

The background is a painting of several bare, dark trees reaching upwards towards a bright, glowing light source in the center of the sky. The sky is a warm, orange-red color with visible brushstrokes. The trees are dark brown or black, with intricate branch structures.

THE SECRETS OF THE SOUL

Part 1

Kees and Marijke Aaldijk

Alber/2007

The Secrets of the Soul

An integral approach to life, death and
consciousness

Part 1

including an annexe for therapists

Kees and Marijke Aaldijk

First published by Elmar BV, Rijswijk - NL, 2009
Translated from the Dutch by Laura Vroomen

Foreword to the Secrets of the Soul by Laetitia Puthenpadath MSc, MNZIPP, Registered Psychotherapist

Secrets of the soul is an unusual and perhaps frightening book. As it provides an alternative to the ordinary ways of perceiving human beings, it challenges our ways of thinking, what we know – or think we know – about the world and how we live in it. It's conceptualisation of what it means to be human in relation to 'reality' as a whole opens up something ineffable, so much so it confuses the mind.

In his theory of rationalisation the German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber (1864-1920) coined the term instrumental reality, suggesting that a person's thinking and the criterion for behaviour is determined by what can be proven empirically.

Weber noted that an increase in rationalisation has caused disillusion in people in both their private and public lives. In this mode of being

In this mode of being, a person's lived experience is subjected to a rational process of assessment, planning and implementation. This modern phenomenon is very much prevalent in the mental health discipline. There are mental health professionals who are technologically savvy, drawing up plans for the most efficient delivery on mental health care and services. Consequently, a person is viewed from the perspective of empirical scientific reductionism. In this paradigm there are no mysterious incalculable forces that are operative within the person. Everything may be explained by technical means and its calculated data may decide the delivery of services to those with mental health difficulties.

Secrets of the Soul by Kees & Marijke Aaldijk outlines a shift in paradigm based on the concepts of Henry T. Laurency. Most of the time human beings live in the conventional model of reality in which our brains construct pictures of the world based on sensory perceptions. The experience of the world we inhabit seemingly follows immutable laws and principles. We never doubt the reliability of what we see, hear, touch or taste. This apparent regularity and predictability may lead us to believe that all we need to know and understand is ultimately revealed by classical science. While this is the status quo, Henry T. Laurency's theories direct us towards transcendent knowledge and non-dual consciousness. We are invited to wake up to ever deepening dimensions of being to which we are destined to slowly evolve. In this configuration of reality the possibilities for human beings are infinite.

Secrets of the Soul warns us against the delusion of the Cartesian view where the 'I think therefore I am' mentality holds sway. Instead we are invited to step into a multi-dimensional universe and to be open to the fluidity of time and space. Once we orientate ourselves to this version of reality, we emerge into a field of universal connectivity. We may come to experience ourselves as interdependent, living in a world where uniqueness and connectedness are no longer polar opposites. Our heart of flesh will see the beauty that is at the heart of cosmos. This is a brave vision and a new cosmology which has wide implications.

This new vision of reality has the potential to transform humanity's fragmentation and sense of hopelessness. It may liberate us from self-generated suffering to a search centred around deeper inner domains. The dynamic net-work of relations inherent in this consciousness is all about complementarity rather than binary opposition between persons, fields, disciplines and forces. In this big picture even our concept of time may be transformed so that past does not flow into the present and on to the future.

Instead the infinity of future flows into the time-space consciousness of the present and meets the past. Hannah Arendt describes this in terms of the present as both a lived experience as well as a reflection in the mental space.

Perceiving time and space from this vantage point brings us to a different conceptualisation of mental disorders, one that is far more dynamic and compassionate. It will liberate psychotherapists from pigeonholing people and atomising the mentally compromised. Psychotherapists will begin to question the established meta-narrative about psyche and soma and their interconnections. When people manifest maladaptive phenomena in their psychological function, psychotherapists will be able to base the therapeutic approach on a transpersonal vision, which is more holistic and balanced.

The integral approach to psychotherapy envisioned in *Secrets of the Soul* highlights four areas of difference, namely, the understanding of the psyche, the understanding of psychological malfunction, the understanding of the healing process and the goals and objectives of psychotherapy. It also opens the reader to trans-biographical domains of the psyche. This vision transcends biology and attempts to integrate the psychological with the philosophical and the spiritual dimensions. In the integrated approach, the psychotherapist remains alert to the transpersonal themes in the client narratives.

As the new millennium unfolds, bringing with it its own particular insecurities, illusions and emotional pain, there is an urgency to engage in increased dialogue between mental health disciplines, psychotherapeutic approaches, existential queries and spiritual dimensions. It is a hopeful sign that *Secrets of the Soul* has come at this particular juncture in human history.

Contents

<i>Foreword by Laetitia Puthenpadath</i>	3
<i>Contents</i>	5
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	6
<i>Introduction</i>	7
I. Who am 'I'?	9
II. The principles of Laurency	13
III. The development of consciousness	19
IV. The physical body	27
V. The emotional body and the development of emotions	32
VI. The mental body and the development of thought	39
VII. The causal body and the development of the soul	47
VIII. Matter, consciousness and energy	59
IX. The need for transcendence	67
X. The laws of life	70
XI. Augoeides, the guardian angel	83
XII. Social development	88
XIII. Esoteric meditation	95
XIV. Our journey through 'death'	102
XV. Towards a new attitude to life	112
XVI. Unity consciousness	116
XVII. The twelve labours of Hercules	120
XVIII. Practice makes perfect	125
<i>Summary in diagrams</i>	139
<i>Epilogue</i>	153
<i>Sources</i>	154
Integral psychotherapy	155
Annexe for therapists, clients and mentors	

Acknowledgements

We would like to dedicate our book to Elise van den Boom, who has made this English version possible. The text was translated from the Dutch by Laura Vroomen. The cover illustration is from Albert van Loon.

We are also greatly indebted to Lars Adelskog who alerted us to some inconsistencies in an earlier version of the manuscript. Needless to say, this book would have been impossible without Lars Adelskog, who has made Henry Laurency's work widely available by publishing it in book form and on the internet.

Soest, the Netherlands, august 2017
Kees and Marijke Aaldijk

‘All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.’

Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher (1788-1860)

Introduction

**‘Everything is just what it is,
but at the same time it is infinitely more than that.’
(Henry T. Laurency)**

Hidden dimensions

For a child watching his mother withdraw money from a cash machine it all seems so easy. Card goes in. Cash comes out. Buy what you want. His mother knows better. Hidden behind the apparent ease of that transaction is a whole world which, starting with her salary, extends to the transfer of money and the banking sector and goes on to encompass the entire global economy.

At first sight, much of what happens around us seems patently obvious because we are blind to the underlying reality. However, beyond the horizon of our perception there are complex structures governed by their own rules and regulations which have a major impact on everything that happens to us.

To give you an example: there was a time when we had no idea bacteria existed. Their world was unseen by us, but our ignorance failed to protect us from the problems they caused. For centuries we were afflicted by the plague and other infectious diseases, and it was only when we became aware of the invisible world of microorganisms that we were able to do something about it. We began producing antibiotics and practising better hygiene, and consequently our life expectancy rose from forty in the first half of the nineteenth century to more than eighty now.

There are good reasons for assuming that there are more hidden worlds with a major, but as yet unknown, influence on our daily lives. The question is not whether we should explore those worlds, but whether we can afford not to. Our knowledge of microorganisms enabled us to substantially improve our quality of life. Likewise, research into the hidden dimensions of our reality could yield unprecedented new insights into our existence, giving us a better grip on our lives.

Henry T. Laurency

In this book we go in search of those hidden dimensions of reality, the rules that govern them and the forces that influence our lives. Our exploration is based on information passed down to us by Henry T. Laurency, the pseudonym of a twentieth-century Swedish esoteric. He wrote two books, *The Philosopher's Stone* and *The Knowledge of Reality*, and left some 4,000 typewritten pages with notes. These have been organized and compiled into new books by Lars Adelskog who has dedicated his life to making Laurency's esoteric knowledge more widely available. We have drawn on this material in the writing of this book. His ideas should not be seen as dogma but as a working hypothesis. It is up to each of us individually to test this hypothesis and then either embrace or reject its truth.

Integral psychotherapy

The discovery of the hidden world of microorganisms led to an entirely new take on our physical health. In a similar way Laurency's insights may lead to a new take on our mental health and from there to a new approach to dealing with psychological problems. Our term for this approach is transpersonal or 'integral' psychotherapy, since it integrates all aspects of human nature. In the *Annexe for therapists*, at the back of this book, we explain this approach and provide guidelines for the treatment of a number of disorders that tend to resist more conventional treatment.

1

Who am 'I'?

Know thyself

'Know thyself' was the maxim given by the oracle at Delphi to those seeking the truth, because before we can say anything about any truth, we must first figure out who we are. That is why our search for the world's hidden truth starts with ourselves. Who or what is this 'self'? Who am 'I'?

Ancient sources merely tell us:

I am not my body;

I am not my emotions;

I am not my thoughts.

To this Buddha adds: 'I am the witness of all these things.'

We are *not* the person we see in the mirror. We inhabit that outward form and we observe our thoughts and emotions. We can watch ourselves from a distance so to speak. But who is the one doing the observing? The answer is 'me'.

Most of us are familiar with the idea that death is not the end of everything, that the loss of our body does not necessarily mean that we cease to exist. We can accept the fact that part of us lives on and that our body is nothing but a temporary shell. What continues after death is our essence. That core, that which we are in essence, is what Laurency calls the 'monad'. The name comes from Pythagoras and means something like 'core of conscious energy'. Everything is transient and everything will eventually die, with the exception of this core of consciousness. This core will last forever and provides us with a permanent sense of identity. This is the 'witness' that Buddha spoke of. This immortal core of consciousness is tied to our current body, to our ever-changing thoughts and emotions. Our monad, however, remains the same, despite evolving over time to become better equipped to experience the subtlest emotions and the most complex thoughts.

In short, we can distinguish between

1. Our immortal monad, our essence; and
2. Our mortal body with its thoughts and emotions.

Thanks to the body the monad is aware of itself and its surroundings. After all, if we had neither sensory perceptions nor thoughts and emotions, we could have no awareness of our existence. The body we possess is the instrument providing our monad with information and the monad can only experience consciousness through this body.

Our monad, which came into being many millions of years ago, has steadily developed over time. At first it could only absorb the simplest experiences, but in the course of its evolution it has learnt to process increasingly complex information.

1. Perhaps we began life as a pebble on the beach which slowly developed a certain degree of consciousness under the influence of changes in temperature and pressure.

This made simple experiences possible which, in turn, gave rise to a primitive kind of 'physical consciousness'.

2. Much later on in our evolution we may have become a small plant. By drawing on the light of the sun and nutrients from the earth we were able to develop a rudimentary form of 'emotional consciousness'.

3. Later still, we became an animal that developed a basic 'mental consciousness' by hunting for food.

4. And now, as human beings, we are learning to further improve our physical, emotional and mental consciousness to be a springboard for growth towards the next level: soul consciousness.

Monad

Our monad, our essence, has allied itself to a suitable body in order to gather specific experiences. In the beginning this body is a pebble and when this stony envelope can no longer teach it anything new, the monad feels the need for another kind of body, one capable of offering new experiences. It then 'incarnates' as a plant until, after innumerable plant experiences, it has had enough of this form and acquires the body of an animal.

Pebbles come and go, plants and animals come and go, but our monad is immortal and develops slowly but surely with the aid of all of these different manifestations. Thanks to a plethora of new experiences, its consciousness grows until even the animal body no longer provides the necessary new input and our monad acquires a human form through which it continues its development. The body we now have and identify with is nothing other than an instrument utilized by our monad to gain experiences, allowing it to develop, life after life. The physical organism is a tool that is replaced when it is worn out. That is when we die and, after some time, are reborn. In other words, we *are* not our body or our emotions or our thoughts. What we *are* is a monad that uses these tools to gradually develop an increasingly powerful consciousness.

One life is not enough to make the most of everything that the human level of existence has to offer. We need several, in each of which we add new knowledge to everything we have learnt in previous incarnations. This is how our consciousness grows. Through our physical, emotional and mental experiences, by trial and error, we will eventually become wiser and more loving. But just as we once discarded the mineral, vegetable and animal evolutionary stages, the time will come when we discard the human form and cease to be human.

'So who am I?' we ask again. I am an immortal monad which, thanks to this body, is aware of its surroundings and which can carry on developing throughout its many incarnations until human existence has nothing new to offer. Without any further need for reincarnation, we can move on to levels of consciousness beyond human reach. As 'divine beings' we then embark on a new stage in our evolution.

The development of consciousness

The purpose of life is to increase consciousness and this is true for all monads in the universe regardless of their stage of development. The entire cosmos can therefore be

regarded as one large consciousness project involving innumerable cores of consciousness. Once upon a time we embarked on our development as a dormant consciousness. Gradually this consciousness awakened until ultimately we became human. During our first human incarnations we were primitive egotists, interested only in our own survival, often at the expense of others. But over time this selfishness made way for a certain degree of compassion. While grappling with the problems life throws at us, we developed a sense of empathy with our fellow man. And one day we will fully connect with others, while still retaining our own individuality. Our consciousness will then merge with that of other monads, without us losing our sense of identity.

The human phase of development, the stage at which we are now, enables us to establish a powerful self-awareness. The search for solutions to our everyday problems forces us to learn and to grow. And it is during this process that we evolve to become stronger and more independent characters, capable of looking after ourselves and others. This painstakingly achieved self-awareness will enable us, as unique individuals, to contribute to future cosmic development and come to understand that we are in fact at one with everything and everyone. Mystics and other sages have experienced the level of *mystic unity*, a state of consciousness in which we can experience a feeling of love and harmony with the whole of creation. The number of incarnations needed for this varies from individual to individual. Our sense of separation from others has its origins in our selfishness, and we can develop unity consciousness only by letting go of this egotism. One might say that we are about halfway through our ascent to the top of a mountain that overlooks a new reality in which we can experience unity with others. We are on the path from self-interest to unity consciousness. Every selfless act and every loving thought brings us a step closer to our target: the top of the mountain, i.e. collective consciousness. With every act aimed at furthering our own egos, we move down a little and away from our ultimate aim. The day we reach our final destination will be the day we realize that there is really only one all-encompassing consciousness of which we are all a part.

Personal growth

‘All humans are equal’ is the idealistic principle held by those who aspire to equal opportunities for all and a fair distribution of wealth. But is that true? Are we all equal? Assuming that we have all been through several lives and that each of us has had unique experiences, it would be fair to say that we are all different. All people are entirely *equal* yet simultaneously quite *different*. We are part of humanity as a whole, but that is where our similarities end. We differ in terms of age and life experiences, as well as in the number of incarnations we have had. Some have had only a few lives, leaving them with limited experiences and less nuanced insights, in the same way that children are less knowledgeable than adults. Others, the so-called ‘older souls’, who have had more opportunities to learn, embarked on their human evolution much earlier. The main reason for the great variation in our ideas about reality is the discrepancy in life experiences resulting from our many incarnations. Our consciousness development in this life, from baby to old age pensioner, bears a great resemblance to the development that takes place in successive incarnations. We can identify more or less fixed patterns with specific accents:

1. We begin by developing our *lower emotions*, so we tend to behave selfishly at first.
2. Next, we develop *lower thoughts*, enabling us to fulfil our emotional needs.
3. Following on from this we develop our *higher emotions*, resulting in a desire to care for others.
4. This will gradually create the space for *higher thoughts*, enabling us to develop complex insights that are independent of our emotions.
5. Finally, the phase in which our *soul consciousness* develops inspires totally new ideas about our existence.

We have a different kind of consciousness on all of these levels of development, that is to say, we experience ourselves and the world in a different way. On each level we hold a different truth just as we are motivated in new ways. Each phase will therefore generate distinct lessons and all of these lessons together teach us to become wiser people.

Answers

Drawing on Henry Laurency's esoteric wisdom, we will explore all of these levels of consciousness and work out their practical implications in the next few chapters, before investigating how we can stimulate their development. Laurency's unusual approach may need some getting used to at first, but in time a surprising, new perspective will open up which, on closer inspection, seems patently obvious. It will give rise to an explanatory model that answers all of our existential questions and invites us to view ourselves and the world in a different way. It is important that we accept nothing as dogma, but continue to cast a critical eye over everything we are told. Our development is aimed at making us self-aware and independent individuals and for this we must find our own truth.

II

The principles of Henry Laurency

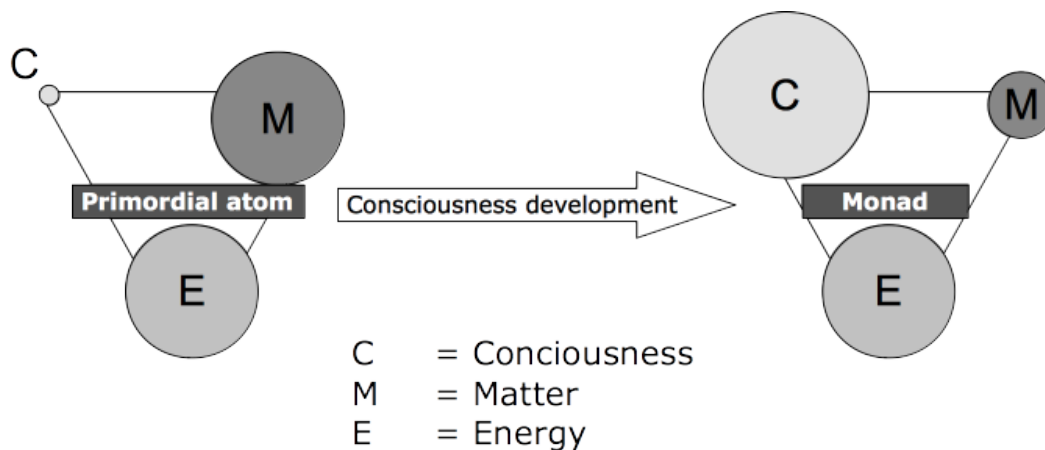
Primordial atoms

The entire universe is made up of an inconceivably large number of the minutest particles, known as *primordial atoms*. Infinitely smaller than the atoms we know from physics, they form the basic material of everything that exists. As they cannot be split into even smaller particles, they are indestructible.

Although completely unimaginable to us, primordial atoms can be compared to a bundle of miniscule strings. These strings are activated under the influence of all the processes taking place in the universe, such as the birth and death of stars and planets. This causes the properties of the primordial atom to change. It acquires consciousness and gradually comes to life. From then on we call it a 'monad'. In essence each of us is such a conscious primordial atom, a monad, and because primordial atoms are indestructible, we are all immortal.

A primordial atom is a *material particle* that carries a *potential consciousness*. Over time this consciousness will slowly awaken and undergo further development.

The primordial atoms' two properties *matter* and *consciousness* are joined by a third: *energy*. Matter, consciousness and energy form the basis of all primordial atoms and because the entire universe consists of these atoms, everything has a material aspect, a consciousness aspect and an energy aspect. One cannot exist without the other two, but the internal relationships between matter, consciousness and energy can vary considerably. The evolution of the universe is geared towards the ongoing consciousness development of all primordial atoms, thus facilitating a shift from the material to the consciousness aspect. This will ultimately bring the entire universe to life.



A mathematical classification

Although Laurency's esoteric vision encompasses the entire process of change, it focuses primarily on our human evolution and its levels of development. On a cosmic level, he identifies 49 different worlds, each of which has its own form of matter, consciousness and energy. They all exist simultaneously and occupy the same space. We as human beings are familiar with three of these 49 worlds:

- The tangible, physical world;
- The world of emotions; and
- The world of thoughts.

Each of the successive worlds is made up of increasingly fine matter, allowing these worlds to penetrate one another, in the same way as fluid saturates a sponge. And the finer the matter is the more important the consciousness aspect is in that world. We can therefore make a distinction between a coarse-material world in which matter dominates (and consciousness has only just awakened) and increasingly fine-material worlds in which the consciousness aspect dominates and the material aspect has lost most of its significance. (We will leave the energy aspect aside for now.)

Laurency describes the highest world, the one with the finest matter and the most divine level of consciousness, as *World 1*. From thereon the lower levels are given higher numbers, up to the coarsest material level of *World 49*. This is the world of our everyday, earthly reality.

Moving in reverse order from coarse (*World 49*) to fine (*World 1*), the successive levels form a consciousness ladder. The lowest rung represents the physical world (49), the next rung up brings us to the emotional world (48) and the third rung up represents the mental world (47), including the level of the soul. With each step up, the consciousness aspect gains in importance at the expense of the material aspect. Only the bottom rung, *World 49*, is dominated by matter.

Laurency's mathematical notation clearly shows the levels across which consciousness can extend, with our human development largely confined to the bottom three rungs of the ladder, that is to say, we are still in the early stages of our journey. The higher rungs, 46, 45, 44, etc. up to 1, are not accessible to 'ordinary' people and the experiences on those levels are beyond our reach for now. Our unfamiliarity with these higher worlds explains why we have so little insight into both ourselves and the meaning of our lives.

Overview I

level 49:	the <i>physical</i> world
level 48:	the <i>emotional</i> world
level 47:	the <i>mental</i> and the <i>causal</i> world (<i>thoughts</i> and the <i>soul</i>)
level 46:	the world of the <i>essential</i> or <i>unity consciousness</i> (' <i>unio mystica</i> ')
level 45:	the world described with the terms <i>nirvana</i> or <i>atman</i>
levels 44 to 1:	the worlds entirely beyond the powers of our imagination

From a *material perspective* one might say that each 'higher' world is made up of increasingly fine matter that can freely penetrate each 'lower' world without being noticed. In other words, we are always among all 49 worlds, but we can see and touch only one: our physical reality (49).

From a *consciousness perspective* one might say that each of the 49 worlds has its own, wholly distinctive experience of consciousness. This means that there are 49

forms of consciousness of which, roughly speaking, we know only three from experience: physical consciousness, emotions and thoughts.

Bodies

We need a dedicated body in order to function in all of these different worlds.

In the *physical world* (49) we have a physical body at our disposal, which allows us, among other things, to see, hear and move. This physical body consists of two parts: the coarse organism that we can see and feel and a fine, etheric body. The latter is a subtle energy field that drives our organism so to speak. It is invisible to the naked eye, but crucial for the condition and survival of the organism.

In the *emotional world* (48) we have an emotional body which enables us to taste the 'atmosphere' of our surroundings and experience our feelings, such as those of happiness and sorrow. Because this emotional body consists of emotional matter it is invisible in the physical world.

In the *mental world* (47) we function with the help of a mental body that enables us to think. Again, we cannot see this body in our physical reality.

For the upper regions of the mental world we have an extra body at our disposal: the causal body that accommodates our soul and provides access to the *causal world*.

These different bodies enable us to function in several worlds at once and to acquire consciousness experiences there. For example, we can go for a walk (physical world), be happy about it (emotional world) and figure out the shortest route home (mental world). Meanwhile Worlds 46 to 1 remain hidden to us, as we do not have the appropriate bodies to function in them. We lack the instruments necessary to see those worlds.

All of these worlds are extremely complex and the same is true for the different bodies we possess. For example, the *physical world* (and by extension our physical body) consists not only of 'solid matter' but also of 'liquid' and 'gas', bringing us to three kinds of physical matter already. These are the elements that the ancient alchemists used to refer to as 'earth', 'water' and 'air'. Then there is the etheric material that surrounds and penetrates our organism (the 'fire' of the alchemists). The etheric body functions as an energy field for our organism, controlling it and giving us a sense of vitality. This body too is made up of various sub-levels.

Likewise the emotional world forms a complex reality made up of different levels. Take love and hate, for example. Both are emotional consciousness experiences, but they rank differently within the emotional world. The lower-emotional level accommodates our negative and selfish feelings, while loving and altruistic experiences dominate on the higher-emotional level.

There are similar distinctions in the *mental world*, with simple thoughts (low-mental), complex and abstract thoughts (higher mental) and, in the highest regions of the mental world, the soul consciousness.

Each world can therefore be subdivided into 7 *sub-levels*; these too are numbered, with the lowest figure referring to the finest and the highest figure to the coarsest aspect. This allows us to refine our overview:

Overview II

Level 49: the physical world (in which we function with the help of our physical body and have our physical and sensory experiences)

- level 49: 7 the coarsest level: solid matter or ‘earth’
- level 49: 6 slightly more subtle: liquid or ‘water’
- level 49: 5 even more subtle: gas or ‘air’
- level 49: 4-1 the successive layers of the etheric body: ‘fire’

Level 48: the emotional world (in which we function with the help of our emotional body, allowing us to experience emotions)

- level 48: 7-4 *the lower emotions, with primarily selfish feelings*
- level 48: 3-1 *the higher emotions, with primarily altruistic feelings*

Level 47: the mental world (in which we function with the help of our mental and causal body, allowing us to experience thoughts and causal intuition)

- level 47: 7-6 *lower thinking, linked to emotions*
- level 47: 5-4 *higher thinking, independent of emotions*
- level 47: 3-1 *the causal body with soul consciousness*

In each of these different worlds we rely on different bodies and the development of our consciousness involves optimizing these bodies, allowing them to function increasingly well in their respective worlds. Our bodies are the tools we need for acquiring consciousness experiences and the more refined these tools are the more specific these experiences can be.

Together, our subtle bodies (etheric, emotional, mental and causal) form our *aura*. Laurency tends to refer to these bodies as ‘*envelopes*’, to indicate that they merely enclose our monad. He calls the physical body ‘*organism*’. We have adopted his terminology in this book, but retained the term ‘bodies’ because it is a familiar one to many people.

Higher wisdom

Each new world opens up a reality that is incomparable with and much more complex than all previous worlds. Each higher level can be said to add a new dimension and a new insight to what has gone before. This is why our thinking (*level 47*) gives us a better insight into reality than our emotions (*level 48*) or our sensory perceptions (*level 49*). At the same time the higher worlds encompass all the lower ones, which is why our thinking gives us access to our emotions and physical experiences, but not the other way around; at an emotional level we cannot think rationally. Higher levels feature higher truths and these can give us a more complete picture of reality. So if we want to know more about ourselves and about the meaning of our lives, we have to progress to a higher level of consciousness. At present humanity is familiar only with the lowest levels of existence, so that our truth is extremely limited and, by definition,

we cannot have a very profound insight into the complex nature of our lives. From a cosmic perspective we are babies with extremely limited comprehension.

The level on which we function can only give us information about things pertaining to our familiar reality; it has little to say about the higher worlds. Within our emotionality we know nothing about thinking, within our thinking we are ignorant of the soul and within the soul we have no knowledge of all the worlds above and beyond. We cannot know first-hand what will be visible 'above' us; we are only familiar with what is 'below' us. Levels of consciousness that are higher than those at which we function are by definition beyond our reach. In our daily lives we are actually not aware of their existence, an excuse for many people to deny their existence altogether. The truth at those higher levels is of an entirely different order compared to our own truth and that is why any knowledge professing to be from those levels is a source of confusion. How do we know whether or not it is true? The best way to assess the reliability of this kind of information is to work out for ourselves whether it is consistent with the qualities that we ascribe to such a sublime level. All higher worlds are characterized by a sense of love and belonging and respect for people's free will. A so-called 'higher wisdom' that is loveless or dogmatic, or that seeks to impose a particular opinion, is therefore by definition no higher wisdom. We can also look at whether the information is in harmony with reality as we know it. A higher truth may not contradict our physical reality. But what it can do is throw a new light on this reality, so that we experience it differently.

Laurency's contribution

Although Laurency's vision has a lot in common with those of other esoteric writers, among them Alice Bailey, he has added some significant new ideas to the esoteric body of thought.

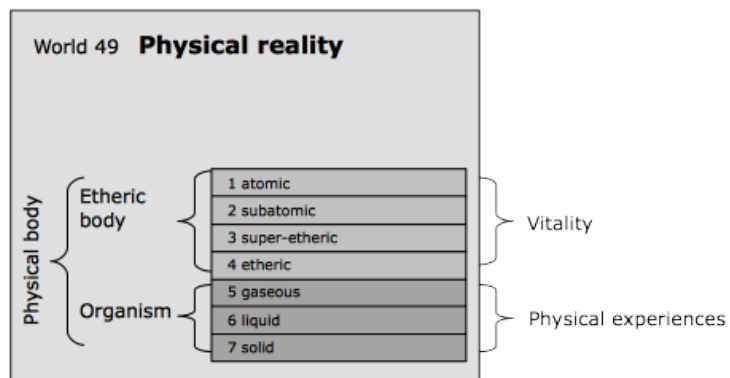
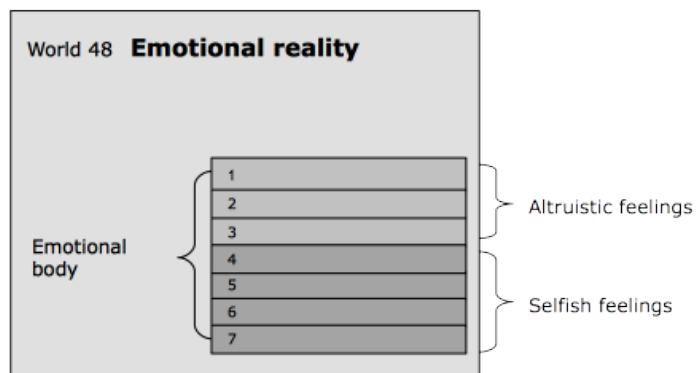
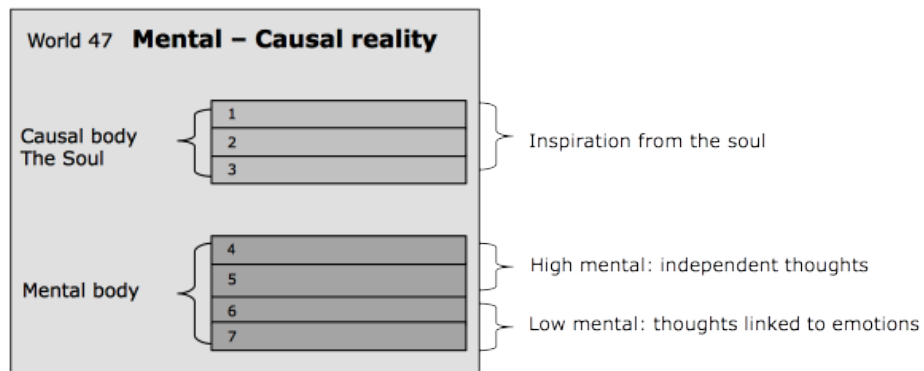
- To begin with, he writes that all the primordial atoms that make up the universe have three aspects: matter, consciousness and energy. This is why everything has material, energy and consciousness properties, albeit it in different proportions.
- Secondly, he introduces the concept of 'monad' to refer to what we are in essence; in other words, to our 'self'. Other authors either have no term for this or distinguish between a 'higher self' and a 'lower self'. The term 'monad' is also used in other esoteric writing, but in an entirely different sense.
- Laurency's third contribution is his mathematical notation for all the different levels of development, in order to avoid misunderstanding. Although this numerical system says nothing concrete about the level in question, it clearly demonstrates the hierarchy of the different levels.
- Finally, Laurency starts from the premise that everything is one and subject to the immutable laws governing the universe.

Laurency's worldview in a diagram

The worlds that are – to a greater or lesser extent – accessible to us and the bodies that we possess in each of those worlds can be represented in diagram form as follows:

World 45 **Nirvana, Atman**

World 46 **Unity consciousness**



III

The development of consciousness

The meaning of life

The meaning of life is the development of consciousness. Every incarnation is an opportunity to gain experiences and to learn lessons, just as every life is a repetition of previous lessons, which then consolidate their place in our consciousness. Development not only means climbing a ladder, step by step, but also being given the opportunity to rehearse old qualities over and over again. We start every life from scratch: our physical body and all of our envelopes are built from nothing and each time we go through the corresponding consciousness experiences all over again. This is most obvious in our physical development, as, in every life, we grow up and learn to walk and talk again. But we also have to relearn our emotional and mental skills in every new life, so they are etched deeper and deeper into our consciousness and we ultimately become capable of functioning properly in even the most difficult circumstances. This creates a powerful foundation for continuing growth. It is not all that difficult to do the right thing and to be nice to everyone under favourable conditions, but those qualities only really come to define us once we can take care of others in difficult circumstances without reverting back to selfishness. What we are now, an individual with a particular character, is the outcome of all of our past efforts. The skills we have now are the ones we worked hard to attain in previous lives. We need some twenty to thirty years in this life to regain the level of development we had in earlier incarnations. That is, more or less, how long it takes us to reactivate our former qualities. Whether we do indeed manage to return to that old level and then surpass it is not at all certain. We could incarnate in a social environment where our development is scarcely if at all stimulated, or perhaps, for karmic reasons, we come up against certain obstacles or disabilities. While those situations can restrict our growth in a particular direction, they can also offer us the chance to cultivate special skills and pay off karmic debts. For example, someone may strike us as having a limited consciousness, but perhaps this is a person with a high level of development who has come here to learn specific lessons. Ignorant of someone's task in life, we cannot assess how successful he or she is. It is impossible for us to estimate the level of evolution of someone's monad, or indeed of our own. Seeing as we are unfamiliar with all the factors playing a role in this life, we had better refrain from passing judgement; after all, we may be judging a saint in disguise.

Of the many different levels we go through on the path of consciousness development, our emotional development constitutes our greatest challenge. Not just because emotions are so difficult to handle, but because we spend most of our emotional development wandering this earth aimlessly. We have no idea why we are here and what life is all about, and because we cannot find a focus for our lives we are all too often a victim of our emotions. Only when our mental development is well and truly underway do we learn to structure our lives and give direction to our development. In due course, our higher-emotional and higher-mental qualities also help us to connect with our soul. Then, as life's higher purpose is revealed to us and we recognize the essence of our existence, the entire consciousness process gathers pace.

The growth of our consciousness

In the beginning, small children are only aware of their physical body. They 'are' their body and their lives are entirely dominated by their physical needs. As they grow a little older, their emotions will become more important and they will gradually focus more on their emotional needs. Later still, they will identify primarily with their thinking. As young adults, they will form ideals and pursue a career and social status, swapping the emotional needs of the moment for mental targets in the future. Initially these will be all about the realization of practical goals, such as increasing one's income, establishing a career or having a family. At a later stage these ideals may acquire a more philosophical dimension and will no longer be oriented solely towards satisfying one's personal needs. As idealistic goals take centre stage, looking after one's family, community and perhaps even the earth itself become more important.

The development of our consciousness, during this life and throughout all successive incarnations, is a process in which we gradually come to identify with increasingly high levels of reality. This requires us to let go of our identification with the lower levels. At first, we 'are' our body. Then this identification shifts to our emotions, then to our thoughts, and all the while our perspective keeps broadening until we reach our soul and start identifying with the bigger picture. As we move through the identification process it is important not to skip stages. We cannot progress to a higher level unless we have thoroughly familiarized ourselves with the lower levels. We cannot attain the higher by denying the lower. Once we have reached the 'higher' the 'lower' will automatically lose its meaning for us.

In every life we relive the development from child to adult, and in every successive incarnation this consciousness development is repeated. This makes it easier for us to pick up our old skills in a new life while adding something new every time. Because every existence offers us new opportunities, we develop a little further during every incarnation. This process continues until – by trial and error – we have learned everything we can possibly learn here. This is the moment we can conclude our final incarnation as a human being and we will not have to return. The growth of our consciousness is a long journey through innumerable life experiences, provisionally culminating in the conclusion of our human development here on earth. Our journey then continues in another form, bringing other levels of consciousness within reach. Every step towards a higher level provides new insights, because each successive reality is completely different from everything that has gone before.

Mystics and other wise men and women describe life in the higher worlds with terms such as samadhi and satori, experiences of bliss. Seen from the higher levels, our earthly reality is drab, with the intense light of the higher worlds reduced to a faint half-light. Consciousness growth is a process whereby we gain access to those higher realities. We do this not by escaping our material reality, but by embracing all the tasks that daily life assigns to us and fulfilling them to the best of our ability. By acquiring more and more insight into the meaning of life and by developing the qualities we need to apply those insights we manage to rise a little above ourselves in each new life.

There are two paths to the development of consciousness. The first is the passive approach, in which we take life as it comes and try to make the most of it. Over time

we are bound to develop our consciousness. The second path is a targeted activation of our consciousness, which requires three things:

1. A spiritual orientation in thought and deed;
2. A willingness to help;
3. Accelerated karmic settlement.

Accelerating our consciousness growth is not easy. It involves squeezing the lessons that are usually spread over a considerable number of human incarnations into a few lives. For many of us such a crash course is fairly demoralizing, not so much because of the difficult lessons that need learning, but because it feels as if we are dogged by misfortune. Individuals who dedicate themselves to consciousness and who willingly devote themselves to helping others often seem to be struck by 'fate' and many of them will, at some point, despair and wonder what on earth they are doing wrong. Those setbacks are unavoidable. If we want to learn several life lessons at once *and* settle our karmic debts at an accelerated rate this is bound to cause problems in the physical reality. A regular re-articulation of our higher aims is necessary if we do not want to lose heart. It is advisable to stay in touch with like-minded people, read encouraging books and meditate or pray. Another significant way to boost our consciousness growth is shifting our focus to a level of consciousness higher than our present one. To achieve this we must stop identifying with the person we are at this moment in time and identify instead with the one we hope to become in the future. By tapping into the wisest and most loving qualities in ourselves we can develop a kind of invulnerability for setbacks. Frequently imagining what it must be like to have the qualities of that higher version of ourselves – and act accordingly – is the key to our transformation.

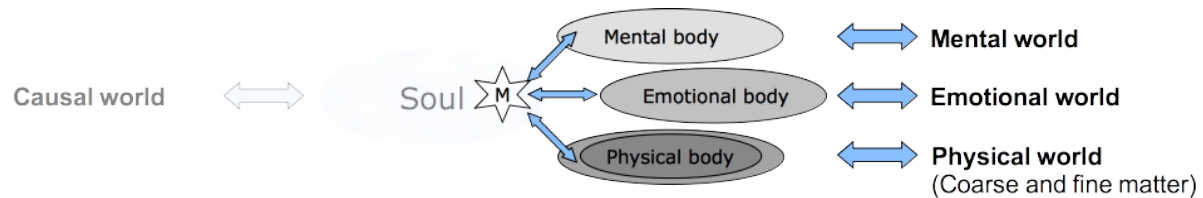
The development of our bodies as a tool for the monad

Our consciousness is developed with the help of our life experiences and in order to gain these experiences our monad needs bodies. These bodies are the instruments through which the monad experiences the world and each one of them connects it with another world.

- When our monad tunes into the vibrations of its physical body it experiences the physical reality, sensory perceptions and feelings of vitality or exhaustion, hunger or thirst, pain or pleasure.
- When our monad tunes into the vibrations of its emotional envelope it experiences emotions that originate in this envelope or in the wider emotional world.
- When our monad tunes into the vibrations of its mental envelope it experiences thoughts that either originate in its own envelope or in the wider mental world.
- When our monad tunes into the vibrations of its causal envelope (the soul), it derives inspiration from new insights originating in that envelope or in the causal world.

Individuals who have only just embarked on their human development have relatively simple bodies that can only process simple thoughts and emotions. Soul consciousness is impossible for them, because they are unable to discern the complex vibrations of the causal body. But in the course of many incarnations the monad becomes capable of processing increasingly complex experiences and, as its consciousness grows, it will eventually also experience the vibrations of the soul.

The reception of complex signals calls for complex envelopes, so the condition of our envelopes determines the monad's ability to gain experiences. That is why consciousness requires that we continue to develop and hone our bodies; they are our windows on the world.



In this illustration the soul is represented in diffuse print. The soul consciousness has only been partially developed.

As a rule, those windows allow us only extremely partial glimpses of our surroundings, not unlike the images we are shown on television day in day out; this information, too, is limited and dependent on our choice of TV channel.

The window that looks out onto *level 49*, our physical world, appears to be transparent, but this is an illusion. All we can see is coarse matter (49: 5-7); the etheric part of our physical reality (49: 1-4) is invisible to us.

Our view of levels 48 and 47 (the emotional and mental worlds) is even worse. We may think that we understand our thoughts and emotions, but that too is a misconception. Our windows on these worlds are tiny; the glass is coloured, sometimes even steamed up, making it virtually impossible to know what is really going on around us. In fact, consciousness development can be compared to cleaning old windows and opening new ones: our view on reality steadily improves over time.

Our monad is not just a passive observer; it also reacts to the signals it receives from its various envelopes. Our bodies, which are more than just windows on all kinds of experiences, are also the instruments that enable the monad to function in the different worlds. They are the 'sparring partners' that challenge the monad to get to grips with the problems it faces in life. During this process our monad grows. It learns to respond to the increasingly complex information it receives from its physical, emotional and mental bodies and gradually learns to pick up the signals from the causal envelope. This marks the awakening of the soul consciousness. It then transpires that all of our physical, emotional and mental experiences only served a single purpose: the development of our soul consciousness. When, ultimately, we fully master this level we are nearing the end of our human development.

Identifying and letting go

Our monad develops by learning new things all the time. But you cannot learn from a book. While you may have read how wonderful it is to be in love or how sad you are when someone has died, you still do not know what it really feels like. Only by experiencing these things 'in person' can we fully understand them and incorporate them into our consciousness. For this to happen we need to identify with the

experience. Identification is a peculiar phenomenon. It familiarizes us with experiences outside ourselves. When we watch a film, for example, we can experience a wide range of emotions simply by identifying with the story's protagonist. We can be happy, scared or sad and have all kinds of wild adventures while sitting quietly in a chair, because we put ourselves in the main character's shoes as it were. We 'become' the hero and go through his or her adventures.

Our monad does exactly the same. Putting itself in someone else's shoes, it has all kinds of adventures. In this case the 'someone else' the monad identifies with is not the protagonist from a film, but our physical body. This allows it to project itself into situations in the physical world. By doing the same with the emotional and mental envelopes, our monad can explore those worlds as well. Our monad is not the equal of the physical body, nor is it the emotional or mental envelope; it merely identifies with them and does so quite naturally. In such a moment we 'are' the person looking at ourselves in the mirror. We 'are' the emotions we are carried away by and the ideas we are so familiar with are 'ours'. These identifications are made when the monad starts vibrating with the same frequencies as its bodies. At that point, the monad 'becomes' its body. This identification is possible only when our monad can find the right wavelength. We cannot identify with something that is totally alien to us, but with the help of a number of successive identifications, all of which have something in common, we are capable of connecting with and taking in totally new experiences. And so we slowly grow, step by step, towards higher levels of consciousness.

Our identification with a character from a film is partial and temporary. We can distance ourselves from the situation any time we want to, knowing it is only a film. The identification with our bodies is much stronger, but in actual fact this too is an illusion from which we can distance ourselves by occasionally realizing that these are no more than the experiences of our temporary bodies.

By identifying with the experiences of our bodies, we can learn what these experiences mean. But in order to grow we must let go of this identification and create room for something new. Learning calls for *connecting* and then *letting go* again; in other words, we must avoid getting stuck in old, familiar patterns.

Our life constitutes a natural process of connecting and letting go. The never-ending succession of life stages, problems and circumstances forces us to learn and so expand our consciousness in a natural way. Little children grow up, go to school and decide to study or work. They enter into relationships, start a family and have children of their own, who, in turn, grow up and leave home and eventually they reach retirement age. And all of this is accompanied by financial, relationship and health problems. Every new situation offers the potential for identification, providing fresh challenges to learn and grow.

Food for our bodies

Our monad develops thanks to the vibration patterns it receives from its envelopes and these envelopes in turn develop in response to the impulses from the world around them. To ensure that our monad develops we must provide our envelopes with a stimulating environment that has the right vibration patterns.

All of our bodies need food and the quality of this food determines our physical and mental health.

- Our physical body is nourished when we eat and drink and exercise, when we are exposed to enough sunlight and regularly spend time in nature.
- Our emotional envelope feeds on the emotional energies with which we surround ourselves.
- Our mental envelope is nourished by thoughts and convictions.
- Our causal envelope, the soul, absorbs all of our life experiences, allowing it to grow.

1. Organic and etheric food

In order to take good care of our physical body we must provide it with the proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins it needs, but we should also be mindful of the wishes of our etheric envelope. This envelope has specific needs. It requires etheric energy which is particularly abundant in fresh fruit and vegetables. Carrots plucked straight from the soil and freshly picked apples not only provide the nutrients that our organism needs, they are also rich in etheric energy. It is vital food because it possesses an extra energetic quality that is lost when the products lose their freshness and become more processed. Much of the pre-packed food we buy in the supermarket lacks vitality; in fact, it often contains negative vibrations. Just think of factory-farmed animals that experience stress throughout their short lives; they certainly do not yield stimulating food. We cannot determine the quality of our food on the basis of chemical analysis alone; its energetic composition is equally important, if not more so. To get the most benefit from the etheric quality of our food, it is also important to eat it attentively. We should be mindful of the fact that we are eating and feel positive about it.

Our food is not the only source of etheric energy. Sunlight, clear water and the effects of nature also feed the etheric body. While walking in a forest, for example, we are surrounded by the energy of all the trees, which activates and strengthens our etheric body. Flower and plant extracts have a similar effect. Their concentrated energy, in the form of flower remedies, homeopathic medicine and essential oils, for instance, can help dissolve blockages in the etheric body. In other words, when choosing our food we should consider the quality of the organic ingredients (*level 49: 5-7*) as well as the quality of the etheric ingredients (*level 49: 1-4*).

2. Emotional food

Our emotional body also needs nourishment if it is to function properly and that is why we have constant cravings for emotional stimuli. We surround ourselves with 'cosy' and 'fun' things and seek out the company of people we feel comfortable with. When our emotional body is hungry and craves stimulation it informs us in time. Restless, it draws our attention to the vibrations it wants to have. Because we identify with our emotional body, 'its' desires become 'our' desires and we seek emotional fulfilment. The lower levels of our emotional body feel the need for the excitement that is linked to aggression and violence or, seemingly more innocuous, gossip with friends. By giving in to these desires, we feed and strengthen the lower parts of our emotional envelope. Similar nourishment is found in violent films and some computer games or the company of those ruled by negative emotions. Negative vibrations activate our lower-emotional body. As its size increases, so too does its strength and appetite. We will want more of this kind of food, realizing that our emotional body is

never satisfied, regardless of the amount of food it is given. The more we bolster our negative feelings, the more we become addicted to them.

As a consequence the higher parts of our emotional envelope, which are responsible for our desire for higher emotions such as happiness, enthusiasm, compassion, kindness, beauty and love and our enjoyment of nature and culture, often languish. But when we admit these feelings into our lives and surround ourselves with positive vibrations, we strengthen the higher parts of our emotional body.

3. Mental food

The needs of our mental body are satisfied by mental experiences. That said, our *mental appetite* is generally much smaller than our *emotional appetite*. Mental food is often difficult to digest; in fact, we find it palatable only when it is served with an emotional dressing. For example, children are generally not that keen on doing arithmetic at school, so they are given grades, gold stars or other marks of appreciation to encourage them to absorb the mental vibrations. Our mental food is not restricted to schooling and studying. Other activities, such as practising a mind sport and training our powers of concentration, influence our mental development as well. Our mental activities are often geared towards satisfying our emotions, as we are looking for recognition or seeking to further our careers, but as we become better at developing insights that are independent of our emotional needs, we are more likely to stimulate the higher parts of our mental envelope. Meditation is also good for the higher-mental body, because it enables us to let go of chaotic thoughts and fixed ideas. Without a proper food supply for the higher-mental envelope the soul consciousness cannot thrive. Every effort we make to develop our higher thinking is also beneficial for the development of our soul.

4. Causal food

The causal body, our soul, feeds on the wisdom we have acquired in the course of numerous incarnations. Many people are largely oblivious to the meaning of their experiences, restricting themselves to trivialities that are not exactly nutritious for the causal body. We cannot get proper nutrition for the soul until we are capable of functioning on a higher-emotional or higher-mental level and open ourselves to a positive approach to life and the constant challenge to develop new insights. As long as we operate on the assumption that life here is mere chance and we try to avoid all problems as best we can, we remain oblivious to the lessons implicit in our experiences. But as our soul fills with wisdom, we begin to experience life as an organic whole that keeps placing us in situations that can help us grow. By having faith in life's lessons, our development will gain momentum and we begin to see all of our experiences as challenges that may nourish the soul.

The more our envelopes are developed, the more insight we will derive from our life experiences and the more food will be released for our soul. Lower emotions and lower thoughts cannot feed our soul; for this we need higher emotions and higher thoughts. Our soul has the best chance to develop when our bodies are at their best. That is not to say that the soul is less likely to develop in the event of a disability or a serious illness or when we face the frailties brought on by old age. Such limitations can actually offer us the chance to further our personal growth. But while special circumstances can yield remarkable learning experiences, we must not underestimate the lessons buried in a dull and mundane existence. Once we are no longer distracted

by all kinds of interesting events, we can become more alert to what is hidden under the surface of everyday things. Illness, setbacks and old age can force us to reflect on life and make us aware of hitherto overlooked facts.

A nourishing reality

The nourishment we receive is not restricted to occasional events. We are always caught up in situations that somehow or other stimulate or obstruct us. It is important to realize that our surroundings always feed us, either positively or negatively. We live in an emotional society. Virtually everything around us is geared towards satisfying the needs of our emotional body. When we go out for a nice meal with friends and family we not only feed ourselves *physically* but also *emotionally* with the atmosphere in the restaurant. Literature, music, film, theatre and the sports matches we love to watch are all emotional nourishment. Radio and television programmes, games, newspapers and magazines are presented so as to target the emotional body. Everything around us is given pretty colours, attractive images and catchy music to feed our emotions. When information is exclusively aimed at the mental body, we tend to find it dull and uninteresting. That is why mental information is often nicely packaged and presented as 'infotainment'. Articles are commonly given an eye-catching layout to retain readers' emotional interest and more readily convey mental information. Lessons at school are frequently interrupted because it is impossible to absorb and process a surplus of mental food. But it seems we can never get enough emotional nourishment. Unfortunately, much of that emotional food is aimed at the lower emotions. Many children are overfed on toys and films that encourage violence and that tend to primarily feed their lower-emotional body. Just as excessive consumption of junk food has a negative impact on children's physical development, so will their emotional development be affected by a glut of negative emotions. Once the lower-emotional body has become (too) strong, it will start sending out louder and more forceful messages that it is hungry. The resulting addiction to negativity will be extremely difficult to conquer.

A changing view on life

The monad can only have a consciousness through the envelopes it has activated itself. In fact, consciousness development is a process in which we try to connect with increasingly high levels of our envelopes and try to ignore the lower ones as best we can. And as we climb to ever higher levels of consciousness the way we experience ourselves and the world will be subject to constant change. When we identify with our *lower-emotional* envelope we experience the world as hostile, but when we identify with our *higher-emotional* envelope the world will be full of love. When we identify with our *lower-mental* envelope our thought processes serve our emotions; we think about how best to satisfy our cravings. In contrast, when we live from our *higher-mental* envelope, we will refuse to let our feelings confuse us, searching instead for new insights into our existence. Finally, living from *the soul*, we will feel truly inspired, capable of seeing our life experiences in a different light. That is when we discover that nothing is what it seems, because hidden behind the apparent everyday reality lies another reality.

IV The physical body

Incarnation

Our physical body is the instrument through which we function in the physical world and the better we look after it, the better it will serve us. We possess our body in much the same way as we might possess a car. It opens up new possibilities and takes us to places where we could not go without the vehicle. In due course we become so familiar with it that we begin to see it as an extension of ourselves.

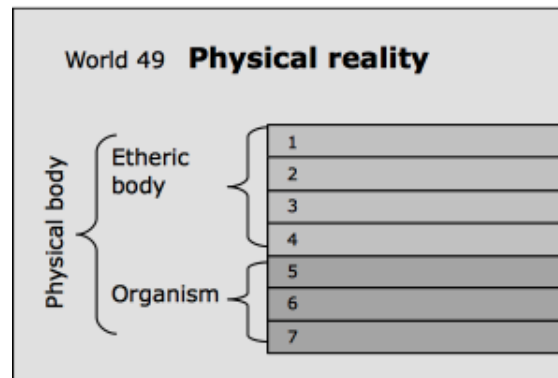
Once upon a time our physical body started as a tiny seed growing in a womb. At some point a connection was made between our monad, enveloped by its causal envelope (the soul), and this physical body-in-the-making. Soul and body came together, creating a *human being*. The two are joined with the help of an energy thread, the sutratma. According to Laurency, this connection coincides with the first breath, although he indicates that the soul may have been in the physical body's immediate vicinity for much longer. But even as this material connection is established we are not yet fully incarnated; it is a lengthy process during which the monad starts identifying more and more with its new bodies. At the end of our physical life, at the time of death, the connection is broken again.

Our physical body

We can easily imagine that the approximately one thousand billion cells that make up our physical body all lead a more or less independent life. Every little blood cell is an autonomous organism which, within limits, is free to do its own thing. Our body's cells are self-sustaining and regulate the chemical balance needed to function properly. They are obviously part of a larger whole, but that does not alter the fact that they are perfectly capable of looking after themselves. The same is true of our organs. Liver, heart and kidneys all operate more or less independently and derive the nutrition they need from their surroundings. Our entire physical body is made up of such small, autonomous entities. In fact, this is true for our body as a whole: it is an autonomous organism aimed at maintaining itself and is pretty good at looking after itself without any help from us, the monad. This is clear when we sleep. Breathing and circulation continue and when the physical body grows cold it covers up again. It turns over at regular intervals to prevent parts of the body from becoming numb. The body is home to innumerable chemical and physiological processes, none of which require our attention. When we have an injury, the body repairs itself. When we have an infection, the body fights it. Our hair grows automatically and old cells are replaced with new ones. Our physical body is an autonomous being with its own needs and desires. When it is hungry or thirsty, it tells us, and because the monad identifies with the organism we say: 'I'm hungry.' In reality, however, it is not the monad that is hungry, but our physical body craving food.

In actual fact our body consists of two parts: an organic part (49:5-7) and an etheric part (49:1-4). The organism is the part we are all familiar with and with which we identify on a day-to-day basis. The etheric body (or etheric envelope), which is invisible to the naked eye, consists of different kinds of etheric material (49:1-4). It is

made up of an extraordinarily complex fabric that envelops and permeates all of the organism's cells and organs and extends to several centimetres outside the organism. Together, the etheric part and the organic part form a unity. Every individual cell as well as the organism as a whole is surrounded by the etheric envelope which is responsible for the vitalisation. Our survival depends on this etheric body as it distributes all energies within the organism. It enables our brain and senses to function and is the source of our feelings of vitality or fatigue.



Sickness and health

The etheric envelope is *not* the organism's 'aura'. In fact it is the other way around: the organism is born and grows under the influence of the etheric envelope. This came first and contains all the information needed to build and maintain the organism. Even while the foetus is still taking shape in the womb, its complete blueprint is already present in the etheric envelope. It contains the complete building plans, including instructions in case the organism needs repair. The organism is the product of the etheric envelope and will always adapt to the information available at etheric level. In the event of inadvertent disparities between the etheric building plan and the organism, the organism will adapt as best it can. This situation is likely to arise in the event of injuries, which can be healed thanks to the information of the etheric envelope. In this way, our organism can always repair damage. Medical science is capable of fixing greater and smaller anomalies in our bodies, but because it has no insight into the working of the etheric envelope, it focuses exclusively on problems in the organism.

Anomalies in the organism can be rectified with the help of the information in the etheric envelope, but the situation is altogether different when the envelope itself contains anomalies. These will be reproduced in the organism and the resulting medical problems can be resolved only when the etheric envelope itself is fixed. Many physical complaints originate in the etheric envelope and people who are sensitive to this can predict such problems on the basis of the information they pick up on the etheric level. In the same way they can find out what the etheric envelope needs to get better. This may include a modified diet, homeopathic medicine or essential flower therapy. Physical exercise, such as bioenergetic exercises or hatha yoga, can also strengthen the etheric body. Anomalies in the etheric body tend to originate in the emotional, mental and causal energies to which it is exposed. When these are either too powerful or unstable, this imbalance will be reproduced in the

etheric body and from there influence the organism. This is why emotional problems can be experienced as physical discomfort. In fact, serious emotional traumas can cause long-term damage to the etheric envelope, which can in turn result in a physical defect. The etheric envelope receives by far its most important information from the causal envelope, which contains the karmic data that determines, in part, whether we will have a healthy or sick body, be strong or weak, and beautiful or ugly. This is a level of programming over which we have very little influence.

Our organism is a passive organ. It is activated by the etheric envelope, which in turn responds to impulses from the higher worlds. The etheric envelope is in fact the link between the organism and the higher levels of consciousness and the distributor of energies originating in the emotional, mental and causal worlds. This is why emotions in particular can bring about such powerful physical experiences. Negative feelings can literally make us ill, while people who are in love can glow with vitality. Depending on the quality of our etheric envelope and our organism, we are capable of absorbing greater or smaller quantities of the higher energies into our physical body. Too much energy is just as problematic as too little. Overstimulation of the etheric envelope can cause major health problems. This explains why people who are into consciousness development and who spend a lot of time meditating, praying, doing yoga or who focus on higher energies in other ways often have health issues. They can be plagued by headaches, insomnia, depression, anxiety and even psychoses. Such symptoms can occur when the etheric body and the organism are supplied with more energy than they can process. The nervous system, in particular, can be severely unsettled as a result. People who function on a lower level of consciousness development often enjoy rude physical health, whereas those who function primarily on a mental level are often a little less hardy because they spend a lot of their energy on processing the glut of mental energies. The latter would benefit from strengthening their physical body through sport and exercise and a healthy diet.

Many health problems originate in previous incarnations. The quality of our current organism depends not just on the care we lavish on it in this life, but also on the attention it received in previous lives. The monad selects a foetus with a physical development that corresponds with its purpose in life, and that complements the level of development attained in previous incarnations. To all intents and purposes, we continue in a new body from where we left off in the previous life. This makes the care for our current physical body an important task with far-reaching consequences. Abuse of our organism, by eating the wrong diet, for example, or neglecting it in some other way, means that we cannot function properly and prevent ourselves from gaining certain planned life experiences in this incarnation. But our lack of care has other consequences. If we neglect our physical body now, we will have to manage with a less well-functioning one in a future life. But if, on the other hand, we look after it to the best of our ability, we will benefit in future incarnations.

Birth and death

The foetus in the womb initially models itself on the blueprint provided by the parents' hereditary material. At this point it is an independent (animal) organism that grows without interference from a human (soul) consciousness.

This situation changes at the moment of incarnation, when our causal body, the soul, is connected with the etheric envelope of the foetus. The soul contains the monad as well as a blueprint for the making of a physical body, based on information from previous incarnations. The moment the soul connects with the foetus the two blueprints will merge, giving rise to a new etheric envelope that will be responsible for the definitive formation of the organism. The emotional and mental envelopes are not yet in place at that point. These will be formed at a later stage when more information will be available in the soul.

During the first of our many incarnations, the monad's decision to connect with a particular foetus will be fairly random. At that point it does not matter all that much where we are born and what we will look like. With so much general life experience to be gained, the monad has no preference for particular circumstances. But as our soul develops, it becomes increasingly important for the monad to end up in a physical body and in a family in which it can gain the experiences it needs for further growth. Our later incarnations stem from a deliberate choice to be born in this body with these parents and in this particular social milieu. That is why our current living conditions represent the environment we need at this stage of our development. Whether or not we actually accept the challenges that come with this is another matter. That will depend on our efforts. But we are certainly given the opportunity to gain specific experiences and thereby further our development. If we make the most of these opportunities we will be given plenty of chances in future lives. If, on the other hand, we do not use them there will be repercussions. We are given everything we need, but if we fail to make use of them, the source of our nourishment will dry up, making its effect felt in incarnations to come.

The importance of this life

Without incarnation on earth human development would be impossible. Our emotional, mental and causal development depends on our physical incarnation, which is why our earthly existence is so extremely valuable. That is not to say that the life of our organism must be prolonged at all cost. It is merely an aid to consciousness and not an end in itself. This approach has huge consequences for our attitude towards life and death, for example when considering the pros and cons of euthanasia and abortion. An unborn child is not by definition a 'human being' and a vegetative organism is not necessarily the best tool for growth. Because the purpose of life is the consciousness development of our monad, the latter requires a physical body that is up to the challenge. When the organism is no longer fit for purpose, it tends to lose its value for the soul. A natural process gets underway whereby the organism disintegrates, paving the way for a new incarnation. But because medical science sees prolonging the life of the physical body as an end in itself, well-intentioned medical care can obstruct the development of our consciousness. Knowing this does not make answering questions about life and death any easier. A 'badly functioning' body can still give us unique experiences and even when our organism stops contributing to our *own* development, it can fulfil an important role in the consciousness of *others*, including family and carers. While voluntary euthanasia always requires careful consideration of all the pros and cons, it is worthwhile remembering that the body is just a mortal instrument for the immortal monad.

The need for incarnation

All the worlds that we are in contact with have both a material and a consciousness aspect (leaving aside the third aspect, that of energy or will, for the time being). We really only experience the material aspect of the physical world. Everything we can see and touch represents the material reality to us. This is different in the emotional and mental worlds. We experience thoughts and emotions as attributes of consciousness even though they are also ‘material objects’ in the emotional and mental worlds.

- The *material aspect* constitutes an *objective, exterior truth* for us, something outside ourselves that everyone else can see in the same way. The material aspect of a flower consists of colour, form and weight, which can be measured and documented. Those data are independent of the observer, so everybody can affirm them.
- We experience the *consciousness aspect* as a *subjective interior truth*, as a personal impression. Do you like that flower, or not? Everyone will have their own, perhaps changing, opinion on that.

If we work on the assumption that we are meant to learn something from life, we need objective facts. *Learning* something means distinguishing between fact and fiction, truth and untruth. That means that somehow or other we will have to verify our information and that is possible only with objective facts from the physical reality. If we were to settle for our own subjective truths, we would effectively be choosing a world of illusions. No matter how great and credible our ideas are, we cannot possibly say they are ‘true’ unless they are verifiable in the physical reality. So if we want to investigate a truth that is independent of our personal preferences, the physical world is a necessary condition. We need the physical reality to develop emotional and mental insights. Physical matter is our eternal benchmark. We can use it to verify scientific data, but it also provides support, for instance when we are emotionally confused. Physical reality will always provide a point of reference.

We learn not through speculation, but by linking ideas to actual experiences in the physical reality. So if we want to develop our consciousness and, for this purpose, want to explore the truth of our consciousness experiences, we will have to incarnate on earth. After death we will fill the time we spend in the emotional and mental worlds with evaluations of our past life and, above all, by enjoying ourselves, playing, indulging in fantasies and day-dreaming. It will be an excellent opportunity to rest and think things over after a strenuous incarnation. It is equally important to reflect on our ideas and to take stock of our past life. But we cannot really learn anything new there – for this we have to reincarnate. The best possible consciousness development on a physical, emotional, mental and hence on a causal level is possible only in the physical reality and for this we need to have a physical body at our disposal. A physical body is indispensable for the development of our soul.

V

The emotional body and the development of emotions

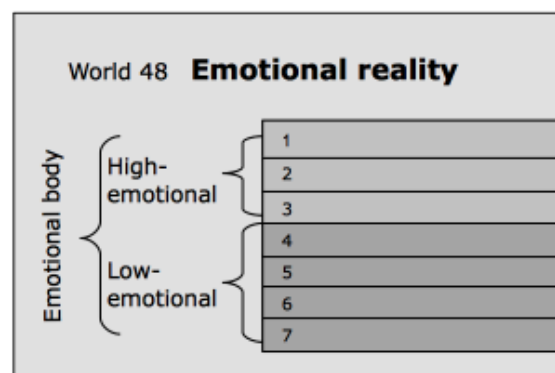
The emotional battlefield

We function in the emotional world with the help of our emotional body (or emotional envelope). This body helps us to receive the emotional vibrations from our surroundings and, vice versa, to transmit our own vibrations to the world around us. In other words, there is a constant exchange of energy patterns with our environment, and while we are aware of a small percentage, we register most of this only on an unconscious level.

Our emotional body is made up of seven different kinds of material, each of which represents another form of emotionality, ranging from hard-hearted selfish feelings (48: 7) that distance us from others, to loving, altruistic feelings (48: 1) that bring us closer to others. Most people's emotional envelopes contain those seven materials in different quantities and proportions, permitting an almost infinitely varied emotional life, perhaps featuring *low emotions* such as hatred, fear, envy, irritation, depression, jealousy, pride and *high emotions* such as affection, admiration, generosity, a willingness to make sacrifices, pity and courage.

Just like the physical body, the emotional body is an autonomous organ that aspires to sustain itself. For this it needs nourishment in the form of emotional vibrations. So what we experience as emotional longing is in fact our emotional body's need for nourishment. If that body is made up largely of lower-emotional material, it will make us hunger after lower emotions, whereas a higher-emotional body makes us crave higher emotions. As a result, someone's behaviour will be a reflection of the composition of his or her emotional body.

In the early stages of our human development, having only just incarnated as a human being, our emotional body is almost completely made up of low-emotional matter (48: 6, 7). With the higher-emotional elements entirely absent, we can only experience aggressive and selfish emotions and will be oblivious to all loving feelings. But in the course of our development, the composition of our emotional envelope gradually changes, and as higher material replaces the lower material, egotism can make way for altruism. Our emotional development will be complete once our emotional envelope is made up solely of the very finest matter (48: 1, 2).



In the early stages of our human incarnation, most of our feelings will be fairly primitive, like anger and greed. These are remnants of our animal origins, which aid our survival in a hostile world. By expressing these emotions, and being at the receiving end of them as well, we come to understand the consequences of violence and oppression. As we learn what it means to feel sadness and pain we will, in the course of several incarnations, develop sympathy and compassion. The experience of negative emotions, often as a result of other people's aggression, thus facilitates the development of our higher emotions, with higher-emotional material gradually replacing the lower-emotional material in our envelope. Every loving experience attracts higher matter and every time we ignore our selfish feelings a piece of the lower matter dissolves. In this way hostile emotions gradually make way for feelings that connect us to others.

Our emotional body is the battlefield where the war is fought between our lower and higher emotions. It is the site of our internal confrontation with aggression and violence on the one hand and love and compassion on the other. As good and evil are pitted against each other on an emotional level, we try to free ourselves from the supremacy of our destructive tendencies. We can do so only if we manage to simultaneously develop our mental qualities.

Motivating force

Emotions are wishes to obtain or avoid something. They are the motivating force underlying everything we do. We do not spring into action when we know we are being threatened, we only do something when we are afraid. The *desire* for a reward, for success or power makes us take action, not the *knowledge* we may have of it. An idea is not attractive to us until it is coupled to an emotion. Good at putting things into perspective, rational people tend to be fairly passive. They spring into action only when their emotions are roused. Emotional people, on the other hand, can get terribly upset over nothing and will do everything in their power to defend their interests. We need emotions to perform our tasks in life, but emotional knowledge is often at odds with mental knowledge. Our desires make us do stupid things, oblivious to the rational consequences. We fall in love with the wrong person and we eat junk food because it satisfies us emotionally. We are easily led by emotional impulses, even when our common sense tells us not to. So if we want to function properly, we need to find the right balance between our emotional and mental consciousness. Although they are an excellent driving force, emotions are not suited to providing direction to our life.

As long as we have only activated the bottom layers of our emotional envelope, we will behave selfishly. Experiencing negative emotions from the world around us, we will feel that we live in a hostile world where we cannot trust anyone and have to fight to survive. We will behave accordingly. At this stage, we have no 'senses' that enable us to pick up the higher emotions, so they do not exist for us. Only when our life experiences enable us to activate the higher parts of the emotional body will we perceive the finer vibrations from the higher-emotional world. What emerges is a friendlier world full of affection. As long as we are incapable of experiencing feelings of love, we remain self-centred and unable to put ourselves in someone else's place.

This changes as soon as our higher emotions are activated. When that happens we will be motivated by love and compassion and will be happy to give as well as to receive.

Emotional structures

In terms of their consciousness aspect, emotions are internal experiences, but on the basis of their material aspect they also form material structures. These are known as *elementals*. Every emotion is therefore also an 'object' in our emotional envelope. An incidental emotion is merely an ephemeral substance, one that evaporates very quickly, but reiterated emotions can turn into stable structures that are firmly embedded in our emotional body.

Because feelings tend to be coupled to thoughts they can develop into convictions that we hold to be 'true'. The resulting truth is based not on objective fact, but on perceived ideas, fears and desires. In this way everybody creates a more or less stable pattern of inner beliefs that represent a personal truth that we will seek to confirm over and over again. They often take shape over many years, and no matter how destructive some of these convictions may be, they constitute *our* truth. Because we are attached to them, they become entrenched in our consciousness. As long as we identify with our emotional body, the emotional structures inside it form a significant part of our personality. Many people have negative views of themselves. They think they are clumsy, stupid, ugly or scared, or perhaps they feel wronged, often as a result of negative experiences in their youth. Over time these emotional and mental patterns form a virtually indelible reality. The fleeting impression 'I don't feel good' is replaced by the idea 'I *am* no good'. The longer this pattern persists and the more intensely the conviction is experienced and nurtured, the harder it gets to relinquish it again.

We do not keep the inner patterns in our emotional envelope to ourselves alone. Having formed them, we transmit them non-stop to the world around us and, vice versa, we receive the signals that others transmit. In this way we often unconsciously 'infect' one another with our emotional baggage and influence each other's behaviour. This is particularly obvious in gatherings when people react to each other's emotions. At a party or in stadiums where large groups of people gather, the exchange of emotional energies can create a communal mood. Personal patterns can reinforce one another to produce an infectious enthusiasm, but they can just as easily result in an explosion of violence. Individuals may end up displaying a kind of behaviour of which they had not thought themselves capable.

Owing to the joint structures that take shape in the emotional world, nuclear and extended families and other relatively sheltered groups also cherish fixed beliefs about reality. The same is true for organizations and associations. Both small groups and entire nations cultivate a perception of the world that is often not founded on objective reality. Yet they are convinced that their views, as well as the associated values, are the only right ones and because they continue to cultivate that emotional conviction these patterns are extremely stable. The resulting, self-affirming inner reality has such an emotional force that members of that community will find it virtually impossible to escape. Religious movements and political opinions are good examples of this process. As all those emotionally charged convictions find a place in the emotional world, cultures and religions will always find confirmation of their own

ideas here. Likewise, widely held scientific theories are often based on emotionality and on their patterns in the emotional reality.

Deceased people who have cast off their physical body end up in an emotional world which, initially, bears great resemblance to the physical world they have just left. The same convictions and desires that underlie our physical world form the basis of the emotional world. All of our collective beliefs manifest themselves here, including our good intentions and positive feelings as well as our collectively generated anger and aggression. With negative emotions consisting of low-emotional material, (48: 5-7) and loving feelings made up of high-emotional matter (48: 1-3), the emotional world is comprised of a number of successive levels akin to distinct landscapes. In the lower-emotional areas we experience fear and aggression. In the higher areas we experience beauty, harmony and solidarity. It is good to know that everything we feel *here* (on earth) takes shape over *there* (in the emotional world), and that, after we die, we will be greeted by a landscape of our own making.

The worship of saints

While we occupy the physical world with our physical body, we simultaneously occupy the emotional world with our emotional body. As such, we are always surrounded by the subtle structures that have been erected under the influence of our individual and collective emotions.

Every feeling takes shape in our emotional body. From there, we transmit them to the world around us. Depending on the intensity with which we sustain them, persistent emotions can form increasingly stable structures. If we have agoraphobia, for example, the persistent emotions associated with this condition will form a structure representing our fear. When we keep imagining all the horrible things that could happen when we are out on the street we feed that fear, causing the structure to stabilize over time and form an increasingly concrete aspect of our internal reality. Conversely, this self-made structure will force itself onto our consciousness as if it were an objective truth. When that happens our fear has developed into an elemental, into an autonomous, material structure.

When we think about someone in an emotional way, we form an image of that person in the emotional world. Repeated often enough, the image will manifest itself more and more clearly and powerfully. When other people start thinking about that person in the same way and add their energy to ours, an extremely stable replica will form in the emotional world, a doppelganger of the original person.

What happens when devout monks spend many hours a day, year in year out, praying to Jesus or Buddha? And what might happen when sannyasins spend years concentrating on a particular guru like Osho or Say Baba? The longer and harder people meditate on that one person, the more powerful that person's image in the emotional reality becomes, ultimately giving rise to a replica of the object of all that attention. The image of the worshipped can become so lifelike that it may manifest itself in the vicinity of the disciple who can then actually see the saint! Just as the agoraphobic sees frightening things all around him, the monk or the sannyasin will see the object of his devotion appearing all around him. The agoraphobic feels deeply unhappy, the monk feels blessed. Yet they have a great deal in common. Both have intensified their internal patterns to such an extent that these have started influencing their external reality. To find a solution to his problem, the agoraphobic will go to a

therapist who can help him cleanse his emotional body. The monk will experience the apparition of his self-formed image as a privilege, no doubt refusing to give it up.

Our inner perception can take on such extreme forms as to turn into an obsession. All spiritual traditions feature examples of saints who, after years of intense prayer, manifested their emotional reality in the physical world. Through their identification with Jesus' suffering, some were able to induce stigmata in their own physical body. What has happened is that the emotional patterns they concentrated on have moved through the etheric envelope to become manifest in the organism.

The emotional desire for a spiritual teacher is a feature of the emotional world (48), which, by definition, lacks 'divine' insights. Such insights are confined to the level of the soul (47: 1-3) and the levels that transcend the soul. For 'divine' wisdom we must rise above the emotional level, which demands an entirely different approach. There is no doubt that people capable of giving such intense shape to their emotional reality to the extent that it takes on a visible form in the physical world have special powers. If the images cultivated are destructive, these people may end up in psychiatric care. If, on the other hand, they construct 'divine' images, we may revere them. However, the latter can be an equally unhealthy development.

When we focus on higher energies and try to establish contact with ever more subtle worlds, it can be useful to seek out a saint or a spiritual teacher who can serve as a role model for us. But focusing our attention on the actual person instead of the ideal that he or she represents can lead to the formation of rigid inner structures that actually get in the way of our further development. The search for higher levels of consciousness involves opening our mind to new wisdom, new truths and new insights. If, on the other hand, we become fixated on the image of a specific saint, we limit ourselves to his or her personality, running the risk of subordinating our own ideals and our own vision. Growth means transcending ourselves and transcending the outward form. The veneration of saints and spiritual teachers can be an aid, but we should venerate them as symbols of human potential. What matters is the path they have shown and the ideals they represent, not the historic person they were. Mindful of that, we can internalize their energy patterns without falling prey to rigid dogma. It is important not to become dependent on somebody else, but to accept responsibility and to discover our own truth.

The influence of religion

We can identify several phases in our personal development. As small children we tend to be guided by our lower emotions, but in the course of our life our consciousness continues to develop and, depending on the age of our soul, higher and higher levels will come within reach. As the lower-emotional level is gradually replaced by the higher-emotional, thinking becomes more and more important until, at some point, we start living from our soul.

As long as we function mainly from our emotional consciousness and look for emotional truths, we will have little need for rational facts. Our ideas about reality must feel good and need not be true. On an emotional level of consciousness we have little interest in cold, objective truths, preferring to feel safe in our convictions. This is particularly obvious in religion: we want to *believe*, we do not care to *know*. Faith and religion play an important role in the emotional phase of consciousness development.

We begin to focus on a new, rational worldview only once higher thought (47:4,5) has been developed and we can let go of our emotional need for security in exchange for a vision founded on reason.

Throughout our entire emotional development, our truth is shaped by feelings. Mental arguments mean little to us as we do not identify with our higher thinking. During this phase, consciousness development is possible only with the help of stimulating emotional incentives. Feelings with the greatest impact are tied to religious beliefs, as these are capable of connecting us with forces that transcend the human dimension. Individuals on a low level of development need simple prescriptions rather than sophisticated insights. They are susceptible to the idea that there is a powerful deity that will reward them for good behaviour and will punish them with hell and damnation if they disobey.

To create the conditions for the formation of a stable society, primitive societies need clear rules. Religious dogma can provide these. If you steal your hand will be chopped off, and if you have an extramarital affair you will be stoned. Although not very sophisticated, it is an effective way of enforcing a certain type of behaviour from people on a low-emotional level of consciousness. In Christianity, the Old Testament fulfils this role. The Ten Commandments are straightforward and oversimplified rules that apply across the board. Absolute obedience is paramount. If God asks you to sacrifice your son, you must do as you are told. For people who operate from a predominantly mental consciousness this is an absurd order, but for those on a low-emotional level the execution of this order is an expression of obedience and a willingness to make sacrifices. Such rigid rules help set in motion a certain degree of socialisation which can form the basis for a stable society and in turn facilitate further development.

As the higher emotions begin to develop, the religious message has to change. This is why the image of God in the New Testament is different from its old counterpart. Here we find not the implacable justice and vengefulness of the lower emotions, but love and compassion, the higher emotions. To develop these, you must not kill your enemy, but turn the other cheek. The God of the New Testament is therefore no longer a vengeful God but a merciful God instead. And so, in the course of history, religions have guided people to ever higher levels of emotional development. Religion's task is in effect the gradual transformation of lower emotions into higher ones, with selfishness being replaced by altruism and vengefulness by mercy. The endpoint of this development is the letting go of all selfishness and the experience of a mystic union with others. Only at this point, on this mystical level of consciousness, is the emotional development complete.

Mysticism

The highest level of emotionality is mysticism. At this level of experience we can reach out from our highest emotions (*level 48: 1,2*) towards the lowest level of unity consciousness (*46: 7*), feeling at one with the whole of creation, the *unio mystica*. The development of higher thought is not on the agenda at first, since this happens only when the development of the higher emotions is complete. Our contact with the unity consciousness enables us to experience feelings of wholeness and union with nature, with other people and ultimately with the whole of creation. Initially we were

motivated by a spiritual desire for enlightenment, which was essentially based on selfish motives. This revolved around *our* enlightenment. But the experience of cosmic unity makes us realize that we are connected to everything and everyone. No longer wanting to retreat into the ecstasy of the higher-emotional level, we want to dedicate ourselves to the development of other people instead, to translate the feelings of the higher-emotional body into concrete actions aimed at the well-being of others. This requires the development of the higher-mental consciousness (47: 4,5), which we will take upon ourselves in subsequent incarnations.

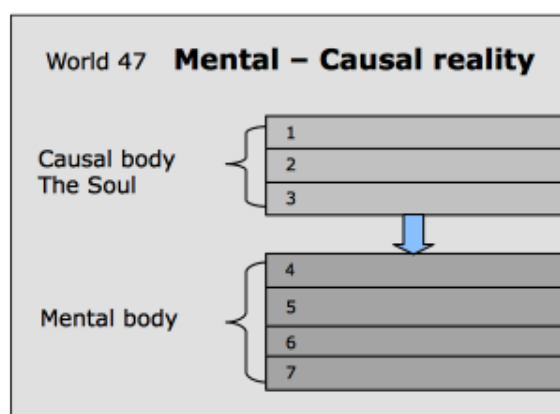
VI

The mental body and the development of thought

Mental levels

Our mental body (or mental envelope) is the instrument with which we function in the mental world. It enables us to think as well as to transmit our thoughts and receive those of others. The mental body is made up of four different kinds of mental material (47: 4-7) that facilitate four different forms of thinking and various combinations of those four. Because we are mostly unaware of the transmission and reception of mental vibrations, we are unwittingly influenced by others. Many of our 'own' thoughts are in fact vibrations we pick up from the mental world without knowing it.

The mental body is closely connected to the causal body, and when it functions properly, it can convert the inspiration it receives from the soul into practical knowledge, thus facilitating a close collaboration between the mental and causal envelopes.



Lower thinking (*level 47: 6,7*), higher thinking (*level 47: 4,5*) and causal consciousness (*level 47: 1-3*) make up our mental world. It can improve our understanding of the world around us and the meaning of life. Each of the three mental levels is characterized by its own form of thinking and a specific take on reality.

We think with our mental body, not with our brains, however strange this may seem at first. Thoughts are patterns of vibration in our mental envelope, and, thanks to our brains, we are aware of those vibrations. Our brains can be compared to a radio set. A radio passes on 'radio waves', just as our brain passes on thoughts to us. What we hear on the radio is not produced by the device itself, so when we switch it off, the broadcast continues. The same is true of our brain. When it stops functioning we can still think. Research into near-death experiences (NDEs) has revealed that at the moment our brain function ceases, we continue to receive information we can recollect later.

The actual thinking is not done in our brain but in our mental envelope, drawing on its four constitutive kinds of mental matter. Each kind facilitates a different form of thinking and each successive level enables us to develop more sophisticated and more complex thoughts. We can distinguish between the lower-mental levels and the higher-mental ones. The first category (47: 6,7) consists of emotionally coloured thoughts. The second category (47: 4,5) enables us to formulate thoughts that are independent of our emotions, so we can develop purely rational insights without interference from fears, desires or personal preferences.

Patterns of vibration

A thought is a subjective consciousness experience, an inner experience. But at the same time it is much more than that. Thoughts are vibrating material structures and highly dynamic. They are 'objects' with an objective existence in our mental body. They are constantly transmitted as signals to the mental world where they take shape again. In other words, by thinking, we produce a continuous stream of frequency patterns that leave a trail of mental structures in the mental world. Our mental body not only transmits these vibrations, but, like an antenna, can also pick up other people's vibrations. The result is a constant, but largely unconscious exchange of information. Our mental body feels the need to pick up energies with which it is nourished and vitalized. We experience this as an interest in mental activities and scientific pursuits. We study because it enables us to still the hunger of our mental body. If we study to get ahead, be somebody or please our parents, then we satisfy the needs of our emotional body. But if we study to gather knowledge, we feed our mental envelope. Our emotional hunger is generally much greater than our mental hunger. Both the emotional and mental envelopes demand attention, but our emotional desires tend to be strongest. Because we are more inclined to listen to our feelings than to our thoughts, we often end up doing foolish things. Once the higher parts of our mental body begin to develop, we can free ourselves from the subjection to our emotional needs. There is no need to deny our emotions, but it would be wise not to surrender completely so they gradually loosen their grip on us and we can turn to the needs of our higher-mental envelope.

The matter that constitutes the mental world is much subtler than emotional matter, which in turn is much subtler than physical matter. The more refined the world in which we function, the more its character has shifted from 'matter' to 'consciousness' and from 'objects' to 'patterns of vibration'. In the *physical world* we experience 'matter' as tangible objects. Examples here are trees and houses, which are relatively stable. The structures from the *emotional world*, on the other hand, are already much less 'material' to us. Resembling dream visions, they dissolve after a few minutes or hours, unless they are reactivated by our own or other people's emotions. The structures we encounter in the *mental world*, our thoughts, are even more subtle and less 'material'. They can be compared to flashes of light or rapidly alternating geometric shapes with an average life span of no more than a few seconds. Thoughts are more ephemeral than emotions, which is why we struggle to hold them for more than a couple of seconds. Soon afterwards our attention is drawn to something else. We can picture the mental world as a luminous world full of flickering images with which we are always connected via our mental body. Thoughts are energetic symbols

that take shape regardless of the language in which they are formulated. The more precise and sophisticated they are, the more complicated and detailed the corresponding energy structures will be. That is why complex ideas are so difficult to grasp.

The 'lower' the thought, the coarser the material it is made of. The higher the thought, the finer the matter and the more complex the energy patterns it has created. Thoughts on level 47: 7 have a coarse, inert structure, which is why nearly everybody can grasp them. Thoughts on the highest level 47: 4 are much quicker and dynamic. Learning to get to grips with those requires many lives and intensive mental training. As our highest thoughts (47: 4) resonate with the inspiration we receive from the soul (47: 3), higher thinking connects us to our soul consciousness and enables us to translate the information from our soul into practical insights.

Lower thoughts (47: 6,7) resonate with our emotions, which is why they are influenced by feelings. The reverse is also true: by thinking, we activate the corresponding emotions. Lower thoughts and emotions resonate in unison, forming a unity as it were, and because the emotional body tends to be stronger than the mental body, the emotional vibrations will dominate the mental vibrations. This explains why emotions are the driving force behind our behaviour. We are motivated by our feelings, not by our thoughts. Our desires and fears drive us to action, not our rational considerations. This situation changes when we start developing our higher thoughts: their vibration patterns no longer resonate in unison with emotions but with the soul, thus helping us to develop our soul consciousness.

Thoughts and emotions

All of our thoughts form material structures, and the more we cherish a particular thought and the more we flesh it out, the stronger that structure will be. Casual, passing thoughts are ephemeral patterns, flashes of light that soon disappear. Repeated thoughts, especially those underpinned by powerful emotions, can develop into inner convictions, creating a stable form that will last longer the more people that share those thoughts. This can result in permanent mental constructions that others can experience as a source of inspiration. Collective *emotional* structures are much more likely to develop than collective *mental* structures. People readily develop an emotional interest in, say, sports matches or political conflicts. In these emotions thought plays a secondary role, if it plays a role at all.

Most people only understand simple thoughts, which is why plain 'truths' and 'one-liners' are so effective. Mass opinions always involve clear-cut ideas, never complicated matters. Such mass opinions derive their power not just from the mental conviction they represent, but even more so from the emotional desire associated with it. Political movements are based less on rational arguments than on the emotions they induce and the same is true for scientific dogmas. The latter are adopted for rational reasons, but even more so because joining a socially accepted group is more emotionally satisfying than isolating yourself and going in search of your own critical truth. Ideas are mental constructions that are often emotionally charged. If people feel inspired by them, they will adopt this pattern and in turn feed it with their own mental and emotional energy, thus further strengthening those ideas. Whether or not such an idea is factually true is not important. Mental patterns of vibration form their own reality, because, like a material structure, they can be experienced by others. The

resulting dogmas and scientific paradigms can assume a life of their own for many centuries. Commonly accepted ideas that shape the picture of reality over long periods of time are in fact mental structures that are kept in place by lots of individuals and that – being so dominant – can even hinder the formation of new insights. The same is true of political convictions and traditional customs. When all members of a certain group think along roughly the same lines, they will create their own truth, a mental pattern in the mental world which is unconsciously perceived by all. Public opinion, therefore, is not an accidental phenomenon, but a mental structure that emerges as the common denominator of all opinions combined. What a dominant group thinks will, in time, become common currency, thus representing the ‘truth’ for many. Social customs and cultural values, for example, are founded on the emotional and mental structures that are cherished within a certain community. An outsider settling in such a community will bring other beliefs with him. The prevailing ideas will seem odd to him at first, and likewise he will find little sympathy for his own customs.

Efforts to change social and cultural practices will always come up against the stability of the structures that have been erected over time in the emotional and mental worlds. Initially everybody will speak ill of the new behaviour. But as soon as a growing number of people embrace it, a pattern will form that will gradually increase in strength and eventually supersede the old structure. Then everyone will want to conform to this new norm.

Manipulation

The truth, as experienced by large groups of people, can be manipulated by deliberately spreading specific energy patterns. This is essentially how advertising works: a certain image is constantly evoked and then takes on a life of its own. McDonald’s, Coca Cola and many other brands disseminate a certain idea which, over time, comes to be shared by more and more people. Products are coupled to mental ideas and emotional desires, associated with existing energy structures and then simply accepted by the people. A product becomes ‘sexy’ or ‘cool’ when it is linked to specific, already existing patterns. Cigarette brands Camel and Marlboro, for example, did this by associating their products with an image of tough independence. As long as we remain on the level of lower thinking, where our thoughts are tied to emotional experience, we can barely resist these kinds of associations.

Politics works in a similar way. Propaganda and selective information play a part in the formation of emotional and mental constructions. It is easy to steer public opinion in a certain direction by providing selective information and making greater or smaller adjustments to it. This is why it has been said that truth is the first casualty of war. All you need to do to rally groups of people behind a certain cause is to present them with an emotionally coloured truth. Do this consistently and you will have no trouble manipulating public opinion and getting any truth accepted. History abounds with examples of large groups of perfectly intelligent people going along with the most bizarre ideas. That is not to say that influencing other people is necessarily done in bad faith. Like everybody else, people who are keen to propagate their opinion have their own truth and are so sure of it they want to share it with others. Because every conviction is largely based on a subjective interpretation of the truth, this is not a question of *being right* versus *being wrong*. It is always about the angle from which you look at things.

At our level of consciousness, we are incapable of knowing the whole truth. At the level of lower thinking, all of our truths are coloured by emotions. At the level of higher thinking, emotions play a subordinate role, but even there our knowledge is insufficient to put all the facts in the proper perspective. We can only comprehend 'the truth' at causal level. Everything that presents itself as 'true' on the lower levels is incomplete and dependent on all kinds of chance factors, such as our life experience and our social and cultural background.

Ways of thinking

Our *emotional body* represents a large spectrum of desires, ranging from low-emotional to high-emotional, from the desire to obtain something to the desire to give something. Our *mental body* has always been the tool with which to realize all those desires. How do I fulfil my desires? By thinking! In their most rudimentary form, our thoughts can be seen as an extension of our emotions. Thinking developed from emotional needs and our mental envelope originated in the emotional envelope. At first, both are indistinguishable, hence the close interconnectedness of our lower thinking and our emotions. Our thoughts cannot free themselves from emotional manipulation until our mental body has achieved a certain degree of development and can distance itself from the emotional body. For this to happen, the frequency patterns of both envelopes must differentiate. Initially they resonate more or less synchronously in response to certain experiences. But as our thinking evolves and develops more specific qualities, they grow further apart. Finally, once our thoughts have stopped vibrating in unison with all of our emotions, we gain access to the higher-mental world where we can formulate independent insights. As it starts focusing more and more on causal vibrations, our thinking will ultimately put itself at the service of our soul.

Our emotional consciousness enables us to experience all kinds of feelings, but in order to draw any conclusions from them we need to think. Emotions in and of themselves do not provide insights; they cannot help us find the truth. We need our mental consciousness to grow before we can develop a view on ourselves and the world. Our thinking enables us to connect cause and effect and wake up to the consequences of our actions. We then learn to link past, present and future and learn lessons from our experiences so we have some control over our future conduct. By thinking we can take isolated facts and forge them into general rules and arrive at scientific knowledge.

Our *lower thinking* is governed by emotions. Incapable of making subtle distinctions, it limits itself to the most obvious conclusions. It tends to simplify truths by disentangling complex problems. The individual facts can then be studied separately before being put together again. The reduction of a complex problem to a set of simple elements obstructs the discovery of new and original truths. Lower thinking cannot handle paradoxes; something is either true or not true. There is no middle way.

Because our *higher thinking* is free from emotional manipulation, it is much better placed to admit new insights. It is more dynamic and unhindered by any attachment to old patterns. At this level we can play with abstractions and paradoxes. Higher thinking works with ideas instead of individual facts, enabling the higher-

mental to engage with abstract realities. *Lower thinking* can combine facts into something logical and coherent. *Higher thinking*, on the other hand, can combine complex and seemingly incompatible ideas into functional connections and arrive at entirely new insights in the process.

Levels of thought

Our mental body is comprised of four kinds of matter that enable four kinds of thought. The many sub-levels and combinations will be left aside for now.

- 47: 7 Discursive thinking
- 47: 6 Principle thinking
- 47: 5 Perspective thinking
- 47: 4 System thinking

47:7 Discursive thinking; thought starting from the physical reality

A wounded animal will try to bite its keeper when he or she wants to help it. ‘Those who hurt us are dangerous’ – that is the logic of discursive thinking. It is black-and-white thinking, the most elementary level of thought that can only reach the most obvious conclusions. This approach is extremely clear-cut, which is why it appeals to a great many people. It explains the appeal of slogans such as ‘whoever is not with me is against me’ in politics and elsewhere. Discursive thinking is founded on a simple worldview with simplistic, often extremely persuasive truths. It has three distinctive features:

- It is based on absolute antitheses.
- Arguments are often simplified to the point of distortion.
- Definitions are used to the extreme.

Arguing with people who reason at this level is usually pointless because they dismiss any deviation from their logic as ‘illogical’ and are not interested in the finer details.

47:6 Principle thinking; thought starting from the emotional reality

Principle thinking is based on hard and fast principles, on reasoning from cause to effect. It is the foundation of our scientific approach. The drawback is that it is prone to being influenced by fixed ideas and by emotions. We ‘think’ that our beliefs are based on mental considerations governed by neutral and objective facts, but in reality this way of thinking is largely rooted in inner patterns and subconscious desires. Because we have an emotional preference for a certain outcome, we reason from a specific angle, ignoring the many alternatives. This way of thinking responds to a desire, provides satisfaction, power or prestige and prevents us from developing an unconventional opinion that isolates us from others. Conformism is an important motive at this level. Truths have both a rational meaning here and an emotional charge and it is the latter that determines our choices, often unwittingly.

47:5 Perspective thinking; thought starting from the (higher) mental reality

Perspective thinking has freed itself from emotions. It is ‘common sense’, a clear outlook on reality that enables us to view a problem from different perspectives,

without being tied to predetermined viewpoints. At this level of thought we realize that all insights are limited and temporary and will in time be replaced by other views.

Perspective thinking can cope with paradoxes, recognizing that even contradictory views can form a single truth together. At this level we can experiment with our convictions, let go of old views and try out new approaches, only to abandon these again. Whereas principle thinking (47: 6) ranks facts to arrive at conclusions, perspective thinking (47: 5) enables us to play with various concepts.

Principle thinking takes things literally, is rigid and is unable to see the finer points. Perspective thinking, on the other hand, enables us to see everything from different angles, lifting us from a factual to an abstract level as it were. With facts combined into abstract notions, we can reshuffle our ideas. That said, the ideas still originate in the actual reality. Lower thinking references concrete information. 'Man' is a being of flesh and blood, and 'money' is hard cash. In perspective thinking 'man' is more likely to represent mankind than the specific individual and 'money' refers to our monetary system. This abstraction facilitates a different approach to these concepts and a fresh take on the world.

47:4 System thinking; thought starting from the causal reality

System thinking connects us to the abstract, intuitive insights that penetrate our mental consciousness from the causal world. System thinking enables us to translate the energy patterns that we receive as inspiration from the causal reality into insights that we can apply in daily life. Causal inspiration (47: 3) is always consistent with the actual reality, but it does have to be converted into practical concepts. System thinking helps us do this. It translates the information from our soul into everyday reality, so we can examine the truth of these ideas. However, some of the content is lost in translation (from 47: 3 to 47: 4). Ideas lose their inspirational power when they are reduced to facts. Something similar happens when those rational insights are made accessible to a larger audience and modified to suit the lower-mental levels. The inspiration drops from 47: 3 to 47: 4 before sliding further down to 47: 5 and 47: 6. By then the inspiration from the soul will have lost much of its strength and will have become something fairly bland. On the other hand, seen from a lower level of thought, higher truths can kindle our enthusiasm and give us a sense of harmony and beauty. Although not (yet) in a position to comprehend the causal truths, we still experience them as harmonious, because they lift us to a higher level of consciousness.

The disentanglement of thoughts and emotions

Because thinking and feeling are originally linked, long and systematic training is needed to detach the corresponding envelopes. This is why we must ask ourselves, over and over again, whether we are allowing our thinking to be guided by our emotions. In practical terms the entanglement of thoughts and feelings means that emotions are the natural adjunct of our thoughts. Once we are aware of this, we can try to distance ourselves from those emotions, every time they occur. As we gradually disentangle both envelopes our higher thinking gathers strength. Mental development involves the mental body gradually detaching itself from the emotional body. Clear insights are possible only when we manage to free our thinking from our feelings. It is a prerequisite if we want to rid ourselves of all emotional confusion. That is not to say

that our mental consciousness will be able to produce an objective image of reality. Generally speaking, the physical reality can be observed objectively, but reality as a whole encompasses infinitely more than the physical alone and our scientific knowledge covers only a minuscule part of the truth. If we want to find a more complete truth we will have to take our consciousness on to the causal level.

Higher thinking has another major problem. Having freed itself from the emotions, it is cold and detached. When we function on a higher-mental level of consciousness we often strike others as heartless. So when we dedicate ourselves to higher thinking it is extremely important, both for our growth and for our interaction with other people, not to neglect the development of the higher emotions. Both are necessary and are perfectly capable of co-existing. Via these levels we can move on to the next phase of development: soul consciousness.

VII

The causal body and the development of the soul

Soul and group soul

Our causal body (or causal envelope) is made up of causal matter (47: 1-3). It contains all the wisdom we have accumulated in the course of our human incarnations. This envelope and its contents are known as the *soul*, and inside it is our monad.

Throughout our entire human evolution, we acquire new physical, emotional and mental bodies in a great number of successive incarnations. But during all this time we only have one causal envelope in which all the wisdom we amass during those many lives is stored. Initially our causal body is only a thin membrane (47: 3), comparable to a soap bubble, but over time it increases in both size and strength. And as it incorporates ever more subtle material (47: 1,2), its composition changes too. We can read our entire history from our soul. It shows us who we really are.

Instead of an individual soul, animals have a *group soul*. A greater or smaller number of animal monads share a communal envelope made of mental matter. In it, the group's shared life experiences are stored and exchanged. This shared consciousness is the *instinct*. It gives animals access to the group members' experiences while also deriving a sense of safety and solidarity from it.

Our human evolution starts the moment our monad outgrows the animal group soul. The individual causal envelope we now have will form our personal soul. This causal body isolates us from all other people, leaving us to fend for ourselves. This is why individuals in their first human incarnation are often more primitive than some animals. After all, highly evolved animals have group consciousness – their instinct – to fall back on; humans do not. In the early stages of our human-ness our causal body merely consists of an empty membrane, and our first human experiences will only yield a little wisdom. But as the incarnations follow, we start living more consciously, so that our experiences become more meaningful as well. As a result our causal body can fill with more and more wisdom, allowing our soul to grow.



Our personal causal envelope lifts us to the human level, while simultaneously isolating us from others. This turns us into solitary souls forced to solve our own problems and to eventually develop an increasingly ~~powerful~~ self-awareness. In fact, our entire human evolution has a single goal: the development of our independence. For this we need to learn how to stand on our own two feet. Once we have reached the end of our human evolution, after a long journey through a great many lives, and we have become self-aware individuals, we can add all of our individual qualities to a greater whole. This concludes the task of our causal envelope. Its contents, the wisdom accumulated throughout life, is then passed on to an *essential envelope*. This is a new envelope (*level 46*) where our wisdom is combined with that of a number of

others. Together we then form another collective consciousness, not unlike that of the animal group soul. With one major difference: as animals we did not have our own personality, but were identical, much like soldiers in the army. But when, as humans, we are given access to the essential consciousness, our self-awareness becomes fully developed.

The soul's loneliness enabled us to develop into autonomous individuals. Having learned who we are and what we are capable of, we then put these talents at the disposal of the collective essential consciousness. In the essential envelope we add up to much more than the sum of separate monads. We form a collective of individuals who share their qualities while still retaining their individuality. Mystics have actual experience of this level of (mystical) unity. Others can come into contact with it at sublime moments, in nature for example, when they experience feelings of complete oneness with the world around them. Egotism is impossible at this level, because we experience the other as oneself.

The causal world

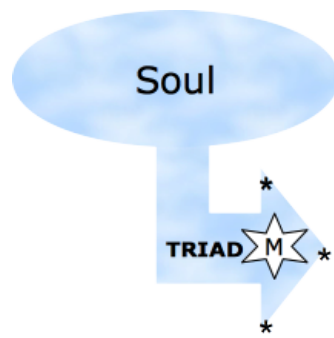
Our causal body is not just the container in which we store our life's wisdom or the isolating cloak that forces us to develop self-awareness, but also our entrance into the causal world, the world of inspiration and intuition. Our causal body enables us to function in that world. During our early human incarnations this is still extremely difficult for us, just as little children find it difficult to function in the physical world. But as our soul gradually develops our contact with the causal reality improves. An older soul is not only wiser, it also has a better connection with the causal world and with the inspiring insights that this world contains. As we approach the end of our human evolution we will be capable of functioning at a causal level on a permanent basis, continually inspired by the causal insights that had always been around us but which we could not perceive very clearly before. These insights will enrich our everyday experiences and reveals a meaningful correlation between chance occurrences. As we begin to live from our soul, we will not only change ourselves, the world around us will become different too. The 'lifeless' world that surrounds us now will become a living reality with which we have an almost organic connection.

Our causal envelope has yet another function: it also forms our connection with the worlds that transcend the soul. It is like an antenna that enables us to establish contact with the energies that exceed the causal.

Like plants in a garden that can only thrive on the light and energy of the sun, we are constantly nourished by cosmic energies that provide us with inspiration, strength and wisdom. Our soul provides the appropriate tuning. The more evolved it is, the better it can receive these energies and distribute them across our various bodies. We are surrounded by this cosmic field at all times, but our development determines the extent to which we can draw on it.

In short, our soul has a number of different functions, most of which only mature in the course of many lives:

- It is an isolating cloak that forces us to develop our individuality;
- It is a container that holds the wisdom we have accumulated throughout life;
- It is the body that enables us to function in the causal world;
- It is the antenna that provides access to the higher worlds;
- It forms our *triad*.



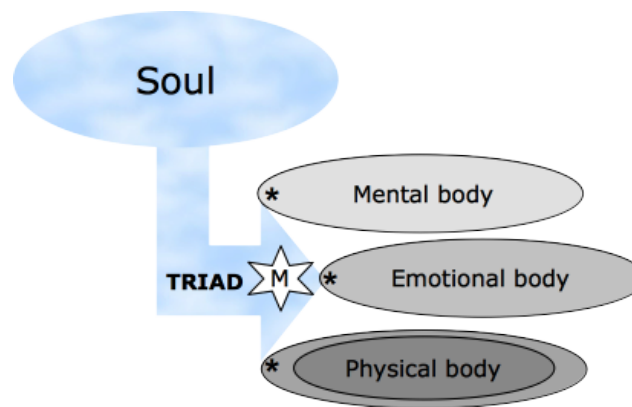
Triad

Our soul has been able to learn over the course of numerous incarnations and as it grows older it grows wiser. But unfortunately we cannot draw on *all* the wisdom that is stored in our causal body, because we are incarnated with only a limited portion of that knowledge. Prior to every incarnation some of the overall capacity of the soul is split off and put at our disposal in the form of the so-called 'triad'. Since this contains on average less than a quarter of our overall soul capacity, we all come into this world more or less disabled. By far the greatest part of our accumulated wisdom is beyond our reach, but this handicap forces us to develop new qualities in this lifetime. A significant share of the wisdom that is now available to us was acquired during our most recent incarnations. This ensures a certain continuity of experience, enabling us to spend a number of consecutive lives applying ourselves to the development of specific talents. Somebody who wants to concentrate on his musical skills, for example, will keep incarnating in circumstances in which these can be activated. This means that he may be born to parents with an interest in music, or meet people who encourage him in that area. Other talents will remain temporarily out of reach. Once that musical development has been completed, he will incarnate without this specific talent. Held back in the larger part of his soul, it will be temporarily unavailable and clear the way for other choices and the activation of new qualities.

As we incarnate with limited powers we are stimulated to try extra hard or to accept certain challenges that we would not otherwise get round to. What's more, because everybody incarnates with only a share of his qualities, it is impossible to estimate the level of another person's soul. Somebody may come across as quite a simple person, but he could have a whole repertory of hidden talents in his causal envelope. Another may appear to be much more fully developed, but could simply have a much greater part of his overall soul capacity at his disposal in this life. In other words, we cannot judge our fellow human beings. Nor can physical or mental deficiencies give us a conclusive answer as to somebody's level of development. Just as the triad's limited soul capacity encourages us to learn certain lessons, so a disability can force us to acquire specific life experiences.

The cores of the triad

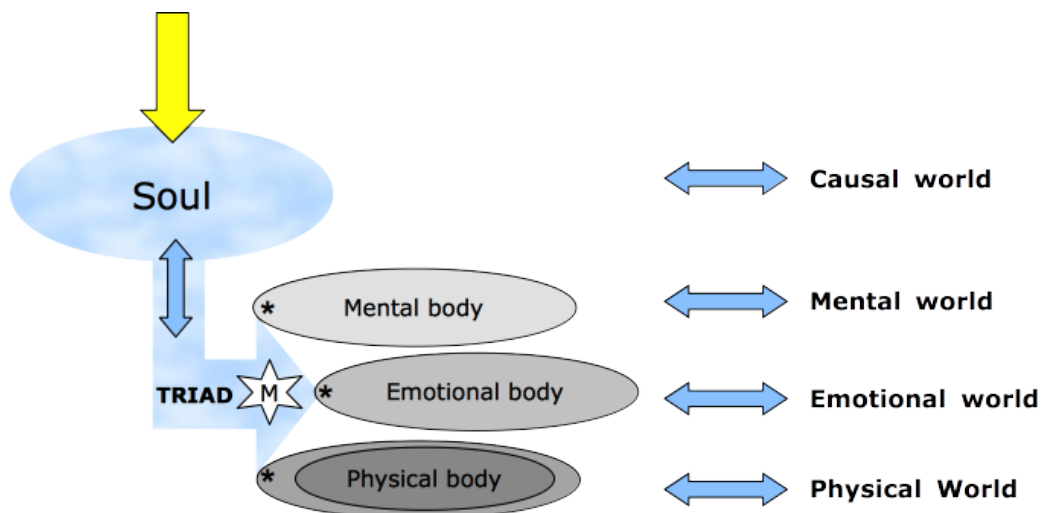
The triad owes its name to the fact that it has *three cores*: an etheric core, an emotional core and a mental core (49: 1, 48: 1 and 47: 4). These cores are responsible for programming and activating the physical, emotional and mental body respectively.



* = *triad core*

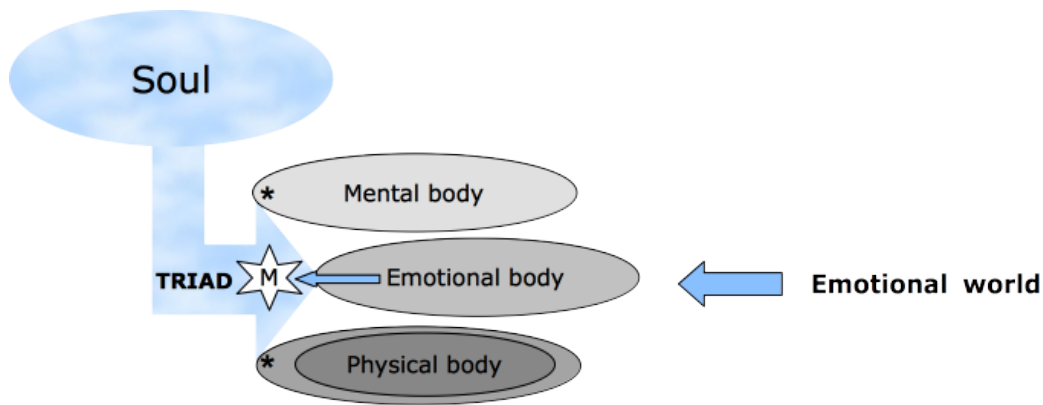
Thanks to these three cores we can be simultaneously aware of both our body and our thoughts and emotions and thus function on and develop these three levels at the same time. Once we have developed our soul consciousness (on triad level), the triad provides us with access to the complete contents of our soul.

The triad is the centre from which our envelopes are controlled. We could compare it to a control centre, a cockpit, from where we can observe the signals from our various bodies and from the worlds in which those bodies function. The monad controls its various bodies from this cockpit, not communicating with them directly but always via the triad's three cores.



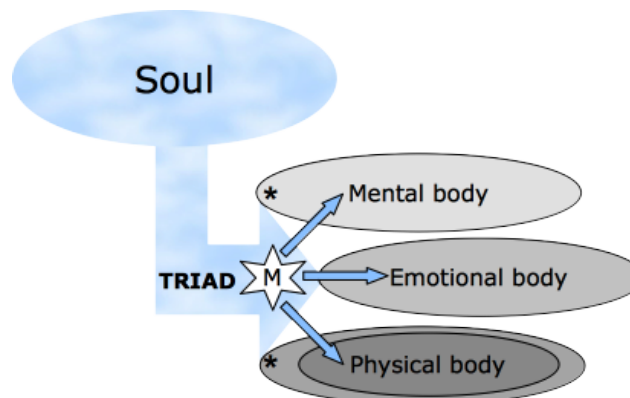
From within the triad, our monad is in contact with the various worlds surrounding it. The energy needed for the proper functioning of this process is supplied by the higher worlds. Through the attention it gives to the different bodies, the monad can measure the energy that flows to each of them. Our attention is the instrument with which, from our cockpit, we control our lives. For example, the monad can be more focused on its emotional envelope than its mental envelope, making us more aware of our emotions than our thoughts and activating our feelings rather than our thinking.

Our bodies provide access to the various worlds. They are subject to the vibrations they receive from those worlds and, via the cores of the triad, pass this information on to the monad. Here, too, our attention determines how much energy – and information – we let through.



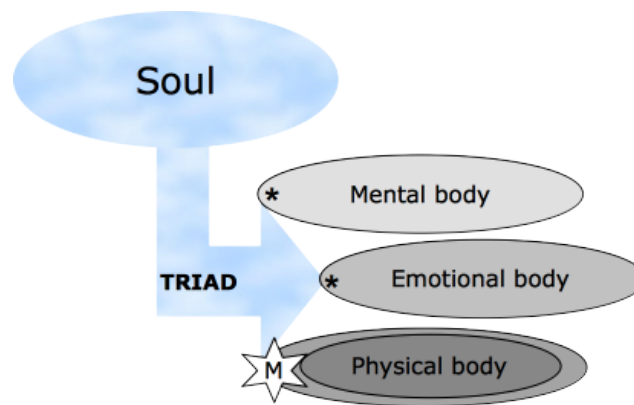
How the monad responds to all those vibrations depends on its level of development. The difference between a little developed and a highly developed monad is the difference between someone who is agitated by everything that happens around him and worries about every little irritation and someone who takes things as they come and handles them in a calm and considered way.

A monad in the early stages of its development will resonate passively with all the signals it receives from its various bodies. At first it is completely subordinate to these vibrations, which are so powerful that the monad cannot possibly avoid them. Only after a long time, when it has grown stronger, can the monad begin to impose its own will on its bodies. It will then be able to consciously control its bodies instead of being controlled by them. At that point we change from someone who keeps being thrown off balance to someone who calmly does whatever is needed, even under the most difficult circumstances.

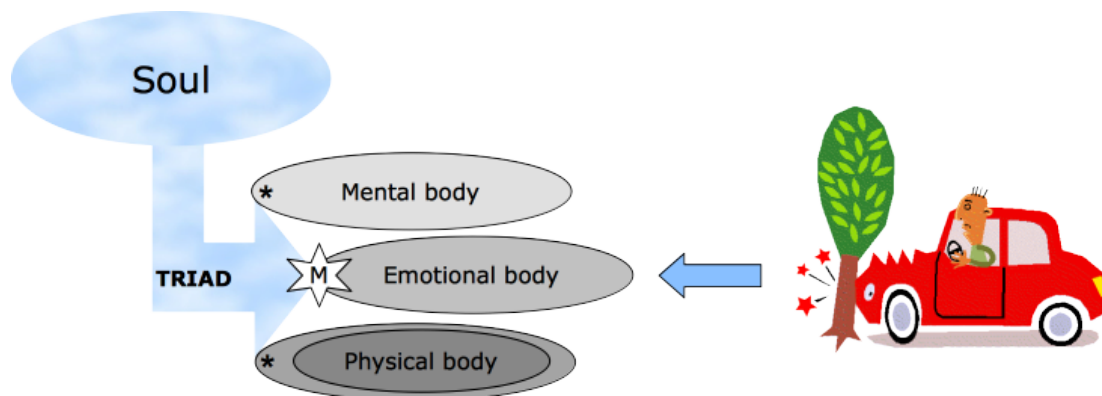


Mindfulness

The triad cores enable the monad to identify with the various bodies. When the monad allies itself to the etheric core, we identify with our physical body; we *are* that body.



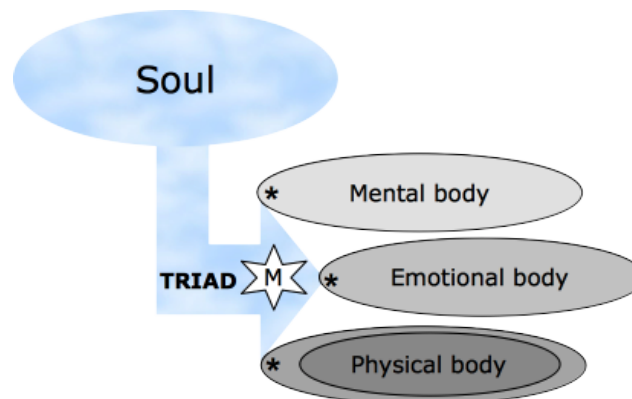
Likewise, when we attach ourselves to the emotional or the mental core we identify with our emotions or our thoughts; we *are* those emotions or thoughts. If, for example, the emotional envelope is ruffled by strong feelings from the world around us, the emotional core will begin to vibrate violently and more or less demand the monad's attention. The monad will then ally itself with the emotional core, prompting identification with those feelings. In other words, we *become* our emotions.



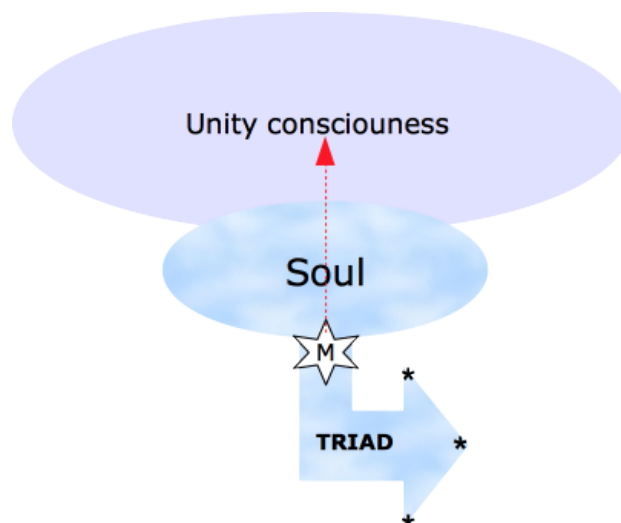
A toddler dropping his ice cream will probably burst into tears when his emotions get the better of him. Something similar occurs when we are involved in, say, an accident. The vibrations of the emotional body and the emotional core will be so powerful as to leave the monad unable to offer resistance. As a result, we will be overwhelmed by our feelings. Once our monad has developed enough mentally to wrest itself from the grip of the emotions, we will be in a better position to handle such situations.

During the ongoing process of identifying with emotions and letting go again, we learn to put our feelings into perspective and control them. In other words, our monad learns to distance itself from its identifications with its bodies and to slowly but surely take charge. In the end, the monad is no longer controlled by its bodies. Instead the bodies are controlled by the monad. We then become the 'witness' who observes what is happening without simply surrendering to events as they happen. As a *witness*, the monad is no longer subject to the turbulent signals of its bodies. Instead it can control its triad cores and make its own decisions, independently of those cores. This *attentive observation*, without getting carried away, is known as *mindfulness*.

The concept has its origins in Buddhism, more specifically in Vipassana meditation, but nowadays it is also known in the West as a therapy that draws on focused attention.



The monad can only be aware with the help of a body. This means that once we are a witness and have let go of our identification with our physical, emotional and mental bodies, we can look at the world from the triad envelope, the 'little' soul.



Identification with our mortal bodies has now made way for identification with our soul. In fact, soul consciousness means that we are no longer at the mercy of our emotional confusion and mental convictions. From within the triad, we can now try to make contact with the complete causal envelope, filled with the accumulated wisdom from all our previous incarnations, and achieve full soul consciousness. From within the soul we can then reach for the next level (the unity consciousness on *level 46*) and make contact with ever higher energies. But all this is only possible if we manage to subject the three cores of the triad to our own will.

An important condition for the attainment of soul consciousness is the cultivation of a certain indifference towards our physical and emotional discomforts and our disruptive thoughts. Once attained, our monad can react calmly to all the stimuli it receives from the physical, emotional and mental levels. We could call this 'divine equanimity': the stoical acceptance of everything that life has in store for us. This

does not mean that we should suppress our feelings, deny our traumas, run away from our problems and ignore the suffering in the world. On the contrary, we must do everything that is necessary (and in our power), but in a relaxed way, without wasting attention on greater or smaller irritations, but always trying to remain placid in both triumph and adversity. If we succeed in doing so, we have well and truly let go of our identifications with our temporary envelopes.

When things are going our way and we are feeling good, it is easy to focus on our soul and open up to higher values. But this is much harder in the face of adversity. We can only really say that we have established lasting contact with our soul when, despite failure and the pull of our temporary bodies, we carry on functioning at the level of the soul. This will be achieved not by indulging in sublime emotions but by struggling with pain and adversity and by accepting all that life has to offer. Once we are able to do this with a certain degree of equanimity we have become a true 'witness'.

Throughout a considerable part of our life, the physical reality represents our truth. It is something we take for granted. Gradually, however, we also learn to trust our causal intuition, the information we receive from the causal world. When we do, our identification shifts from the physical world, and its corresponding thoughts and feelings, to the triad and, from there, to the soul. At that point we are no longer our (physical) body with everything that that entails, but become our soul instead. We no longer live first and foremost in the material reality, but in the causal reality. We are no longer a body with a soul, but a soul that has a body at its disposal.

In summary, we can say that mindfulness involves the following:

- We recognize our physical needs as vibrations of our physical body.
- We recognize our emotions as vibrations of our emotional body.
- We recognize our thoughts as vibrations of our mental body.
- By distinguishing between our 'self' and our bodies, we can free ourselves from the tyranny of those bodies.
- We are always aware of our motivations. Why do we make certain choices and at what level do we make them?
- When we are unhappy we identify with our (lower) emotional body and we think about ourselves.
- By directing our consciousness to the level of the soul and living on that level, we develop the ability to be happy and spread joy all around us, independently of our actual situation.

Mental and causal consciousness

There is a huge difference between *mental* and *causal* consciousness. *Mental* consciousness (47: 4-7) tries to piece together a picture of reality with the help of disparate facts. It is a bottom-up process, in which a vision is constructed brick by brick as it were. All known facts are gathered and combined into a cohesive whole.

Causal consciousness (47: 1-3) operates in an entirely different way. Causal insight sees and knows, without the need for thought. It is a top-down process. The picture of reality is revealed to us, in its entirety or in greater or smaller chunks, depending on our ability to connect with this level. We do not require thought (47:

4-7) for our causal insight, only for its practical interpretation. The insight we receive from the causal level is always more or less complete and leaves an overwhelming and convincing impression. We can then apply, verify and realize those insights through thinking. Causal and mental consciousness can be compared to an architect and carpenter. The architect supplies the ideas, abstractions, which are then worked out and realized by the carpenter and take shape in the physical reality.

How do we know for certain that the insight we think is inspired by the soul corresponds even remotely to the truth? Causal insights are revealed spontaneously, naturally, and in such a way that all the facts seem to simply fall into place. But our thinking will have to confirm the truth of the ideas that present themselves to us, and this is often problematic. The causal transcends thinking. Our thinking cannot fully grasp the causal. Yet where the causal insight overlaps with physical reality, both must be in accordance with one another. That is our verification.

That said, most of the information we receive ‘intuitively’ does not originate in our soul, our ‘superconscious’, but in our ‘subconscious’. We carry quite a few old patterns from our past and from previous lives with us, including old expectations and convictions, and these too can surface in our waking consciousness as ‘ideas’. And as they represent our ‘old’ truths they can be quite persuasive. They are emotionally charged and feel right because we used to identify with them, but that does not necessarily mean they are true; as a rule, they are not. That is why it is important that we always cast a critical eye over all of our ideas and intuitive insights. The images from our subconscious are always tied up with our past and with the person we were at an earlier stage of our development, and therefore often represent a more primitive part of ourselves. The emotional truths these images represent tend to reflect personal convictions based on unassimilated lower emotions. This is why many of these ‘intuitive’ insights provoke a sense of anger or irritation when they are not acknowledged by others.

True information from the soul is fundamentally different. It is of a higher order. The inspiration we receive from the causal level transcends our current self and provides us with insights we have never had before. Not only do they correspond with factual truths (insofar as these can be verified), they are also characterized by a sense of perspective and humour. These insights explain both known facts and make us aware of their interconnections and wider context. Since they cannot be easily verified, we have to accept this causal information as a *working hypothesis*, before we get the chance to investigate in real life whether those ideas do indeed represent our truth and correspond to our experiences.

Causal insights must meet another important criterion. They represent not only the *truth* (which can be verified up to a point), they also imbue us with a sense of *beauty* and *harmony* and are characterized by *goodness* (i.e. they cannot harm anyone). ‘Does this teaching have a heart?’ is one of the questions asked within Buddhism to assess whether a claim is true. The truth of the soul makes our hearts rejoice. Causal consciousness represents joy and beauty and, vice versa, joy and beauty will activate our causal consciousness. The truth of the soul is not solemn or strict or pious. Unfamiliar with fanaticism, it shows empathy with others and is brimming with compassion and a profound wisdom.

Because our physical body and our emotional and mental envelopes are mortal, their truths are always coloured by a fear of disease and death. Mortal bodies

are finite, and when we identify with them we inevitably worry about our own survival. The same does not apply to the soul. The soul is immortal, at least in human terms, and can afford to be carefree and happy. As the soul knows no fear, it shows us an entirely different truth than our thoughts or emotions.

Mental and causal truths

The physical world is the most important point of reference in our life. Offering us firm ground to stand on, literally, it provides a benchmark for maintaining our inner stability. Since it is independent of our personal opinion it can serve as an objective frame of reference against which we can test our beliefs. This is in stark contrast to the emotional and mental worlds, which arise out of our own desires and convictions, so that the 'truths' we find there are rooted in ourselves. Since we created these worlds with our thoughts and feelings, everything we experience in them is based on illusions. And while the subjective truths we find there may comfort or amuse us, they cannot provide any insight into the reason for our existence. The development of our consciousness requires us to search for objective truths and for this we must concentrate on objective data, such as those found in the physical world.

As we become more familiar with the causal reality, we can discern a new objective reality in it. Like the physical world, the causal world exists independently of ourselves. It is not made up of our own ideas, but created at much higher levels of consciousness (beyond the causal) and based on truths that far surpass our own. Because the energies on this level are much more powerful than those at our own disposal, it is impossible for us to exert any influence over that world. This is why the causal reality represents a constant and sublime truth to us. It shows us, despite our frequent doubts on a rational level, that life is meaningful and that all of our experiences have a purpose. Representing another level of reality, causal truths appear at first sight to be incompatible with our mental truths. Our search for a resolution to the resulting inner conflicts enables us to grow.

In the physical world a single glance is all it takes to survey an entire landscape. Upon seeing the houses and trees, roads and car parks, we instantly grasp the connections between them.

Something similar can be said for causal insights. We can see an enormous chunk of reality at a single glance. The overall picture we are given leaves us without any doubt as to why things are the way they are. We experience and understand reality without having a rational explanation at the ready. And although our causal field of vision is still restricted at first, the correlations between individual angles are already entirely clear and obvious to us. In moments of clear insight, such as those during near-death and other mystical experiences, we are capable of suddenly, and almost involuntarily, making contact with a greater truth. When that happens all details fall into place and all questions are answered.

The truth we experience through our thinking is composed of disparate elements that we have painstakingly combined. We are not in a position to judge whether the conclusions we draw from this are correct, because we do not know whether the facts we have amassed are complete. The truth of our thinking is akin to groping in the dark, which sees us trying to order our data in such a way as to create a plausible whole. Causal ideas are fundamentally different. They show us a coherent

overall picture in an instant. Thoughts are made up of mental matter. They are diffuse and much less detailed because they are so mobile. They come and go. We struggle to rein them in and they keep getting away from us. We can compare them to children running around a playground. Causal insights, on the other hand, are stable, as if hewn from rock, because they originate in much higher levels of reality. They extend to worlds that are far beyond human reach and represent an immutable, immensely cogent truth.

Causal crisis

We may be unaware of it, but we are always surrounded by causal energies. Our insight in the causal world does not depend on the availability of the right information but on our ability to receive that information and interpret it correctly. Higher energies are constantly flowing down through our envelopes, their qualities changing in the process. In this way, causal ideas change into mental insights and then into emotional feelings, and with each of these transitions some of their wisdom is lost. With each rung down the ladder, the causal energy loses a dimension as it were and becomes a shadow of its former self. We can picture this as a three-dimensional image that is reduced to a two-dimensional image as it drops to a lower level of consciousness. With each step down, the image is simplified further. In a similar vein, causal energies lose much of their strength as they cross to lower levels of reality. We see this happening in religions, for example. The originally sublime causal (and higher) ideas that ought to inspire us to connect with higher levels of consciousness are translated by its followers to a rational and emotional level. In the process, inspiring insights are reduced to rigid dogmas and rituals tied to strict rules.

Conversely, to somebody functioning on an average mental level a sudden confrontation with a causal (or essential) insight will be an overwhelming and unforgettable experience. Mystics speak of *satori* or *samadhi*, and people who have been through this have difficulty putting it into words. There simply are no rational terms to describe causal insights. Those who have had them are often so certain of their significance that they are prepared to turn their lives around. Causal ideas represent a new reality that is both more harmonious than our mundane reality and in many ways at odds with our lifelong convictions. They cause confusion in us and in the people we share our lives with, because we cannot defend our new viewpoints rationally. That is why we have such difficulties integrating them into our everyday lives. Causal insights tell us that life is meaningful, that all of our experiences have a purpose and that we must have faith in everything that happens to us. A level-headed thinker will not simply accept that.

On a mental level we were used to a life full of confusing and chance occurrences and, in order to find some support, we sought salvation in the safety of firm convictions and material possessions. After all, these represent the only kind of security we know. A sudden causal insight can reveal that all of our truths were false and that we have spent a lifetime chasing illusions. This can be quite confrontational and can cause a long-lasting crisis, not least because the people around us continue to pursue such goals. Letting go of our old convictions calls for a radical inner change, and this may burden us with major problems. At stake here are not just our personal convictions, but also our relationships with family members, friends and colleagues and our traditional and cultural values, all of which come under great pressure.

Besides this, our subconscious contains a lot of old patterns that we have amassed in the course of many incarnations and form part of our personality. If we wish to distance ourselves from all of this, a great inner crisis is bound to follow. No wonder that the acceptance of causal truths turns out to be so difficult in practice.

The *consciousness aspect* of our causal inspiration will confuse us if we fail to integrate the insights into our daily lives in a harmonious way. And as if that is not enough, these insights can also cause energy-related problems. Causal consciousness is coupled with a powerful energy, and if we cannot come to grips with this *energy aspect*, perhaps because we are already feeling a bit unsettled, internal chaos may follow. The resulting physical, emotional and mental confusion can cause severe symptoms, ranging from insomnia and headaches to depression and psychoses. Contact with higher energies can be both immensely stimulating and dangerous. While causal inspiration and mystical experiences can provide us with new insights, they can also wreak havoc if we do not handle them appropriately. Should we find ourselves in such a situation we would do well to start by restoring and strengthening our contact with the physical world. We can do this with the help of grounding exercises (bioenergetics), massage, swimming and gardening. In short, by focusing on the earth and our physical body.

VIII

Matter, consciousness and energy

Consciousness development

According to Laurency, the entire universe is made up of an unimaginably large number of primordial atoms that are originally all alike. They are much smaller than the atoms known in physics. These primordial atoms form the building blocks for everything in existence, from the minutest subatomic particles, to the largest galaxies. Since all of these primordial atoms have three different aspects – *matter*, *consciousness* and *energy* – everything in existence shares these three properties.

As the universe evolves, the consciousness aspect will come to the fore, at the expense of the material aspect. A similar transition takes place in our personal consciousness development, as we shift our attention from material issues to consciousness experiences.

In each of the 49 successive worlds that constitute reality, matter, consciousness and energy are expressed in entirely different ways. On the lower levels we really only experience matter, as do stones and plants for example. Consciousness and energy are barely noticed there. But on the emotional and mental levels, and particularly on the level of the soul, consciousness becomes increasingly important, as we can see in animals and humans. And higher up, on the ‘divine’ levels, the energy aspect becomes even more prominent.

Without clear-cut boundaries between them, the successive worlds run into one another, and because everything consists of vibrations, the vibration patterns of the various worlds resonate more or less in unison. This means that on any one level we can have some experience of what the higher levels are like. ‘Growth’ involves trying to acquaint ourselves with those higher frequencies and to activate them inside ourselves. As we become more familiar with the higher levels of consciousness and with the energies there, our attention to matter will steadily decrease.

Growth

All worlds are different and on each level we experience ourselves and our surroundings in a different way. In our day-to-day lives we tend to see ourselves as more or less isolated individuals. But once we have learnt to focus on the higher levels of consciousness, we will discover that, as mankind, we are one and that we are all part of one universal consciousness. All *consciousness* is interconnected and the same is true for *energy* and *matter*. The entire universe consists of a complex configuration of these three qualities, and the higher the level on which we function, the more we will experience the universe as a living entity. The reverse is also true. The lower our level of consciousness, the more isolated we feel, and the more the world around us appears to consist of dead matter.

At the moment we still experience ourselves as separate individuals, as leaves on a tree, fighting other leaves for light and water. In order to survive as a leaf, we try to appropriate as much sunlight for ourselves as possible. Seeing all the other leaves as rivals, we would like to prune away all the branches and leaves around us. However, once we manage to increase our consciousness, we discover that we are not only that

one leaf, but also the branch it is attached to, as well as the other leaves on that branch. Ultimately we come to realize that we are in fact the entire tree. As a tree we then discover that, rather than enemies, all those leaves are part of ourselves. But that is not all. As our consciousness increases further, we realize that we are not only that one tree, but also all the other trees, the entire forest and finally the entire world. In due course, our consciousness extends even further to include the entire cosmos. We are all part of a universal consciousness, universal energy and universal matter. How much we can identify with that depends solely on our development. On each level we experience ourselves in an entirely different way: as a leaf, as a tree or as the universe. And on each level our self-image and our perspective on the world change. This is how we grow.

Body, soul and spirit

Sometimes you experience something, a stone for example, as purely matter, sometimes as just consciousness, like a thought, and sometimes as pure energy, like light or warmth. Which of these three aspects is the most prominent depends not only on the object but also on its observer. When we find ourselves on a low level of consciousness, we tend to focus almost exclusively on material issues, judging others primarily on their material qualities and their outward appearance. Once we start functioning on a higher level of consciousness, we begin to see the other more like a consciousness. Matter still exists for us, but we pay less and less attention to it. The same is true for our material possessions. Once we start applying ourselves to consciousness development our attention gradually shifts from the material aspect of our existence to its consciousness aspect.

As our development progresses, our attention will shift even further, first from matter to consciousness, and then from consciousness to energy or willpower. In Laurency's vision the body represents the material aspect, the soul the consciousness aspect and the spirit the energy or will aspect. The same division into body, soul and holy spirit can be found in the Christian tradition.

* *On levels 49:7 to 47:4* (physical, emotional and mental) the material aspect dominates. Here we *are* our body, coupled to our thoughts and emotions.

* *On levels 47:3 to 45:4* (causal and essential) the consciousness aspect is most important. Here we *are* our soul as it were.

* *On levels 45:3 to 43:4* the energy aspect is dominant. Here we *are* spirit, but what exactly that entails is something we cannot even begin to imagine.

As long as we find ourselves on the lower levels of development, we identify with our physical body and its needs. Living and functioning in a material world, our whole life is aimed at maintaining our organism. The development of consciousness involves gradually identifying more with the consciousness aspect and with the immaterial sides of our existence. While matter is not rejected altogether, it becomes less significant to us over time.

Matter

The house we live in is made of wood, brick and other building materials, yet this is something we tend to forget when we talk about our home. We prefer to talk about its

atmosphere and about the comfort we derive from it; in short, about the way we experience the house. The material aspect, however, is a necessary condition for everything else. People live in a material reality, but given that the purpose of our life is the development of consciousness it is important to realize that matter serves our consciousness. Throughout our personal evolution we are encouraged to subordinate our focus on material things to our consciousness.

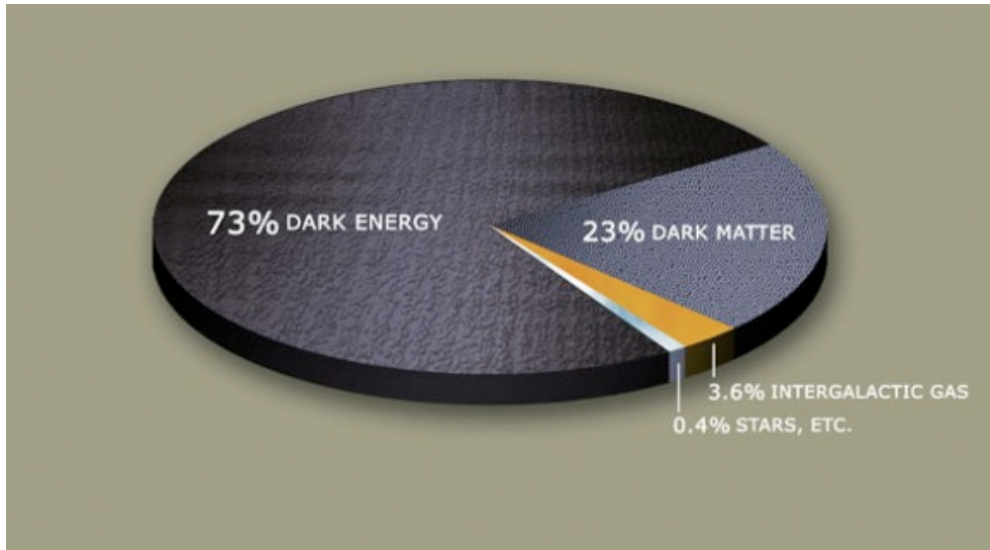
Our physical body is home to our monad and enables the monad to gather experiences and grow. But it is not just our body that is 'inhabited'. So too are all natural material structures: from stones, plants, animals and people to entire galaxies. Each of these structures contains numerous primordial atoms at various stages of development and each is controlled by its most highly developed monad, not unlike the way we control our bodies. All of these progressively complex structures enable the primordial atoms to develop, and because these constructions are all impermanent, each atom can in due course move into new accommodation and gain new experiences. Every time an old form is destroyed, its resident monads have the chance to free themselves and settle into a new form. Desperately clinging to old forms and material possessions inhibits the development of our consciousness because it keeps us – longer than is strictly necessary – imprisoned in an unchanging structure.

Throughout our entire (human) evolution we are, as monads, enveloped by bodies that receive vibrations from our surroundings and pass them on to us so we can learn from them. In our successive incarnations, the composition of those bodies will gradually alter to meet our changing learning needs. During this process lower emotional material will be replaced by (somewhat) higher emotional material, lower mental material will be replaced by (somewhat) higher mental material, while ultimately the composition of our causal body too will become increasingly refined. In this way our monad learns to function on increasingly high levels. This development would be impossible without material aids. Matter is the ladder that can lead us to higher levels of consciousness. The ladder itself is of little interest; it is just a means to an end. Our ladder must be maintained properly, but we should not forget that the thing itself is relatively insignificant. The ladder is important for what it puts within our reach.

Dark matter

(Some observations by the authors)

Physical matter, as we know it from *level 49: 5-7*, comprises only an extremely modest percentage of all matter. Laurency indicates that all levels, from *49* to *1*, are made up of matter, even though nearly all that matter is invisible to us and unknown to science. But there are good reasons to accept this idea as a working hypothesis. Gravity measurements have suggested that the cosmos must contain a lot more matter than physical matter as we know it. The matter familiar to us can account for only 4% of the universe's gravity, so there ought to be a further 96% of other matter that we cannot perceive. In cosmology this is referred to as *dark matter*. It seems fair to say that the invisible 'dark matter' of astronomers bears a great resemblance to Laurency's invisible 'higher' matter.



1

Individual and collective consciousness

The entire universe is one great, all-encompassing consciousness of which we are all a part. At the same time every monad is a unique individual with its own consciousness and character. So while we are firstly ‘ourselves’, we are also part of a greater whole, such as the family we were born into and the country we live in. And in addition we are part of humanity at large. Consciousness is always simultaneously *individual* and *collective*. We can compare this to a diamond with different facets. Each facet is unique and individually identifiable yet all of them are inextricably linked to the diamond as a whole. Without the diamond there would be no facets and without facets no diamond. Likewise we are not isolated individuals but elements of a much larger, collective whole.

Collective consciousness comes in many different guises. Where two or more monads meet they automatically interact and form a (more or less close-knit) collective consciousness. Taken together everybody forms part of the collective consciousness of humanity, but every relationship also forms its own collective. Every nuclear or extended family, company or organisation forms a communal consciousness which will develop its own character based on the participating individuals. More than an idea, this is also a material connection that binds all members. If you are born in a particular country, part of your causal envelope is coupled to the group soul of that country. A nation’s soul is made up of the individual souls of its population. This is a real, material connection. It allows all people to identify with their native country and derive strength and inspiration from it. Being part of the political, cultural and social patterns of their country can help people construct their own identity, albeit at a price. All individuals are also held jointly responsible for any mistakes on the collective level. The same is true for the nuclear and extended families we are in. Family consciousness supports members in the development of their personal qualities, but the downside is that they must also accept some of the communal karmic debt.

Clan

¹ Image Wikimedia Commons

During our lifetime we are part of a nuclear and extended family, but that connection is not lost after death. Both in life and death we are linked to a particular set of individuals. So we are not some lonely souls, wandering aimlessly through the universe and incarnating in a random body somewhere. No, we are part of a substantial family, a clan of connected monads, travelling together through space and time. In a distant past we, and other groups with us, passed from the animal kingdom to the human mode of existence and in the course of numerous lives we support one another on that journey, whether we realize it or not. The individual members of such a clan meet regularly in successive incarnations and in various capacities. Family members, partners, friends and acquaintances are often clan members who, in changing relationships, support one another's development. Those we are closest to in this life are probably clan members we have known for many lives. They are also the people we understand best or feel a natural affinity with. The relationships we enter into with them are characterized by an immense sympathy for one another's qualities and flaws. We experience a wholly natural intimacy with them. Love at first sight is nothing other than the memory of old ties we have cherished life upon life. The members of our clan not only accompany us during our earthly existence, they take care of us after death as well, accompanying us in the emotional and mental worlds and renewing our acquaintance when we are reborn.

However, it seems that some people must go without the company of clan members. These solitary souls appear to be incapable of entering into meaningful relationships and feel lost among the crowd. This may be to do with the special task they have taken upon themselves in this incarnation. The development of our human consciousness is aimed primarily at cultivating an independent self-awareness. Having the support of our clan can give us confidence, in the way that little children rely on their parents' support to grow into confident adults. But too much support from others can hamper the development of our self-awareness, so perhaps the people who feel lonely have decided to work on their independence. A life in relative seclusion can help them do this. By embracing this fate and making the most of it under the given circumstances, they can prove their autonomy and once again enjoy the familiar company of the members of their group in a subsequent incarnation.

The clan members we incarnate with are more than just the kind people who support us. The hardest lessons in life are also worked out within the clan. Outsiders often leave us fairly indifferent, but we are bound to have quite a few unresolved issues with those who have shared so many of our previous lives. Intimate relationships give us love and support, but they can also degenerate into a bitter struggle. When the parties involved meet again in a next life, those passions are likely to flare up at some point, until the crux of the problem is finally tackled and solved. Many of our current difficulties, especially relational conflicts, are a continuation of comparable problems in previous lives. We can learn most from these challenges.

Collective consciousness

Towards the end of our personal evolution, once we have become self-aware and independent individuals who can easily hold their own in a wide range of circumstances, we prepare to function within a collective consciousness. Although we have always been part of a group consciousness, we do not become aware of it until

the end of our human journey when we learn to actually handle it. At first we experience this collectivity through empathy for others and their situation. We feel an intuitive connection with them and understand their motivations. Once we are capable of functioning on this level of solidarity, we are ready to form a collective consciousness with a number of other individuals. This does not happen at our own initiative. It is initiated by a mentor on consciousness level 45. Guiding us during this process of growth, this mentor brings together some individuals we can have a close-knit bond with. This bond is strengthened during a number of consecutive incarnations until a communal consciousness emerges. The members of this group are people we are comfortable with and with whom we can share our ideals. We can be ourselves with them and feel a profound sense of acceptance.

At some point during this process of increasing connectedness, the souls of the individual group members will be linked together, giving rise to a new, collective envelope, a group soul. Under the guidance of their mentor, the members will spend a number of incarnations drawing on this group soul and enter into an ever more close-knit bond with one another. During this process the contents of the individual causal envelopes (47: 1-3) will be gradually transferred to the group soul on *level 46*, making the achievements of the individual members available to the group as a whole. Each group member can then draw on all of the other members' qualities as if it were his own consciousness. In fact it is, since the individual consciousness has passed into collective ownership and all personal thoughts and emotions are now available to each group member, making it possible to share knowledge and experiences. From this moment on, the members no longer experience themselves as separate individuals who are part of a collective: they *are* that collective. Each member functions within that union, while still retaining his or her own individuality. You could compare it to a family. Parents tend to consider what is best for the family without feeling in any way hard done by themselves. They live and act like a family without losing their individuality. This process is taken a step further in the collective consciousness where all consciousness experiences are shared among members. Having *become* the other, the duality between oneself and the other disappears. The formation of this collective marks the awakening of the consciousness on *level 46*, the essential consciousness. Our final preparations ahead of moving on to that level require a number of incarnations during which members form increasingly close-knit bonds. This can take the form of friendships that feel entirely natural, inevitable even, and require no special effort. Marriages and other intimate relationships are also good preparations for the collective consciousness. They allow us to practice opening up completely to the other. The collective's main task, however, is not strengthening the mutual bond, but working on the joint objectives on behalf of mankind, which in turn strengthens the collective even more. Only by helping others (who are not part of our collective) can we further our own development.

We find this level of consciousness among mystics, who may experience feelings of mystical union while meditating. These experiences of loving connectedness are possible because the highest levels of emotion (48: 1, 2) resonate with the lowest level of unity consciousness (46: 7). Yet the mystic is not yet capable of functioning on this level on a permanent basis. This requires the development of higher thinking and soul consciousness (47: 1-5), a process during which the necessary wisdom for expressing the feelings of unity is amassed. Since both love and

wisdom are needed to gain access to essential consciousness, we need to finish our emotional and mental development first.

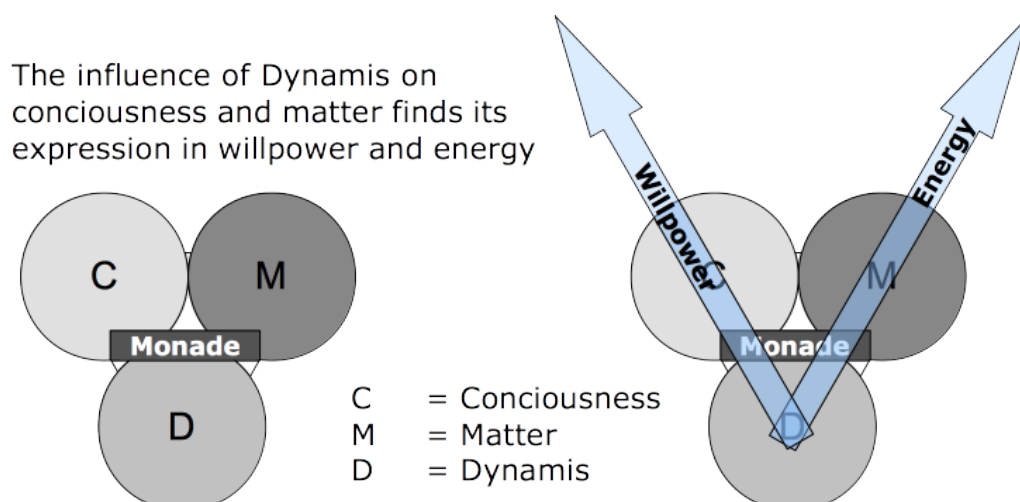
Dynamis

Laurency uses the term *dynamis*, meaning ‘force’, to refer to the basic energy of the universe. Just as consciousness and matter assume a different shape on each level, so too is dynamis experienced differently on each level. And just as all consciousness and all matter are one, there is just the one energy. Or put differently: there is only one all-encompassing will. The *Divine Will*, if you like: the infinite power that drives evolution. Nuclear energy, magnetism and gravity are all forms of this energy, just as our own desires and our personal will. Every change and every movement in the universe takes place under the influence of this energy. And yet dynamis in itself is ‘blind’. It has no purpose, no direction. It takes consciousness to control dynamis. The higher the world in which dynamis functions, the greater its strength and the more consciousness is needed to successfully manage it.

Everything in the universe has three aspects: matter, consciousness and energy (dynamis). This third aspect operates through the first two.

- When dynamis expresses itself *through matter*, we experience it as *energy*, such as the warmth of the sun, gravity or our own vitality.
- When dynamis expresses itself *through consciousness*, we experience it as *willpower* or desire.

Because both matter and consciousness take a different shape in each of the 49 worlds we always experience dynamis differently. In the higher worlds, the consciousness aspect becomes more and more important compared to the material aspect, with dynamis increasingly manifesting itself as willpower.



- On a physical level the force of dynamis results in vitality.
- On an emotional level it is the strength of our desire.
- On a mental level it provides us with the motivation to express our ideas.

- On a causal level we experience dynamis as the pursuit of self-realization.
- On an essential level it comes in the form of selfless and universal love. Love is now no longer an emotional desire, but willpower.

Knowledge, insight and wisdom

Everything we do and experience has material, consciousness and energy aspects. So too has our inner development. Whenever we want to learn something, we begin by collecting factual information – the material basis for our development. We would be lost without that foundation. The meaningful combination of our data gives insight, and the practical application of these insights yields wisdom. The concepts *knowledge*, *insight* and *wisdom* can be interpreted as, respectively, the material, consciousness and energy aspects of our inner growth.

Knowledge is everywhere. Entire libraries are filled with it. A teacher can give us all the knowledge we need, but that does not give us wisdom. Wisdom will be ours only if we take all that knowledge, combine it into *insights* and then apply those in day-to-day reality. We acquire *wisdom* by putting our life experiences and our insights into practice and accepting that we make a great many mistakes in the process.

IX

The need for transcendence

Divine will

Dynamis keeps the entire universe moving and provides it with energy. It is the radiation of the sun and the stars as well as the energy that passes through all 49 consecutive layers of reality, from top to bottom and back again. This 'Divine Will' drives the universe and brings it to consciousness. Mental insights, emotional desires and physical vitality are the respective forms of this energy (from top to bottom) as we know them from experience. This all-pervasive force originates at *level 1* from where it penetrates all subsequent worlds, becoming diluted and reduced until it finally ends up at our levels 47, 48 and 49. By this point it contains only a fraction of its original potency, which is a good thing because we would not be able to handle more.

The energy that descends on us from the higher levels trickles down through the successive layers of consciousness as it were, going through causal, mental and emotional bodies before reaching our physical body. As this energy 'descends' it is tempered and made more manageable for us, but that also means that the information it contains is reduced. The causal insights at the level of the soul transform into mental theories, which in turn are reduced to emotional experiences until only physical vitality remains. This happens to everything we receive from the higher dimensions. It gradually loses strength and meaning. It is no wonder then that the meaning of life often escapes us. It is important for us to intercept the information that flows towards us at the highest possible level. The higher our level of consciousness, the more information is released to us, and with each step up a new dimension is added to our insight. The resulting transcendence of our consciousness enables our limited truths to grow into clear insights.

It is possible to make unexpected contact with levels of consciousness that are normally out of reach. Through intensive meditation, the use of certain drugs that break down natural barriers in our brain, or without any apparent reason, we can suddenly come into contact with these higher dimensions and acquire insights that transcend our more mundane views. A whole new world appears to reveal itself to us, one that enables us to experience our life in a different way. We have been brought into contact, perhaps accidentally, with energies that contain a lot more information than we are used to and that are also far more powerful. This enables us to experience a moment of enlightenment, a revelation we will cherish our whole life and that will inspire us until we die. But it can also have serious repercussions. While the consciousness aspect of that experience can provide us with a great new insight, its energy aspect can be so powerful as to hit us like a stroke of lightning and unsettle us both physically and psychologically. The result is a spiritual crisis that makes us feel as though the whole fuse box has blown. So perhaps it is a good thing that these energies tend not to be readily available to us.

Consciousness development not only involves augmenting our consciousness, but above all increasing our ability to handle ever more powerful energies.

Plenty of people have had mystical experiences in their life. These bring us into contact with a higher level of consciousness and new insights, making us realize just how limited our current knowledge really is. On each level of consciousness we are fed by energies that flow to us from the higher regions. This 'rain of blessings' is always falling down on us, so there is no need to constantly ask God for help or inspiration. The energies that are always around us offer vitality and inspiration and it is up to us to make the best possible use of them. By taking up the challenges we encounter on every level, we can grow, because finding a solution to our problems forces us to stand on tiptoes as it were. This then enables us to make contact with the next level of consciousness and move beyond our current situation. In other words, we transcend to a higher level. Sometimes, when the obstacles on our path are fairly minor, we can choose whether we want to work on them either now or later. At other times the tasks present themselves to us with such urgency that we have no choice. If we are born with a disability, have an accident or become seriously ill, or if we lose our job or suddenly end up in a new and challenging situation, there is little we can do but meet the task head-on.

To solve a problem we must always move up a step on our consciousness ladder. When we are angry with someone there is no solution on that particular level. Anger or frustration is not resolved with more anger or more frustration, only with a level-headed, rational approach or with a loving take on things. Depending on the challenge facing us, we need to move up to a higher-emotional, mental or causal level of consciousness for solutions. This is how our problems force us to grow. Doing nothing and resting are important from time to time, necessary even, but only by tackling the obstacles that life puts in our way can we rise above ourselves. And this is not just about developing new levels of consciousness, but also about increasing the strength we need for doing so. Viewed from an energy perspective, our problems could be described as blocked energies that need to be released.

Flow

The universe distributes energies from the higher worlds to the lower ones, thereby stimulating development on all those different levels and giving each one the thing it needs. Each world is a link between a higher and a lower level and the energy vitalizing each world must be passed on to the levels of reality below. The universe is designed in such a way that we always receive the help we need, but in order to admit it we must let the energy flow. This is not just about *receiving* energy, but even more about *passing* it *on*. The resulting flow will nourish us. Everything we call ours was once given to us, whether it is our talents or material possessions, the education we had or the wisdom and insights we amassed in the course of our lives. But everything we possess is only on loan to us. We are meant to pass it on to others. If we refuse, we not only deprive others, but we also hamper our own growth. Our development demands that we ally ourselves more and more with others and thus evolve towards unity consciousness. In practice this means sharing everything we have. By being prepared to serve, by helping others without thinking of ourselves first, we can keep the flow of energy going and automatically receive what we need ourselves. If, on the other hand, we are afraid of going without and dare not give anything away, we block the flow and deny ourselves our nourishment and inspiration. This has consequences for both our present life and subsequent incarnations. If we use what the universe

gives us in the right way and pass it on, we will activate the flow and receive more in future. But if we misuse and hold on to what we possess, we block the flow of cosmic energy.

There is another good reason to keep the flow going. Causal inspiration, mental insights and emotional experiences all consist of structures charged with energy. If we obstruct the flow and block the energy, it may look for another, less natural way out. This can result in damage on a mental, emotional, etheric and organic level. Blocked mental ideas can cause frustrations and emotional energies can build into traumas. Bottled-up energies harm us and in fact many physical ailments originate in our inability to go with the flow of things. By not giving expression to our inner patterns we become blocked and cut ourselves off from the nourishing flow. We all have a duty to maintain the warm gulf stream that moves through the universe – as individuals and as mankind in general. We must pass on the gifts we receive. The care we lavish on our fellow human beings, on animals, plants and on the earth as a whole is also the measure of everything we grant ourselves.

We are always surrounded by seas of energy. By focusing on those, we open up to the wisdom that comes our way. Thoughts that are in tune with higher vibrations have a harmonising effect on us. Negative thoughts, which are not in harmony with the universal truth, confuse us. It is our task to keep making contact with the higher levels and thus achieve a better balance. While lower energies are chaotic and destructive, higher energies are experienced as positive, constructive, wise, loving and vitalizing. We can welcome these qualities in ourselves by passing them on to others.

X

The laws of life

The laws of nature and the laws of life

The universe is an ordered system that obeys certain laws. Laws such as the laws of gravity and magnetism are universal and inescapable. They are unavoidable. Laws of nature keep the planets in their orbit around the sun and electrons in their path around the atomic nucleus. If these laws were rendered inoperative, the universe would be reduced to chaos in an instant. They are impersonal and apply to everything and everyone, from the smallest grain of sand to the highest deity. These universal laws dictate what is and is not possible. They set limits while at the same time pointing towards new possibilities. Knowledge of the laws of nature is essential for the development of a complex society, enabling us to build houses and bridges, airplanes and computers. The laws of nature apply both to the things around us and to ourselves. Since they control the material aspect of reality, all objects in the universe, including our own bodies, are subject to them. We notice this when we trip, for example, and experience the law of gravity at first hand.

Since the forces of the cosmos manifest themselves in both matter and in consciousness, we can identify two types of law.

- *Laws of nature* govern the way the forces of the universe act on *matter*.
- *Laws of life* govern the way the forces of the universe act on *consciousness*.

Knowledge of the *laws of nature* provides us with insights into physical reality. The correct application of these laws enables us to guide and focus our material development. Knowledge of the *laws of life* gives us the opportunity to control the development of our consciousness. This is a question of insight into the meaning of our experiences, so that we understand that life is not a random succession of accidental events but a process with a purpose over which we can exert some influence. The seven main laws of life are:

1. The law of personal freedom
2. The law of unity
3. The law of development
4. The law of self-realization
5. The law of destiny
6. The law of karma
7. The law of activation

We are part of an evolutionary process that encompasses the entire universe. The successive formation of minerals, plants, animals and humans does not bring this development to an end. In fact, we are only at the beginning of a long journey that leads to a further awakening. By working on our personal talents in this and subsequent incarnations, we can contribute to the growth and development of the entire universe. If we behave in accordance with the laws of life that regulate this process, we can accelerate our consciousness growth. But if our lives conflict with

those laws, growth will slow. Everything we do and do not do, as well as every thought and every emotion represents energy and this can either boost or hamper the development of our own consciousness and that of others. Everything has an effect, no matter how subtle. Negative behaviour will get in the way of both our own and other peoples' growth, while loving and stimulating behaviour will help us increase our consciousness. The laws of life facilitate this process, and the better we understand this the easier our lives will be.

1. The law of personal freedom

Free is the one who can determine his own actions, emotions and thoughts. We cannot be free as long as we are dominated by the vibrations of our envelopes. As long as the will of our envelopes is more powerful than our own, we are neither free nor do we have free will. We are supposed to develop into free and independent individuals with enough wisdom to take our own decisions.

Freedom is also a paradox. It assumes that we can act as we see fit. But in order to be genuinely free we must also know our limitations. The *law of personal freedom* guarantees each and every one of us that we can think, do and say as we please, but that nobody should violate another person's freedom. No god can stop us from going down our own path, but at some point (in this life or a subsequent one) we will have to account for our behaviour, since we will always be responsible for our actions. These are the limits of our free will. We acquire genuine freedom when we realize that the universe has rules that everybody has to abide by. Freedom is acquired through knowledge. If we use our freedom in the right way and integrate the laws of life into our day-to-day lives, we begin to live in increasing harmony with the universe and our freedom will grow. If, on the other hand, we abuse our free will, the resulting friction with the flow of the universe will – in the long run – have consequences.

Unaware of our hidden motives, many of us only think we are free. We have the freedom to distinguish ourselves from others, but we must realize that both conformism and compulsive resistance to conventions may be expressions of a lack of freedom. Our behaviour is largely determined by what we once learned and experienced. Our thoughts follow old beliefs from our childhood, or perhaps express our resistance to them. To a significant extent our emotions are shaped by acquired needs and we are programmed by political propaganda, social conditioning and religious dogmas. Even when we genuinely believe that we are free, there may be evidence of indoctrination by emotional and mental influences from our subconscious as a result of earlier experiences in this life or previous incarnations. The law of personal freedom stipulates that we should try to extricate ourselves from all of these influences. Not only do we have the right to be free, we also have the *duty* to acquire increasing inner freedom, so we can become independent individuals who steer their own course.

Freedom has a downside too. Unable to hide behind norms, conventions, authorities or coincidences, we are accountable for the choices we make and responsible for our own lives. That is why we must know the consequences of the various options we have. Freedom without wisdom is dangerous and could lead to self-destruction. The liberty to do what we want also presents a challenge. The way we handle it is the measure for our wisdom.

Because the law of personal freedom guarantees everybody's freedom, all unjustified meddling in other people's private lives is taboo. Imposing our own ideas on others is a violation of the first law of life. Religious dogmas with strict regulations and sanctions contravene this law, as does the claiming of absolute truths that hamper other people's freedom to choose. Power wielded without wisdom and love is dangerous and history abounds with leaders who have violated the laws of personal freedom.

If we wield only a modest amount of influence over our surroundings, we cannot do a great deal of damage. But as we acquire more personal power our responsibility will increase. This is why political and social functions call for extra wisdom. The freedom of action that such a position involves must be deployed with a great sense of responsibility, or the consequences for all those affected will be disastrous.

The law of personal freedom guarantees the unique and independent way in which we can shape our lives. We are not only *allowed* to make our own choices, in fact we *have to*. Asking for divine counsel and inspiration is certainly worth a try, but it will not yield ready answers, just as a mother will not give her child the answers to the sums it has to do in school. If she did, she would stop the child learning and growing. Likewise, God will not rob us of the lessons we need, because only freedom of choice allows us to make mistakes and experience the consequences of our actions. We are free to jump off the roof, but the law of gravity will confront us with a painful landing. We are also free to wrong others, but sooner or later the account will have to be settled. The law of personal freedom allows us to live our lives as we see fit, but in doing so, we must accept the consequences of all the laws of life and nature. The more familiar we are with them, the more we can take them into account and the easier our lives will be. Our reward is progressively more freedom. The boundaries that we come up against in the exploration of our freedom are the lessons that help us become wiser people.

2. The law of unity

The second law of life, the *law of unity*, indicates that there is essentially only one consciousness that encompasses everything and everyone. According to this law we will become increasingly aware of this unity at each higher level and integrate it into our lives. Right now we may feel like a particle adrift in the cosmos somewhere, and, in order to become 'whole', we must seek to connect with others. By helping them we help ourselves, because we are all part of the larger whole. However, by selfishly pursuing personal advantage without giving a thought to other people's well-being, we isolate ourselves and cut ourselves off from the help we so badly need.

As human beings we are connected to one another and the entire universe, although we generally barely notice. But at our most sublime moments, when the boundaries around us seem to suddenly fall away and we feel a connection with the whole of creation, or at least part of it, we will recognize that sense of unity. When this happens, perhaps when we are overwhelmed by the grandeur of nature, experience the beauty of music or find ourselves in a loving personal relationship, we will experience a sense of harmony that enables us to let go of our 'little' self. At those mystical moments we feel, to a greater or lesser extent, at one with everything. The resulting bliss is independent of our material circumstances because we are subsumed by something greater than ourselves. Consciousness development means

growing towards unity, and, one way or another, all of our actions have some bearing on the achievement of that goal. Each and every selfish action separates us, removes us from others and hampers our growth. Helping others not only connects us with one another, it also supports our own development. But while our behaviour towards others is important, what matters even more is our intention. This determines whether or not we are working on wholeness. Even when we are confused, at a loss what to do, we can still live in accordance with the law of unity if that is our genuine desire.

We can only grow up with the help of others. As children we were helpless and dependent, but later in life we still need support. We benefit from the achievements of others, including education and health care, agriculture and industry, housing and roads. In turn we must make our own contribution to society, because one way or another everything we receive must be passed on. Unfortunately we not only share in the good things that society has to offer, but we are also partly responsible for all the ills, such as the unfair distribution of wealth, political injustice, abuses of power, the exploitation of people and animals and the wastage of natural resources. The law of unity holds us partly responsible for these ills, even when we are not personally involved or prefer to close our eyes to them. Needless to say, not everybody can always be held equally responsible for other people's actions. Children, for example, are less accountable than adults, while figures of authority bear more responsibility than the average citizen. The more knowledge and influence we have, the more responsibility we bear and the time will come, in this or a subsequent life, when we must account for our actions.

The laws of life are independent of penal law, and of social conventions and social customs. Even while carefully observing the laws and regulations of the country we live in, we can violate the laws of life, for example when we favour ourselves at the expense of others. If we wrong others, we cut ourselves off from them and violate the laws of life even though we are not actually breaking any social rules.

Tradition has it that Buddha once said that his task would not be complete until even the last blade of grass had become enlightened. This reflects the essence of the second law of life, i.e. that we do not live for ourselves alone. We must also take care of our fellow human beings because ultimately we are connected to others. We *are* the other.

Those who selfishly pursue their own interests act contrary to the law of unity. There is nothing against taking good care of yourself and standing up for your rights, but you must not lose sight of other people's interests. Everybody who helps his fellow human beings acts in accordance with this law and there is no better way of working on your own development than focusing on the well-being of another. The more we strive for unity, the more we further our own growth. The more we share, the more we ourselves receive what we need for our own awakening. Isolating ourselves from others and pursuing personal enlightenment in solitude is therefore not a good option, which is not to say that we cannot withdraw to work on specific qualities in a particular incarnation or stage of life.

As human beings we feel isolated, and in order to survive we think mostly of ourselves at first. Our lower emotions prompt us to take good care of ourselves, at the expense of others if need be. But through on-going awakening we will gradually

develop more altruistic feelings and inevitably make more of an effort to help others. A similar development can be seen in our society. Not all that long ago slavery was widely accepted. In this day and age, however, most of us cannot even conceive of such a thing. Nowadays much of our food is factory-farmed and most people think it is perfectly normal to misuse animals in this way. Yet the tide of public opinion is slowly turning in this area. Respect is growing for all living creatures. Organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières and Amnesty International are helping us to transcend the self-seeking stage of our society's development. We are thus slowly but surely moving towards a greater awareness of unity.

3. The law of development

The third law of life, the *law of development*, brings everything and everyone, slowly but inexorably, to ever increasing consciousness. Just as gravity forces all water to flow down the mountain to the sea, so too does the law of development force everything in the universe to grow. Everything is subject to this driving force. We all know the ultimate purpose. In due course each of us will develop an all-encompassing cosmic unity consciousness. The route there is largely determined by ourselves and depends on our personal efforts. There is no time limit for reaching this goal.

We learn through personal experience. Our life is a course, and each situation in life a lesson. Throughout life we face a multitude of problems – the lessons that enable us to learn and grow. As with any other course it is up to us to do our homework or not. After all, we have free will. We can work hard or do the bare minimum, but – unlike school – we cannot leave this course, which stretches across many incarnations, without a diploma. The lessons that life throws at us will continue to haunt us until we have successfully completed all of our tasks. The meaning of life lies not in having as great a time as possible but in developing our consciousness and if we can do that in an enjoyable way then so much the better.

Some of us may have chosen a set of easy subjects, setting us up for a relatively comfortable life. Others have a much harder life in which they are confronted, time and time again, with all sorts of problems. Not surprisingly, their harvest of new qualities will be much greater. The various situations that life has in store for us offer us the chance to learn what we need at that particular point in time. We are given exactly those tasks we need for growth. Our current circumstances derive from all of our past actions, and the talents we possess now are the result of lessons we once learned. Our future circumstances arise out of our present-day approach to life. With every thought, every emotion, every word and every deed representing a flow of energy, we weave our own future. In other words, as makers of our own fate we are responsible for the circumstances in which we find ourselves now and in the future. The law of development is like a wide river that underpins the consciousness growth of the entire universe. When our behaviour follows the river's flow, our life will run relatively smoothly. But if we travel upstream, we will encounter ever more resistance until we get to the stage where our life is blocked.

The law of development manifests itself on various levels:

- On the *cosmic level* as the evolution from unconscious matter to universal consciousness.

- On the *planetary level* as the development of all life on earth, from the first primitive microorganisms via plants and animals to human beings and on to even higher forms of life.
- On the *social level* as the development starting with more or less primitive tribes that are driven primarily by lower emotions and selfish motives and moving towards a rational society where altruism and compassion can thrive.
- This development is most clearly visible to us on a *personal level*. Our physical and emotional development takes precedence, before we move on to our thinking. And, finally, we rely on the inspiration we receive from the soul.

All the qualities we acquire are primarily of benefit to ourselves, both in this life and in subsequent incarnations. However, every effort we make and all the lessons we learn also benefit the people around us and the earth as a whole. As such, the way we live our lives is certainly not without obligations; since we are here to contribute to the development of the universe, we are fully responsible for everything we do.

4. The law of self-realization

At some point in the future, each one of us will attain an all-encompassing cosmic consciousness. But how long that journey takes and which route we follow depends on the choices we make. We work on the development of our consciousness by learning lessons; this is the reason for our incarnation. Ultimately our entire earthly existence has only one single goal: not the acquisition of money, power or status, but the accumulation of experiences that enable our monad, our ‘self’, to learn and enrich itself. The *law of self-realization* guarantees us that we will eventually realize our full potential.

Our ultimate goal is known, but we can only achieve it by making an effort. Passivity equals stagnation, which is why the universe keeps placing us in situations that force us into action. Our most basic challenge is our personal survival. The need for food, water and shelter alone makes us learn quite a few lessons. In the course of numerous lives we evolve towards ever higher and more nuanced levels of consciousness. On each of those levels we will experience our own ‘truth’ and growth involves abandoning old truths and long-cherished convictions. What we hold to be ‘true’ tend to be the emotional desires and mental convictions that we picked up in the past and such ossified viewpoints are bound to hamper our further development most. Growth is possible only if we keep mustering the courage to let go of the old. The greatest of our illusions is the identification with our organism. Thinking we *are* our body and no more than that, we initially focus primarily on the needs of this body. By the end of our human evolution, once we have let go of the identification with our temporary bodies, we will finally manage to connect with our soul. We will then settle on the causal level from where ever higher worlds become available to us until, at last, we can identify with the universe as a whole. Having realized our potential, we *are* the universe.

Mystical experiences teach us that as we increase our consciousness we will feel increasing unity with the world around us. Egotism separates us from that unity, altruism connects us. Growth therefore requires that we let go of our identification with our physical bodies and individual desires and ally ourselves with others. We can only grow if we contribute to the development of our fellow man. The insights we

acquire in the process are necessary for our own development, but we would never have received them if we had only worked on ourselves. Concern for our own development is therefore unnecessary. It is a guaranteed by-product of caring about the fate of others. At the same time we must not take life too seriously. The long journey ahead of us is an adventure and we can only find our way by embarking on the challenge. Wisdom will follow if we are pro-active, curious and not afraid to make mistakes. Reproaching ourselves for our failings is utterly pointless. We must not be too hard on ourselves or others. Shortcomings are part and parcel of life and we all struggle with the lessons we have to learn. What matters is a positive intention that must not degenerate into fanaticism. With such a positive attitude life becomes a game we play, instead of a tragedy that befalls us.

5. The law of destiny

Whereas the fourth law, the law of self-realization, propels everybody towards our shared ultimate goal, the fifth law, the *law of destiny*, is much more individual and aimed at our personal needs. This law ensures that each of us is exposed to forces that support our personal development. It means that we keep ending up in situations in which we can learn exactly what we need at that moment.

In the early stages of our human development, when we are incarnating for the first time and are still entirely unfamiliar with the world of human experience, all of our lessons are new and fairly random. This is our first introduction to human existence. Having acquired a basic knowledge after a number of incarnations, we start developing personal preferences and our individual character will begin to form. This is when the law of destiny enters our lives. Thanks to this law we come into contact with specific life experiences that are of significance to our personal development. We are not only influenced by forces and situations that enable us to grow, we are also given the chance to find our own unique expression. Whether or not we achieve our goal depends on three factors:

- The driving force of evolution
- Our free will
- Our karmic potential

At first sight our life experiences appear to be little more than chance events. But on closer inspection our path turns out to be marked by tasks of which the precise meaning only reveals itself in the context of several incarnations. Our current circumstances are certainly no accident. They are part of an ingenious network of experiences that spans many lives, but which we cannot even begin to imagine right now. Looking at our lives, we usually only see a small section of the path we have travelled, and our limited field of vision makes it difficult for us to attach any kind of meaning to it. The same is true for the road ahead. It is as though we are wandering in the mist. But it would be wrong to assume that our path leads nowhere and that our world ends where our visibility ends. On the contrary. The place we are now at is part of an infinite landscape in which our life experiences point the way. Since we have free will, we are free to choose our own way, but the surrounding landscape almost forces us in a particular direction. Our future is like the bed of a dry river that leads us almost inevitably to our destiny, provided we do not act too much out of character. Still, quite a few obstacles can surface, giving us the chance to develop specific

qualities. The law of personal freedom allows us to stray from our path and ignore our tasks, but if we do so, we will be confronted with even greater obstacles that will ultimately force us in a particular direction. Nobody can make us do anything, but in the course of many incarnations the law of destiny will put more and more pressure on us, thereby forcing us to learn our lessons.

Whether or not we are successful in assimilating our tasks in life is not easy to ascertain. This cannot be measured on the basis of our material position or other people's impression of us. A troubled life that does not appear to be very successful at first sight may well be the perfect preparation for a subsequent incarnation with major responsibilities. Instead of reaping the rewards of what we do now, they are postponed until a later life. Fame, status and the acquisition of wealth are no evidence of success as there is no way of determining the exact tasks during this incarnation. Besides, outward and inward success are two entirely different things. Successful lives, measured in consciousness development, tend not to stand out much in the external world. Most progress is made by people who complete their life's tasks under the radar as it were. Those who help others in the process have the best grasp of what matters in life.

6. The law of karma

Karma is the balance of all of our good and bad deeds from the past that now face us in this life. Positive circumstances, such as loving parents, a good education and the fact that we live in a civilized country can be interpreted as the reaping of good karma. Negative circumstances, such as ailing health, difficult relationships, accidents and adversity are seen by many as the consequences of negative actions in the past. However, this simplistic interpretation of the concept of 'karma' is wide off the mark. The laws of karma are so complex that we must not apply general rules to individual situations. It is wrong to assume that somebody who is struggling in life only has his own mistakes to blame. Problematic situations can just as easily be a special challenge, a test or a sacrifice that somebody makes to help others. Alternatively, somebody may have opted – in one of his final incarnations – to settle all of his remaining karmic debt at once. The story of Job in the Bible could be an example of this. We lack the insight to pass judgement on the situation that we or others are in. Besides, all unjustified meddling in somebody else's private life is a violation of the law of personal freedom. The law of karma can only be described in general terms. We cannot explain individual situations. However, it is good to realize that everything we do has consequences and it would be wise to take this into account.

Karma is not only the result of our own actions. Because of the law of unity, we are connected to our family, the community we live in and our country of residence. Sharing in both the achievements and the burdens, we bear joint responsibility for the mistakes we make as a family or a country and we must all carry our share of this collective karma.

Everything flows, the universe is always moving and the same is true for consciousness, which keeps developing. All of these movements are subject to strict rules and immutable laws. What the law of cause and effect is to dead matter, the law of karma is to life. Everything we do, say, think and feel has an energy aspect that we transmit to the worlds around us. That is why, one way or another, all of our individual actions have an influence on the processes taking place in the universe. You

could say that, throughout life, we all leave traces of energies that either support or thwart the development of the universe, and each one of us is responsible for his or her contribution to the whole. The law of karma represents the balance of positive and negative energies we have built up in the course of all previous incarnations and thereby expresses the absolute justice of the universe. According to this law both the negative and the positive energies will come back to us at some point. Positive karma may find expression in favourable circumstances or chance occurrences that take our life in a positive direction. We experience negative karma when somehow life does not go our way or we fail to realize our ideals. Blaming others for our troubles does not help. It is up to us to restore the balance we upset in the past. Our negative karma is certainly not an implacable fate that keeps us in its relentless grip. We can rectify our past mistakes in various ways. For example, by being loving and positive towards everybody who crosses our path we can settle much of our karmic debt, without actually having to undergo any negative experiences.

It is far too simplistic to see positive karma as a reward and negative karma as a punishment. Mistakes are shortcomings in our wisdom, not sins that must be punished. If we make mistakes we clearly still have things to learn and the law of karma creates the necessary lessons for us. Karma is not a punishment or revenge; it is our teacher! In the face of adversity we may feel like victims of a tragic set of circumstances, but our potential for growth lies in accepting responsibility for everything life throws at us. Working on the assumption that every single situation offers potential lessons, we can make the most of all of our life experiences. No longer the passive victims of an unpredictable fate, we can take control of our lives. Unable to blame others for our problems, we have to search our own conscience and come up with solutions of our own. In fact, that is the purpose of evolution: the acceptance of more and more responsibility for everything that happens to us. This is how we take charge and meet one of the most important conditions of our human development, the formation of an autonomous self-awareness.

Life is an exercise, so it is inevitable that we make mistakes. Mistakes are not ‘sins’ but indispensable experiences. If we are afraid of making mistakes, we cannot learn. The result is stagnation. Passivity for fear of doing something wrong is perhaps the greatest mistake there is. It means that we allow the opportunities offered by this incarnation to pass. It is important for us to accept life as a challenge, explore new routes, be prepared to make mistakes and take a positive approach to all setbacks. While doing so, it is good to remember that all problems are only temporary, whereas all the benefits we reap are eternal. Everything we learn becomes our inalienable property, bringing us a step closer to our ultimate goal.

Are we, when we prosper, any ‘better’ than someone who is plagued by adversity? Certainly not, because we can never judge the personal situation of others. A difficult situation is always first and foremost a chance to learn and grow. We would do better, therefore, to describe our problems in terms of ‘challenges’, ‘exercises’ or ‘opportunities’. Giving us a chance to develop, they are extremely valuable to us. From the limited field of vision of a lower level of consciousness, problems are simply tricky obstacles that we want to get rid of as quickly as possible. But seen from a higher level of consciousness, the very same difficulties can look quite

different. The higher the level from which we look at ourselves, the more likely we are to view a problem as a chance to learn something and the less liable we are to blame others for it. Pointless though they may seem, by handling our difficulties in a constructive way and refusing to be discouraged, we can learn something and prove that we are ready to shoulder more important tasks. In this way life creates specific situations for each of us that foster our growth. Every problem has different aspects. Viewed from a practical perspective, problems are all about learning specific skills. On the level of the soul, however, these situations give us the chance to develop more abstract qualities, such as trust, for example, or patience, perseverance, courage, self-sacrifice and, if we manage to take life as it comes, perhaps also a certain degree of 'divine equanimity'.

On a low-emotional level problems will readily provoke anger, rage, resentment or sadness. On a higher-emotional level we view them as an opportunity to prove ourselves, and perhaps experience a sense of satisfaction. On a low-mental level there will be confusion, prompting us to look around for help. On a higher-mental level we will try to remain level-headed and find a solution. Finally, on a causal level, we are capable of placing our difficulties in a much broader context whereby the problem as such becomes less important than the exercise it offers us. Trying to avoid the difficulties is not an option, because we will only face comparable tasks time and time again until we have learnt their lessons. Only then will the problem cease to exist. Difficulties are much more than the practical obstacles they seem to be on the surface. They are our lessons, but we can also regard them as a test, an exam, that enables us to show where we are in our development. In the process we learn to place both ourselves and our circumstances into perspective. Life is like a day. Some days we work hard, other days we rest. Likewise, all of us have both easy and difficult lives. The latter are preparatory exercises, and as a rule we do not reap the rewards until a subsequent incarnation. Just as a difficult degree course paves the way for a career, a difficult life can prepare us for an unprecedented cosmic challenge.

The burden we feel on our shoulders is often not the same as the one we actually carry, because we have a tendency to needlessly blow up our problems. Self-pity can make every problem seem unbearable. But by taking things as they come we can lighten our load. As long as we identify with our body and with lower emotions such as fear, pain, worries and sorrow, we are, as human beings, vulnerable to distress. By deliberately tuning into the higher emotions such as love, compassion, beauty, harmony, trust and gratitude we are in a better position to cope with life's setbacks. Once we can accept all situations without judgement and without negativity, in the confidence that they have meaning, we become practically invulnerable. From that point on, we refuse to be confounded, just as we refuse to let bad weather, be it rain or snow, upset us. By steadily performing the tasks in front of us we can eventually distance ourselves from our difficulties and leave the lower levels of reality for what they are. This is what karma is really about.

7. The law of activation

The *law of activation* tells us that everything we direct our attention to is magnified. By focusing on fear, we activate fear. By focusing on joy, we activate joy. If we concentrate on material success we will bring it closer, and if we apply ourselves to reinforcing the contact with our higher consciousness then this too will be activated.

Many people are completely unfocused, their minds drifting, which leaves them with a sense of aimlessness and confusion. We can only be masters of our own lives if we manage to direct our attention, although that does not guarantee that we will actually realize the goals we aspire to. This depends in part on the merits and demerits we have accumulated in previous lives (our karma). Nonetheless, with the help of the law of activation we can exert some influence over our goal in life. By focusing on our goal with enthusiasm, we bring it closer until – either in this or a subsequent life – we can realize it. The law of activation gives us a chance to shape our existence.

Many people take a passive approach to life or concentrate on trivialities, fun and games. There is nothing wrong with that per se. *Relaxation* is useful and necessary, but *effort* determines the speed with which we develop. In that respect life mirrors school. We achieve better results by working harder.

According to the law of activation every thought, every emotion and every desire takes shape on the more subtle levels of our reality and eventually this will make itself felt in our day-to-day reality. The more focused and intense our attention is, the more concrete the results in the material world will be. The laws of life enable us to determine the form and substance of our lives, or at least have some influence over it.

We like to claim responsibility for our successes, but the flipside of this is that we cannot blame anyone for the things that go wrong. After all, they too are the result of our consciousness activities or of karmic debts from the past. This is a simple approach to a complex reality that we cannot really assess. It is virtually impossible for us to determine how a certain situation in our life came about. We generally do not even know whether to interpret an event as positive or negative, or whether we should be happy about it or not. Our blessings often come in disguise, so we do not recognize them as such. Children, for example, may have to work hard in school, when they would rather play. To them their time in school will be more of a burden than a joy, whereas we as adults have an entirely different take on that. In other words, we often cannot see the true meaning of the situations that we and others are in.

Our current circumstances are the outcome of those things we focused our attention on in the past and in previous incarnations. Unfortunately we tend to be barely conscious of that attention and that is why we are largely unaware of everything we create. Thoughts and emotions flutter aimlessly about, thus forming a reality that is equally aimless. On the one hand this inner confusion originates in a poor inner discipline, on the other in complexes and convictions that we have unconsciously taken over from our parents and educators. At the same time we are constantly swamped by thoughts and emotions from our immediate surroundings. Unbeknown to us, political convictions, scientific ideas, religious dogmas and advertisements fill our consciousness. So it is no wonder that our internal patterns are so incoherent and that we recreate this chaos in the world around us. If we really want to structure our life we will have to organize the contents of our consciousness first.

Our traumas, fears and depressions are patterns of energy that have somehow become lodged in our emotional and mental bodies. From there they influence our consciousness and scatter our attention, thus shaping our future in a chaotic way. If we want to take charge and set out the course for our lives, we need to remove these patterns from our system. This target cannot be achieved by actively battling our unwanted thoughts and emotions, but by ignoring them. If we battle, then we give

them attention and feed them with energy. Chances are that we achieve the opposite of what we want. But if we ignore them they will, for want of energy, eventually die out. We must be wary of suppression, however. If we try to let go of traumas and other deep-rooted experiences before we have come to terms with them, they will remain an active presence in our subconscious where they can cause serious psychological harm. We can only let go of these kinds of experiences once we have had the courage to face up to them. Traumas are not resolved through denial, we have to work through them and for that expert help may be needed.

Once we have distanced ourselves from our negative or destructive ideas, we can start activating new thoughts and positive convictions in ourselves. For this we can draw on the help of affirmations. These are positive thought patterns that we repeat on a regular basis to fill our consciousness with constructive ideas. In due course they will be absorbed by our subconscious and, from there, influence our lives.

For example, in an effort to structure our reality, we could spend ten minutes every morning contemplating an ideal, a goal that inspires us, which we also wholeheartedly aspire to. By linking our thinking and feeling in this way, we vitalize our thoughts through the power of our emotions. When we visualize the target, the energy pattern in our subconscious will continue to influence our reality for a large part of the day, enabling us to bring almost every goal closer. Our success in shaping our desires depends largely on whether or not they are in agreement or in conflict with our goal in life. In the latter case, we need infinitely more energy and effort to realize our desires. Finally, it goes without saying that we also need to take practical action to realize our ideal, because on earth the energy must be converted into matter.

We are not powerless; we are not the passive victims of an unknown fate. The laws of life guarantee us that we have control over our fate and that we are in charge of our own life. If we make a habit of orientating ourselves on the higher levels of our consciousness and become more skilled at applying the laws of life, we will almost automatically manage to connect to the flow of life. We will then find that we receive support from chance occurrences and from unexpected corners. As we tune into the laws of life our lives will become easier and we will discover that, despite all the setbacks, we are always given the chance to grow.

Our position in relation to the laws of life

The laws of nature and the laws of life describe the forces at work in the universe. These laws are universally applicable, with even the highest divinity obeying them, and nobody can adapt them or render them inoperative. They guarantee that the universe is reliable and just.

We tend to experience the laws of *unity*, *development*, *destiny* and *karma* as restrictions on our freedom, because they push us in a certain direction. They determine the broad lines of our development, which means that we are fairly limited as far as influencing the course of our current life goes. These four laws of life force us to grow and yet the fundamental choices we made in a distant past are unknown to us. That explains why we often feel as if we are at the mercy of an unpredictable force that shapes our life and curtails our freedom. It is as if, once upon a time, a long time ago, we bought a train ticket to some distant place and now we are on that train,

traveling to our final destination. Unable to remember or change that destination we will have to simply endure this aspect of our life.

But the other laws of life grant us freedom. Operating on a more individual level, they enable us to make our own decisions. These are the laws of *freedom*, *self-realization* and *activation*. These three grant us freedom of action and autonomy, so we can, up to a point, influence the effect of the other laws.

XI

Augoeides, the Guardian Angel

Coaching

We often feel as though we are at the mercy of the vagaries of fate, confronted with unexpected, random situations. Sometimes these are positive surprises, but more often than not we come up against failure, disappointment and other more or less serious problems. And yet we are part of an ordered structure, even if that order is not visible to us. Many of our experiences appear to be sprung upon us because their origins are hidden behind the horizon of our existence. But when we raise our consciousness we begin to realize that everything in life has a cause and that life unfolds in accordance with universal laws. We are not at the mercy of blind chance. Our lives are shaped by rules and the better we know them and apply them, the better we can influence everything that happens to us. Throughout this process we receive careful guidance. We are not lonely travellers wandering aimlessly through the universe. We all have a guardian angel who keeps a loving watch over us. This mental coach assists in our consciousness growth, advising us, bestowing inspiration and fulfilling the task of our soul when our own causal body is not yet up to the task. He monitors our progress and always knows what we need for growth. He arranges the chance occurrences that enable us to develop as well as the unexpected encounters that can transform our lives. He has selected the body in which we have been incarnated and he orders our life experiences so that we can learn specific lessons. While doing so, our guardian angel must, like us, obey the laws of life governing the universe. In fact, he implements these laws for us, although his task encompasses much more than that. He is our constant companion in both this life and all of our successive human incarnations. And within the space afforded by the laws of life he will try to help us to the best of his ability. As we develop further, our relationship with our guardian angel will improve, allowing us to make more effective use of his support. But even while our consciousness remains insufficiently developed for direct contact with him, we can count on his help.

Augoeides

The name of our invisible companion is *Augoeides*. The word means ‘luminous figure’. Every human being has their own individual guardian angel acting as their coach. When we left the animal kingdom and took on human form for the first time, he gave us our causal envelope. Its material is part of his ‘body’ so that, like Siamese twins, we remain connected with him until our human evolution is complete and we can discard our causal envelope again. All this time he nourishes us with his inspiration, and as long as we are incapable of functioning on the level of the soul ourselves, he serves as our deputy soul. This means that our guardian angel is aware of everything that goes on in our consciousness. He knows exactly what we are doing and what we need. Augoeides has never been human himself, but he learns and develops by guiding us. It is in his own interest that we complete our human evolution, because once his task is fulfilled, he is free to pursue his own development.

Augoeides did not embark on an easy task when he made contact with us. Just after leaving the animal kingdom, we are still unreasonable and irresponsible beings.

It takes a long time for us to develop our higher emotions and the capacity for communicating with our guardian angel. Then we slowly learn to experience and integrate his intuitive guidance into our lives, and in due course we develop a close bond with him.

That is not to say that he leaves us to fend for ourselves during the early stages of our human development. He has no choice but to be involved as we are inextricably linked. Even before we are actually aware of his presence, he exercises great influence over our life. He selects the physical body in which we will incarnate, as well as the social milieu and the parents we are born to, and he is the one who disconnects the cord of life from our organism when we die. He is also the luminous figure that welcomes us on the threshold of death (as described by people with a 'near-death experience'). As he does so, he can take on any shape he deems suitable for this situation, because to him, form is completely subordinate to consciousness.

Our mental coach is an individual that functions on consciousness level 46 where he and other guardian angels are part of a collective consciousness. Because each of them accompanies a human individual, our personal mentor has access to the consciousness of a great many people. This enables guardian angels to coordinate the individual needs of different people with one another. They can join forces and do the best possible job of coaching us. For example, they will arrange chance encounters between people who need to work something through. They also create specific opportunities for each of us so we can further our development. Coincidences often have the greatest impact on our lives and Augoeides is the one who arranges them. He makes sure that we meet the right people or end up in a situation that could change our life. Because he is capable of looking beyond the horizon of our consciousness, he can chart the right course for us.

While doing his work, Augoeides will always obey the laws of life. He cannot impose anything on his protégé, as every human being is endowed with free will. All he can do is present us with opportunities. Whether or not we take advantage of them is up to us. We can make our own decisions and our coach will have to respect those. Likewise, our guardian angel cannot grant us privileges that contravene the laws of life. He implements those laws, seeing to it that we receive our due. To begin with, he is mainly responsible for implementing the *law of karma*, but in subsequent lives the emphasis shifts to the application of the *law of development* and the *law of destiny*. He then arranges the lessons we need for growth.

It is Augoeides' job to guide us as we develop our consciousness. He is not here to make life easier or more fun, or to take us by the hand like a nanny and tell us what to do. We learn from our problems, so he will not solve them for us, no matter how nice that would be. He helps us by making sure that we better understand the meaning of our experiences, and the more inspiration we draw from him the easier our lives will be.

Our 'higher self'

Our spiritual coach stays with us throughout our entire human development. Our causal body derives from him and he manages it while our own soul is insufficiently developed to provide us with inspiration. Augoeides is fundamentally different from us. He is not a man but an angel. And yet, on the face of it, we do not experience him

as an 'other' at all. He is 'our' intuition, nourishing us with inspiration without the need to manifest himself as a separate individual. Because he lives on the level of unity consciousness, it is only natural for him to experience such unity with us. He is our 'higher self', our 'own' inner voice with infinitely more wisdom than we have. Everything his voice tells us is aimed at increasing our consciousness. We need not ask explicitly for assistance or support. He will always try to help us to the best of his ability, and the more we tune into him the more help he can offer us.

Although our guardian angel functions on level 46, we can actually experience him on the higher-emotional levels (48: 1-3) and the higher-mental levels (47: 4-5). The higher our consciousness, the clearer the promptings we receive from him. At first we can only experience him very occasionally as a vague inner voice, but as we develop further his influence over our life will increase to the point where it will become a source of constant inspiration. That said, he will not support us if we use his help for selfish purposes. Abusing our qualities has serious karmic consequences from which he will want to protect us. His support always seeks to increase our sense of unity, and the more we grow and abandon our selfishness, the more we benefit from his help.

Because the vibrations from our guardian angel are extremely subtle, we can sense his inspiration only when the confusing pulsations of our lower emotions and lower thoughts have died down. We can improve our contact with him by adopting a mindset of receptivity and humility, and imagining that he is with us as our guide. This helps us tune into *level 46*. One way of practicing this is to ask ourselves if the choices we make are in keeping with the advice he *would* give us *if* we could actually hear him. As a consequence, our contact with him will start to feel increasingly natural, and we will realize that while our harmonious thoughts derive from him, our confused ideas and negative outlook originate in our own emotional and mental envelopes. Tuning into his level purifies our consciousness; it calms our emotions and our thinking, so that our relationship with him will strengthen and gradually transform our life. This then enables us to develop a coherent worldview in which feelings of security and trust can blossom independently of everything that happens to us.

Although the help we receive from our guardian angel is absolutely vital to our personal development, he too benefits from successful cooperation. His responsibilities encompass more than taking care of us, and we can help him with those other tasks. He cannot do his work for human evolution without individuals who carry out special tasks here on earth under his guidance. Our usefulness to Augoeides depends on our talents and our practical life experience, but, even more importantly, on our mindset. Augoeides works within a collective, focusing on unity and connectedness, and if we want to help him he expects us to do the same. We are therefore most useful to him when we espouse a humble willingness to help. If, on the other hand, we aspire to personal fame or riches, we isolate ourselves from the larger whole. Likewise, when we go through life disgruntled and grumbling (perhaps in the belief that we have been wronged), we are unable to perform his tasks properly. As a co-worker of our mental coach, we are expected to devote ourselves to others and focus on unity. This will strengthen our bond with Augoeides, stimulate our growth and increase our insight.

God

Augoeides, our coach, functions as our soul. All contacts with the higher levels of consciousness (*46 and up*) take place via our causal envelope, via him. So when, one way or another, we turn to 'divine' beings, we effectively turn to him. When we invoke Mary, Buddha or Allah, it is Augoeides who hears us. When we pray to God, we actually send our prayers to our guardian angel, who will always try to help us as best he can. But his help is not aimed at fulfilling selfish desires. He wants to make us stronger rather than rob us of the lessons we need. He looks after us like a loving parent who motivates his children and supports them without depriving them of the experiences they need to grow. He will refuse to solve our problems for us, because we learn by grappling with the challenges he presents us with.

'God' is omniscient and omnipotent in our eyes. To our dog, our cat and our goldfish, we are 'God'. And yet we do not experience ourselves as divine, on the contrary. The same is true of Augoeides. Although he is the one who most closely embodies our definition of the concept of 'God', he does not feel like a deity either. He is too aware of his limitations and the many levels of consciousness beyond him.

The occupants of the higher worlds are charged with assisting us, the occupants of the lower worlds. You could therefore call them our 'gods', but each of them will emphatically reject this label. Those higher worlds are not populated by people as we know them, or can even imagine them. Those that dwell there are part of a collective and function on the basis of a unity consciousness. 'God' is not a king, a strict but fair ruler of his kingdom, but the '*primus inter pares*', the first among equals, of a collective of individuals. Remarkably, this unity consciousness is not limited to their world, but extends down to us on the lower levels. Because of this unity consciousness, divine beings feel at one with us, and inspired by this sense of connectedness they will look after us the way we look after our children. They are motivated by unconditional love, and are strangers to self-interest and incapable of doing us wrong. And like us, they must adhere to the universal laws of life, with this big difference: these laws are much stricter for them, since they shoulder a much greater responsibility.

The occupants of worlds *46* to *43* form a hierarchy of progressively developed forms of consciousness. This *Planetary Hierarchy*, which also includes Augoeides, can be compared to the management of an organization or a business. Responsible for the consciousness development of the whole of mankind, as a collective they represent what we could describe as 'God'. Once we have reached the level of unity consciousness, we too will become part of this management level. At present, our consciousness is insufficiently developed for direct contact with them, which is why, for the moment, we have to make do with our guardian angel. So, from a practical point of view, Augoeides serves as our God and as our link with the higher worlds.

Communication with individuals on a higher level of consciousness than him is virtually impossible for us. The higher the level on which they function, the greater the disparity between our respective levels of consciousness and the smaller our capacity for mutual empathy. When we try to make contact with 'higher' gods, we are like small children who refuse to make do with their nursery school teacher and demand to speak to a professor instead. While not impossible, it is not very useful either. We cannot understand anything they say and we, in turn, are too insignificant

to them for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Each higher level of consciousness represents a completely different view of reality. We will simply not understand one another, and that is why it is good that Augoeides looks after our interests. But there is another reason why our contact with individuals from the higher worlds is so complicated. Earlier we saw that higher levels of consciousness exude a powerful energy, and that casual contact with such energy can cause serious problems. Intensive meditation, for example, can lead to headaches, anxieties, depression or even a psychotic episode. When we connect with individuals from the higher worlds, we also come into contact with what is, for us, a very dangerous energy. So it is certainly not child's play to focus our attention on them, while they for their part have better things to do than to chitchat with us. Should they want to address us directly, they must shield us from their energy as much as possible to prevent damage to our bodies. All this means that our communication with them is not as straightforward as we might think. Stories of people who claim to be in touch with 'divine' beings should therefore be treated with the necessary caution. It is unlikely that they are genuinely speaking with divine beings, and much more probable that they are in touch with entities from the emotional world which they have created with the help of their inner convictions.

God is not an anonymous force of nature but a collective consciousness. 'He' has a loving connection with us and the task of guiding our development without violating our personal freedom. Our privacy is respected. God (or Augoeides) does not engage with all of our thoughts and actions, unless we explicitly ask him to. The karmic balance of our life is not drawn up by a judging God, but by an impartial law of life. We can compare this with the forces of nature which are similarly impersonal. That said, the *implementation* of the various laws of life is in the hands of higher beings, most notably Augoeides. But instead of judging us on our individual actions, the Planetary Hierarchy judges us on our overall pattern of energy which is the product of our combined actions. This aura shows who we are, how far we have come and what we need for further growth. Once we have shaken off our selfishness and attained a sufficient level of consciousness, we can take our leave of Augoeides and accept the invitation to take part in the (lowest levels of the) Planetary Hierarchy.

XII Social Development

Individual and community

In the course of all of our incarnations we move towards ever higher levels of consciousness. But our personal growth happens alongside the development in the social sphere. As people interact, live and work together, they coordinate their conduct with one another. This is true of families and businesses as well as towns and villages and even entire nations. This process gives rise to social patterns that depend on the average level of consciousness of the group members involved. On some individuals this will have a stimulating effect, while others may feel hampered by their social environment. Because people influence one another, each grouping will acquire a distinct experience of reality with more or less uniform rules of conduct. Each group thus develops its own collective features, and on this basis, Laurency has drawn up a classification identifying five successive stages of development.

1. *Traditionalism* (also called barbarism by Laurency). This level is dominated by the development of the lower emotions (*levels 48: 5-7 and 47: 7*).
2. *Civilization*. The development of lower thinking (*levels 48: 4-7 and 47: 6,7*).
3. *Culture*. The development of the higher emotions (*levels 48: 2-5 and 47: 6,7*).
4. *Humanity*. The development of higher thinking (*levels 48: 2-5 and 47: 4,5*).
5. *Ideality*. The development of causal consciousness (*levels 48: 1-3 and 47: 1-5*).

(The terms that Laurency uses here, such as ‘civilization’, ‘culture’ and ‘humanity’, have a different meaning in common parlance.)

Levels of social development

Since all people are connected with others, they are part of social structures that are characterized by a specific level of development. We will limit ourselves to the key features of the five main groups and leave aside all sub-levels for now.

1. Traditionalism (60% of the world's population)

Most of the world's population function on the development level of traditionalism. Although these people are quite different from one another, they share an experience of reality that is shaped by lower emotions and a limited capacity for logical thought. They tend to be impulsive and largely incapable of reflecting on their own actions. In their most primitive manifestation, these people do not have the capacity to plan ahead and they lack a vision for the future. They only heed their immediate emotional and physical needs, and because negative feelings dominate on this level they are quick to lose their temper. Thought processes are not yet developed enough to regulate the emotions, so that men, in particular, struggle to control their urges. These people cannot look beyond the instant gratification of their emotional needs and as soon as these are fulfilled there is no motivation to do anything else. Passivity is a symptom of this traditional behaviour.

With thought processes insufficiently matured, the opportunities for developing personal beliefs are limited. People imitate one another, so that traditional

customs remain in place and dominate daily life. Incapable of putting prevailing views into perspective, these people live by rigid dogmas. Something is either true or not true, however unrealistic that viewpoint may be. Judgements are not based on rational considerations, but on old, familiar patterns that provide emotional stability. Traditions and conventions dictate the behaviour of individuals and thereby bind them to the community. The individual cannot escape this, because his identity is insufficiently developed to enable him to stand on his own two feet. People's sense of safety and security is commensurate with the degree to which they feel part of the community. On this traditional level of development, individuals depend on the group the way a child depends on its mother, which is why they will unreservedly defend the communal traditions. If anyone distances himself from these traditions, the rest of the group will experience this as major threat. Because survival hinges on conformism, there is a strong aversion to unfamiliar or different opinions. This makes it difficult to rectify abuses. Things such as honour killings, circumcision, dress codes and rules of conduct can be seen as elements of a shared identity that are beyond personal judgement and which must not be relinquished. Since those who are not part of the community are likely to arouse feelings of contempt and suspicion, constructive cooperation with outsiders is often difficult. As development on the traditional level improves, people's behaviour becomes slightly more sophisticated, yet it remains governed by group control. Traditionalism is characterized by its emphasis on self-interest – either of the individual or of the family or group one belongs to. This forms the prime motivation for action. This self-interest is bounded by an extremely narrow horizon, since today's gains are all that matter. With little or no capacity for rational thought, people fail to realize that, in the long term, their self-interest is best served by certain forms of cooperation with people from outside the community.

People who belong to a traditional community cannot see reality objectively. They live in a mythical or magical reality, in which religion plays a major role. Religion is important for their development because it can help structure their lives and transform selfish emotions into higher, altruistic feelings. Since these are simple people, with an aversion to change, it takes powerful impulses to trigger those changes. Religion can provide those impulses. Simple truths, easy instructions and tough sanctions can bring about changes where other approaches fail. Religion prescribes what is good or evil and demands absolute obedience from its believers. For many the religions of traditional peoples can seem rigid and harsh, but for the believers themselves it is exactly what they need for an inner transformation. Within the Christian tradition, this process has been described in the Old Testament.

2. Civilization (25% of the world's population)

By 'civilization' Laurency means social groups whose mental development has progressed to the point where objective observation of the world is possible. People in this category are capable of carrying out scientific research, even at an academic level. That said, all thought processes continue to be governed by emotions, so that the worldview is coloured by inner convictions and conformism. As a result, people on the civilization level live in two worlds at once: an emotional world and a rational world. The two are often mutually exclusive, but that need not produce internal conflicts, because the rational insight is so limited as to leave plenty of space for

emotionality. We can see evidence of this in scientists who adhere to conflicting scientific and religious dogmas.

The behaviour of people on this level is characterized by tentative attempts at curbing the lower emotions. There is still plenty of selfishness, however, and this is fully accepted by society. Selfish behaviour, insofar as it is not prohibited by law, is perfectly normal. Self-interest is the norm, since life is aimed at indulging in material pleasures, and people who are canny enough to exploit the system to their own advantage are openly admired.

At the same time, people will try to transcend their nature by helping their fellow man. But the desire to become better people will be achieved only under ideal circumstances: when they can be seen to do good, or, better, when they profit from it. As a rule, religion is the driving force behind noble intentions. Although the standard approach to life is one of selfishness, religion helps foster charity. The religious experience is characterized by dogmas and feelings of superiority towards people of different faiths. Missionary work has traditionally been based on that sense of superiority, as it enabled those involved to stress both their own righteousness and their goodness.

3. Culture (10% of the world's population)

On the consciousness level that Laurency labels 'culture', thinking is no more developed than on the 'civilization' level. On both levels it is governed by emotions. But while people from a civilized community are mainly influenced by their *lower emotions*, individuals from a cultural community are motivated by their *higher emotions*. People in the latter group are therefore more altruistic, which is reflected in a constructive approach to their fellow man. Unlike people on the civilized level of development, those in the cultural community need not suppress negative emotions. They are naturally quite positive about their environment, which allows them to respond to others without prejudice and without feeling threatened. They tend to understand and accept the needs and wishes of other people. Intolerance and fanaticism are rare on this level and there is a great acceptance of all kinds of different political, social and religious convictions. The other is granted the right and the freedom to develop in his own way. People who have attained this level, which is characterized by the pursuit of justice and solidarity, are not dogmatic and can easily accept that everybody is imperfect and that we all have limitations. They are forgiving and aware of the good intentions of their fellow man. The ongoing pursuit of consciousness development – for both themselves and others – is important, hence the need for a role model or an ideal that can serve as a source of inspiration. People on this level often have an interest in art, religion or spirituality. Art, in all its different manifestations, brings people into contact with feelings of beauty and harmony, enabling them to discover a reality that transcends their own imperfection. The same is true of religion and spirituality. And by departing from prescribed forms, it becomes possible to experience a more general spiritual sense of connection, independently of established traditions. To the people on this level, religion is a tool for transforming selfish feelings into altruistic ones. The form and content of the religion are subordinate to this endeavour. People who have reached the end of the cultural development phase are capable of experiencing a mystical unity consciousness on the higher emotional level (48: 1,2). Feeling safe and connected, they have the confidence to surrender to the divine. Without any more questions there is no more need for

answers. The world is beautiful despite the many flaws that are part and parcel of it all, just as light and dark are inextricably linked.

4. Humanity (5% of the world's population)

The humanity phase of development is characterized by its emphasis on a mental approach to reality. People who function on this level need more than nice feelings alone. Their intellect dominates, and feelings of wholeness have been pushed to the background. All problems and shortcomings are seen as challenges begging for a solution. With little faith in a higher power, religions have lost their meaning. The euphoric feelings of connectedness known to people from the cultural community are absent here. Those who dwell on this level of consciousness are aware that the world is full of problems and that it takes hard work to find solutions. Those solutions are not found by meditating quietly and losing oneself in ecstatic feelings. There is work to be done. The humanist wants to take action, and for this he must appeal to reason. As he focuses increasingly on thinking, emotions will be pushed to the background. The emotional qualities that were so prominent in the earlier phases of development remain buried in the subconscious, thus allowing ample space for the development of thought. This means that humanists may initially come across as a bit aloof compared to the loving and empathetic people in the cultural development phase.

At some point those on this level of consciousness development will conclude that thinking is hopelessly inadequate. It cannot provide a coherent and meaningful worldview nor can it find a solution to all the problems in the world. Because even science ultimately fails to offer a firm foundation, these thinkers can be tormented by doubt, confusion and insecurity. With religion, politics, philosophy and science having lost their meaning, the humanists may be tempted to turn to personal glory, fame and success, but they will soon find that these things offer no satisfaction either. By now, emotional needs have become too inconsequential to provide genuine fulfillment. The result could be an existential crisis. The humanist then becomes a sceptic, atheist or agnostic, which marks the start of a long quest, during which old ideas and convictions are jettisoned. When people on this level eventually reach the conclusion that they cannot answer their questions through thinking alone, they will open up to a reality that transcends reason. This can only happen once their thinking has taken a back seat. The resulting sense of connectedness and harmony is not the kind of emotional experience that characterizes mystical phenomena. It is a clear insight, a knowing that transcends thought. Humanists realize that they are part of a greater whole and that they share a responsibility for this. Losing oneself in a state of euphoria is not an option. They want to take action and do something meaningful for their fellow man. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of the humanist community is its increasing willingness to help. On this level, religion has lost all authority; there is no more need for organizations or agencies telling us how the world works. Once their quest has been completed, humanists have faith in their own authority and feel completely independent of others. They rely on their conscience and their intuition, carving out their own path, independently of prevailing views yet without deliberately upsetting the status quo. They will sacrifice their own interests for the common good in an effort to reach the next phase of development: ideality.

5. Ideality (far less than 1% of the world's population)

In this phase of development people live primarily on the level of the soul. Their number is so small that it is impossible to put an exact figure on it. Their higher emotions and higher thoughts are developed to such a degree as to give them ever more frequent access to causal consciousness. Those who live on this level experience a connectedness with others, not as a theoretical concept but a living and breathing reality, and since their thinking has now matured they can actually put this into practice. All others are accepted as they are: as unique individuals with their own qualities. Any external pressure from religious or political organizations seeking to enforce constructive behaviour is not appreciated.

Political and social consequences

The four main levels of social development can be summarized as follows:

Traditional

60% of the world's population

They live by their lower emotions and have a subjective experience of reality.

Rigid and intolerant

Selfish

Aggressive

Mythical / magical

Contempt for outsiders

Ritualistic religion and an avenging God

Civilized

25% of the world's population

They live primarily by their lower emotions and have a largely objective experience of the world.

Conservative

Oriented towards collaboration

Emotional

Materialistic

Moralistic, with a sense of superiority

Dogmatic religion

Cultural

10% of the world's population

They live by higher emotions.

Tolerant

Helpful

They seek gratification in higher emotions

Oriented towards personal growth

They pursue ideals

Religion is a means to brotherhood

Humanity

5% of the world's population

They live by higher thought.
They are open to new insights
Altruistic
Rational
Oriented towards personal freedom
They aspire to solidarity
Mysticism alongside atheism

(The given percentages pertain to the overall world population. In the Netherlands, the number of people on the cultural and humanity levels is likely to be higher.)

The average developmental level of a certain social group has an effect not only on its social functioning, but also on politics, since every level is characterized by a different worldview and distinct conditions for growth and development. A political approach which is primarily aimed at unity and connectedness and which aspires to respect and support the different levels could be termed an *integral* or *idealistic* politics. Such a politics could have the following broad policy targets:

- an emphasis on the spiritual over and above the material;
- an emphasis on connectedness over and above division;
- an emphasis on altruism over and above selfishness.

Just as school children of different ages need different teaching materials, people on different levels of consciousness need specific circumstances to develop as best as they can. Everybody needs to be addressed at his or her own level in order to grow. But the big problem here is that the needs of people on different levels of development are often incompatible. Someone on the level of *traditionalism* needs a clearly demarcated structure that stresses the sense of community and gives them a sense of safety. Those on the level of *civilization*, however, are keen to satisfy their need for material things. People on the *cultural* level need emotional satisfaction through the pursuit of higher goals. Finally, on the *humanity* and *idealty* levels, it is important for people to abandon all convictions and dogmas, to free themselves from imposed structures, so they can discover a personal truth. In other words, traditionalism and humanity thrive under quite disparate conditions.

We can draw an analogy between social development at large and the individual development that takes place in nuclear families. Children of different ages grow up side by side, but thanks to the family's support, which is tailored towards the personal needs of each child, each one will be able to develop his or her own identity and become an autonomous individual. Later on, as self-aware people, they will be able to guide their own children. A similar, slowly evolving process takes place in successive incarnations, with the individual initially detaching himself from the community and passing through various stages of increasing development and autonomy before finally dedicating himself to the greater good.

Like children of different ages, different social groups demand different approaches. Individuals on the higher levels need freedom. They acknowledge alternative points of view and demand the same for themselves. On the lower levels of development, however, there is no room for tolerance. People here need clear structures and they

will also try to impose their own views on others. These diverse social groups can be found within national politics and because their interests are at odds with each other, it will be difficult to find a compromise capable of meeting everybody's legitimate needs.

It is important to bear in mind that we cannot impose higher development on people on a lower level, just as surely as we can only help students learn by offering them lessons appropriate to their specific needs. Everybody has their own specific requirements for growth. A politics based on these principles can cater to this by embracing the following principles:

- accepting everybody's personal level of consciousness;
- addressing everybody on their own level of development;
- ensuring that within the personal sphere everybody can live on their own level (as long as it does not harm anyone);
- demanding that within the public domain everybody adapts to the national level.

Finally, it is good to bear in mind that high and low are relative notions. For humanity as a whole, consciousness development is still in its infancy. From a cosmic perspective, even the most highly developed among us function on an extremely modest level. So there is no reason to look down on people who may be a little less advanced than we are. By supporting them with love and understanding we can be sure to reap the benefits ourselves.

THIS IS THE END OF PART ONE

