class of builders for that globe, while these globe architects are coordinated under the architect of the whole chain of globes.

The human being, as has been said, is, like everything, built on the hierarchical plan, with seven or ten principles. Each principle is itself a conscious being, and down to and including the mind, each principle is a self-conscious being. These principles have been named in an earlier chapter, and here are referred to only from the point of view of hierarchical formation, as stated above. At the head of this great hierarchy is the atman, spoken of as our inner god. But this great being is also the inner god of many, many others in the human stage of evolution.

To return to our tree symbol, every inner god is a major branch, which divides and divides, eventualizing in a group of human beings. Its influence reaches its large family through intermediaries, the first being buddhi, or the spiritual monad, a lesser but high god from whom branch out the manasaputras, or sons of mind, who send their rays directly into the evolving human minds. Those people who have profited by the help of these higher beings will, in the next great cycle on another planet, have gained a rung on the ladder of life. They will then have become the manasaputras to help those now in our animal kingdoms. The present manasaputras and those above them will likewise have stepped up as the great tree of life spreads in all directions.

Now, we find these two classes of architects and builders working in man as a whole, as they work in every other hierarchy. His higher triad represents the architects. It is they who make of him a divine being, and who ever seek to reach and further the evolution of the lower self. From them come all his inspiration, all his yearning for the noble and beautiful things of life, his sense of moral values, his conscience and intuition; while in the lower self we find the builders, all working under the hierarchs controlling these subordinate hierarchies, just as that which works through

the human brain controls the various activities of the physical body through the nervous system. As above, so below.

The more perfect the working of this chain of hierarchies, the more perfect is the human life. When it is clogged or broken, we may have moral or physical abnormalities. Dr. de Purucker, in answering a question in the series *Questions We All Ask*, says in No. 29, pages 417-8:

But what becomes, to follow the language of this questioner, of the ego of one who goes insane? Where is the ego of an idiot? This questioner of course asks his question according to the ideas of the modern Occidental, having the idea in the back of his mind that the body is the man, and that the ego is something which lives inside the body, and that something happens to it in such cases, and that the man then becomes insane or an idiot.

We Theosophists have a different viewpoint. We say that the body is but a reflexion of what you are inwardly, that it merely mirrors what you are within. Now, what are you? You are a bundle of energies, a collection of powers, faculties, and characteristics, and the body is the vehicle through which these work on this physical plane. This bundle of inner energies, this collection of faculties, becomes dislocated as it were, or out of tune with its vehicle, and therefore cannot work properly through that physical vehicle, due, perhaps, to some accident; and hence disease results, or insanity, or idiocy.

A physical body which is an idiot furnishes an example where the Reincarnating Ego did not find full expression through, so to speak, full entrance into, the physical vehicle. An idiot, an insane person — irrevocably insane I mean — is one whose inner ego is more or less absent in

function, linked to the physical body nevertheless by chains of vitality, but not functioning fully and smoothly. The ego in such cases as it were overshadows the brain, but does not illuminate it.

H. P. Blavatsky, explaining human evolution, and referring to the awakening of mind by the manasaputras in the third root-race on this globe earth, writes:

the two higher principles *can have no individuality on Earth*, cannot be *man*, unless there is (a) the Mind, the *Manas-Ego*, to cognize itself, and (b) the terrestrial *false* personality, or the body of egotistical desires and personal Will, to cement the whole, as if round a pivot (which it is, truly), to the physical form of man. It is the *Fifth* and *Fourth* principles [counting from below] -- *Manas* and *Kamarupa* — that contain the dual personality: the real immortal Ego (*if it assimilates itself to the two higher*) and the false and transitory personality, the *mayavi* or astral body, so-called, or the *animal-human* Soul — the two having to be closely blended for purposes of a *full* terrestrial existence.

Incarnate the Spiritual Monad of a Newton grafted on that of the greatest saint on earth — in a physical body the most perfect you can think of — *i. e.*, in a two or even a three-principled body composed of its *Sthula-sarira*, prana (life principle), and *linga-sarira* — and, if it lacks its middle and fifth principles, you will have created *an idiot* — at best a beautiful, soulless, empty and unconscious appearance. --  
*The Secret Doctrine* 2:241-2

## LAYA CENTERS

A few words must be said as to the channels of communication between the various hierarchies which not only fill but *are* the universe. In the last century the teaching of science was that

there was a definite amount of force or energy in the universe, which was never diminished, but was convertible from one form to another; that electricity, for example, could become light; light transformed to heat, etc. But the stronghold of materialism has been invaded since those days. Scientists have recognized other planes than this physical plane to which our five senses respond. Matter or force can disappear from this plane or enter it from a higher, to explain which Sir James Jeans has introduced the hypothesis of "singular points," which are suggestive of the laya centers taught in the ancient wisdom. We read in one of Dr. de Purucker's works:

The dawn of manifestation, as *The Secret Doctrine* tells us, begins in and with the awakening of a laya-center. The Sanskrit word laya, as we saw before, signifies in esotericism that point or spot — any point or any spot — in space which, owing to karmic law, suddenly becomes the center of active life, first on a higher plane and later descending into manifestation through and by the lower planes. In one sense such a laya-center may be conceived of as a canal, a channel, through which the vitality of the superior spheres is pouring down into, and inspiring, inbreathing into, the lower planes or states of matter, or rather of substance. But behind all this vitality there is a driving force. There are mechanics in the universe, mechanics of many degrees of consciousness and power. But behind the pure mechanic stands the spiritual mechanic. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, chapter 6

A laya center then is a center of *homogeneous* substance. Such a center is at the apex of every hierarchy, at the heart of every entity of lower degree in that hierarchy, indeed at the heart of every atom dwelling in it, thus allowing ingress and egress for



consciousness everywhere. This makes it possible for any hierarch, such as the divine architects mentioned above, to reach through its agents to the remotest corner of its kingdom, and coordinate every function. Modern science has an analogous conception in its "stepping down" provision — referring to two differing rates of vibration which are bridged by an intermediate rate more nearly akin to both the others, though, of course, the hierarchical idea is not yet recognized by modern science.

The teaching of laya centers is intimately connected with the teaching concerning the birth of worlds, which teaching shows the weak points in the nebular hypothesis and completes an explanation the need for which has been recognized. There is a simple analogy which will help to convey the idea of the laya state. If water is poured over a lump of sugar, the latter passes into its *laya* state. Its form has disappeared and it has entered into something else, but it may, under suitable conditions be precipitated again. Thus, as the time comes for a cosmic body to close its life cycle, its *higher principles* are dissolved into the highest cosmic aether, before entering the intense spiritual activity of higher spiritual planes, where they enjoy their rest from manifestation for aeons. But as a new Great Day dawns, these hierarchs descend through their laya centers, and collect their children who have been resting in the respective lower laya centers to which they by nature belong.

## **EMANATIONS**

The hierarchical constitution might be called the secret anatomy of the universe, and the energies and forces flowing from the infinite number of conscious beings of infinite grades and working through the living structure of the kosmos might be called the secret physiology of the universe — the laya centers being part of the structure and explaining nature's marvelous

method of uniting all parts of this stupendous organism so that they work together as one. For man, though more intimately connected with the higher centers of his *individual* hierarchy, is also linked by streams of energy with the sun which gives him life; with the farthest star; with the unknown center of all life — the Boundless.

Now there is another aspect of nature which, again to borrow the terms of science, might be called the embryology of nature. How did these endless hierarchies come into being? The answer can be suggested by returning in thought to our tree symbol. Every hierarchy is born out of the one above it. This is the old doctrine of emanations, which ecclesiastical Christianity took such pains to cover up in the early centuries. If it had been understood, not only would the "special creation" theory have collapsed, but much else. H. P. Blavatsky discusses this subject in *Isis Unveiled* 2:34-9. She calls attention to the false translation of the Hebrew word *asdt* as "angels," while it means "emanations," and shows that had this been understood rightly, "the mystery of the Christian trinity would have crumbled, carrying into its downfall the new religion into the same heap of ruins with the Ancient Mysteries." (We interpolate that the "new religion" was not, as she explains, the *true* religion of the great avatara Jesus.)

This doctrine of emanations was universal. It was taught in the old religions and also in the great philosophical schools of Alexandria. It could not be otherwise, for it is part of the archaic wisdom-religion, taught to the first human beings on this planet, and the fountain-head of all subsequent knowledge for the human race.

A deeper understanding of this marvelous, yet simple, working of nature belongs to more advanced instruction, but the broad outlines are plain enough for the understanding of a child. A

belief in the divine origin of all that is, in a boundless principle or being in which everything is rooted, is inherent in all normal human beings, however much it may have been distorted by the various exoteric theologies. The teaching that everything is actually a part of this boundless principle is not always so clearly or so generally perceived in our confused age, though the Bibles of the past express in their various ways that "in Him we move, and live, and have our being." Once, however, that this latter is plain to the mind, it follows that all life has grown out from the one Life. How else could it come into being? — since this one Life is space itself, unmanifest when it breathes in its forces, slowly visible as the dawn of a new day opens.

Issuing from the inner center of darkness, forever unknown, appear first the high gods in a living matrix of space, every mathematical point of which contains the potentialities of the whole, though every such point has its own latent individuality, its own characteristics, making it different, though one, with every other. These gods awaken to consciousness the gods one degree lower than themselves, and *emanate* into them their spiritual energies, as they themselves draw these from the great center of life. Or, to use another figure of speech, from them grows the next branch of the tree of life, already existing in the divine mind. From the latter grows another branch, until the tree fills all space. Every subordinate entity is the *emanation* of another just above it. In the ancient ceremonies this teaching was symbolized by the lighting of many candles from the one, though the real significance of this ceremony is not understood in the West today. The first candle does not thereby lose any of its light, though it gives it freely to others. In an analogous manner every truly spiritual teacher awakens the sleeping fires in his disciples. Thus are the hierarchies born, children of their hierarch.

All this universe is pervaded by me in my invisible form;

all things exist in me, but I do not exist in them. Nor are all things in me; behold this my divine mystery: myself causing things to exist and supporting them all but dwelling not in them. Understand that all things are in me even as the mighty air which passes everywhere is in space. O son of Kunti, at the end of the kalpa all things return unto my nature, and then again at the beginning of another kalpa I cause them to evolve again. Taking control of my own nature I emanate again and again this whole assemblage of beings, without their will, by the power of the material essence. -- *The Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 64-5

---

## Chapter 9

### **Involution and Evolution**

This is a vast subject, calling for separate treatment, but must be touched upon here because it is so inseparably united to the subject of hierarchies, being indeed but another aspect of this latter. We hear much from scientists of evolution, yet it is impossible without involution. As the gods emanate, they *involve* themselves into their emanations, otherwise these lower vehicles could not *evolve*. Everything works in everything else and for everything else. Every lower has a still lower into which it must involve itself, partly for its own experience and partly to bring about the evolution of its inferior. And this implies that every last atom has locked up within itself the potentialities of the whole. For example, man has his body into which he pours his energies, and these lower centers of his organism not only receive vital force from him, but are colored by his thoughts and desires, and nature will hold him responsible to the last farthing for the trend he has given to their evolution. Incessantly the atoms enter and leave his body to migrate to another, either elevated or degraded

by their contact with him.

Now evolution is the unfolding, the developing, the bringing out from the divine seed within of all its latent capacities, its swabhava in short; its individual characteristics or the essence of its being. The whole effort of evolution, however, is not merely to bring out that which is within each individual seed, but also that each individual monad, and each ego, and each soul, shall gather up from the matter in which it works other less progressed entities which become parts of itself, and shall carry them along with it on the arc of the evolutionary journey upwards. — *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, chapter 13

There is much teaching in theosophy regarding evolution, which as said would be a subject in itself. In every great cycle, such as the life of a planet, there is a change at the halfway point. Spirit involves itself in matter until it can go no further in that great cycle. Then the pendulum swings in the opposite direction and matter involves itself in spirit. During the first half of this great age, matter is being awakened or evolved through the influence of spirit. During the second half, matter is *involved* or raised up to the spiritual plane from which both started on their long journey. Matter, which is but the other pole of spirit, returns awakened in consciousness. Spirit returns laden with its rich experiences, compensated for all it has passed through. These are the *great* sweeps of the pendulum, the dominating tendencies, but as a matter of fact both of these processes — involution and evolution — proceed concurrently; one cannot exist without the other. Together they are nature's expression of cooperation, for matter and spirit are one, the terms being used relatively. Matter evolves into spirit and spirit becomes more spiritual. Their mingling comes through emanations, and hierarchies are born through

emanations.

---

## **Chapter 10**

### **Brotherhood as a Fact in Nature**

It is pertinent to inquire into the real value to the human race of the knowledge of the structural constitution of nature. Why have the masters of compassion taken such infinite pains to present this philosophy at the present time? Certainly not to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but rather to awaken people's minds to the superb universal cooperation which exists; to make them see and feel their inescapable responsibility, and the glorious destiny awaiting those who accept it.

If the Golden Rule were practiced, earth would be a paradise instead of the hell it is to so many. Everyone knows this, and certainly there is no ignorance as to the Golden Rule. Why is it so neglected? This cannot be explained simply by the evil impulses in human nature and its unadvanced evolution, for there have been past periods in history when this same human nature, no more highly evolved, has been happy and sane. Now the earth reminds one of a huge schoolroom where most of the children are either regarding each other with suspicion, or openly fighting for some imagined prize, while the rest are painfully striving to keep the peace.

The trouble is that this army of human children have not for centuries been taught the truth about life. They have been taught that they were "worms of the dust," not potential gods; that they must forever wander in ignorance of themselves and of the facts of being; that they must look for favors from the ruler of the universe, who was said to be full of love, but who so often, to their minds, fails to give proof of this. They have been made to feel themselves as outcasts and not as partners in the universe of

which they are an inseparable part. They have not been made to understand the truly cooperative system of the universe, with which they themselves must learn to cooperate. In short, they have not been made to see that brotherhood is a FACT in nature. Yet even under these adverse circumstances, many have given proof of their innate divinity by intuitively sensing the truth. Had there been wise guides during all these dark ages, instead of the blind leading the blind, how general would have been the recognition. Now, however, that the results of false teachings have culminated, and have borne their evil fruit, and now that the suffering children of earth are consciously or unconsciously *demanding* an explanation of life, as their minds have more fully evolved, this philosophy has been brought to them again to save them from themselves.

The teachings of theosophy as a whole, of which one aspect is the explanation of the hierarchical constitution of the universe, will give a *basis* for ethics which is absolutely necessary to bring about the *practice* of ethics. It is impossible that the average person of this age, without knowledge of his real place in the universal scheme, should act in accordance with it. Without this knowledge he is in a vicious circle. His feeling of separateness increases his selfish tendencies, and these latter increase the former until life becomes impossible and there is a general explosion.

Those on the higher rungs of the ladder, *conscious* of their place in the mosaic of nature, pass on their knowledge to the fine flowers of the human race — the masters of compassion — who in turn unceasingly seek to touch the minds of those below them who are receptive. It is their expressed hope that enough will be found willing to listen to their message in this critical transition age to stem the tide of disintegration, and gradually, through their help, to purge our civilization of its nightmares and insane

delusions, and to awaken human minds as well as hearts to a consciousness of the *reality* of harmony, love, cooperation, enveloping them and only waiting to be recognized. How foolish is selfishness!

Selfishness is restrictive; it is the foundation of all degeneration, of all moral decay, of all mental and physical weakness; it is crippling; it binds you in, and leaves you no room to expand and to grow. Selfishness is the root of all evil, and therefore of weakness of mind, of lack of faculty, of lack of power, of lack of judgment, of lack of discrimination, of lack of a feeling heart. Selfishness is therefore the fertile cause of all misfortune and pain. Everything that cripples the native faculties of the human constitution arises out of selfishness. It brings about a deplorable and evil-working view restricted to your own little circle of thought. You are then a prisoner, imprisoned in your own selfishness, and therefore are you fearfully crippled in life's noblest battles. Selfishness makes you a prisoner — and your prison is your lower self. — G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, chapter 4

Theosophy, in explaining the cooperative system of the universe, shows that brotherhood is an actual *fact*, whether in our ignorance we like it or not, and it is impossible to run counter to *facts* for any length of time. No one can hurt another without hurting himself still more. This is an appeal to the head, but the appeal to the heart is yet stronger. The whole of nature above this transitory human period is an overpowering expression of compassion and active love. Without the intelligent working of this law of compassion, the children of earth would be like babes abandoned by their mothers to the cold winds of fate. But — if those whose minds have been awakened by this compassionate host choose deliberately to close the channel of inspiration and



resist the call to move up higher, they must, perforce, fall like dead leaves upon the earth to be ground up again in nature's laboratory and start afresh. For all are a part of the universe — an eternal part — and cannot get out of it.

The great heresy and the only real heresy is the idea that anything is separate, distinct, and different essentially, from other things. That is a wandering from natural fact and law, for nature is nothing but coordination, cooperation, mutual helpfulness; and the rule of fundamental unity is perfectly universal: everything in the universe lives for everything else. — Ibid.

Theosophy thus teaches the noble, pure, superb system of ethics which has been the basis of all the great religions. It explains more fully than was possible to Jesus at his cycle, the basic cooperative structure of the universe; it draws aside more than one veil which heretofore has kept mankind in a prison of ignorance, deprived of its heritage of knowledge. It reveals beauty where there has seemed confusion. It awakens responsibility and true dignity, and points clearly to the only door which opens the broad, peaceful, and beautiful arena of the larger life — the door of impersonality.

Behold the Truth before you: a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one's co-disciple, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction . . . . a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the Secret Science (*Gupta Vidya*) depicts — these are the golden stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple

of Divine Wisdom. — From an ancient writing quoted by H.  
P. Blavatsky for the Instruction of her students

---

[Top of File](#)