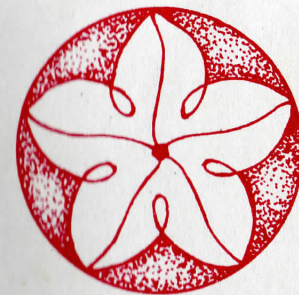


# BEYOND PERSONHOOD

Dane Rudhyar



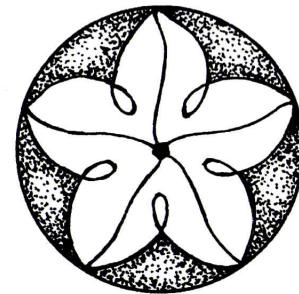
Rudhyar Institute for  
Transpersonal Activity

BEYOND  
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# BEYOND PERSONHOOD

This first communication from the **Rudhyar Institute for Transpersonal Activity** is an attempt to clarify what I have been formulating for many years: an approach to the complex and confusing situation all truly conscious and concerned human beings are now facing, both as individual persons and as responsible participants in the collective thinking, feeling, and behavior of mankind — or at least of the portion of mankind to which they consider themselves to belong.

Today many people believe that humanity as a whole is passing through a cathartic and potentially tragic crisis of reorientation and transformation. They interpret such a crisis as a process of transition between a tumultuous, conflict-ridden historical past and an impending "new age" in which all human beings will live in peace, harmony, and under social conditions allowing them to develop their "human potential" to the full. This belief in a utopian new age undoubtedly has great psychological value during dark hours, but it often is formulated unrealistically and sentimentally, in ways that are not consistent with an understanding of historical processes. Moreover, because such a belief often rests on the expectation of a miraculous event — like the Second Coming of Christ or the timely intervention of super-intelligent beings from outer space — it softens our will. For if an event that seems to originate outside the natural process of evolution is requisite for a new age to begin, we as individuals can have only the most minimal responsibility for it. At best we can only help prepare for a wider acceptance of the transformative revelation by trying ourselves to be open to the new and by giving up some of the most obviously unessential forms of our dependence upon a civilization whose industrial products and technological marvels have led, not only to personal comfort, longevity, and total permissiveness, but to the egocentricity of legalized greed, a critical depletion of the earth's resources, and the pollution of its air, water, and soil.

It may be relatively easy to give up what "facts of life" compellingly reveal as unessential, but the real problem is to realize clearly and fully what *is* essential and *why*. We hear many references to what we have to give up or overcome in ourselves, but the mind has to realize and be strongly impressed by what



we can expect *after* the surrender or overcoming. In India, the guru concretely and experienceably represented the future human state making the giving up valid, but the value of today's gurus' attainments is often ambiguous or inconclusive. Contemporary Westerners usually require a different kind of realization.

This realization should be based on a broad, clear understanding of the cosmic process we call evolution, of the place and function of mankind in the universe, and of the character and special quality or purpose of the historical situation in which we are living. A new mental perspective is indispensable as a solid foundation for the new *quality* of living and interpersonal relationships without which no truly significant *new age* is possible. We have to develop a new mind able to formulate a truly all-inclusive interpretation of cosmic as well as human and personal existence. We need such a mind to consistently as well as constructively transform the basic values (or paradigms) upheld by our Western civilization and its institutions — values that are responsible for the violence and chaos confronting us everywhere and polluting the minds and emotional responses of our bewildered youth.

Knowledge is always based on an *interpretation* of human experience, and *mind* is the interpreter. It provides a frame of reference giving to psychic or physical experience, or to what we call intuitive feelings, a more or less consistent and systematic structure within which elements of experience can be interrelated. Any institutionalized religion or definitely formulated philosophical, psychological, or scientific system provides such an interpretation, and it also must provide a way of meeting life-events and experiences that is both intellectually and emotionally satisfying for the people who live and think according to it. Such an interpretation has a collective character; it is valid for and generally accepted by the people of a particular culture, whose collective psychomental and socio-ecological need *called for* such a system of interpretation\*.

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\*Since the appearance of Buddhism, religions have claimed a "universal" validity, but the word universal is misleading. It is meant to signify that each of the relatively recent "great religions" (Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam) appeals to or fulfills the essential *need* of one of a few types of human beings, theoretically independent of the culture with which the religion was associated at first. However, when one of these "universal" religions is officially accepted by the people of a different racial or cultural background from the one to which

Let us not be deceived by claims that cannot be substantiated: all systems are based on premises, postulates, or assumptions that ultimately cannot be "proven" in an intellectual way. The only "proof" of a system's validity is that it satisfies the need of the people, or of a section of the people, among whom it took form *through* the creative activity of a farseeing and inspired personage or group. Even "scientific" and "logical" proofs can never be absolutely "true;" they are *valid* within a particular frame of reference which can establish *only the consistency* of a series of events or intellectual propositions. For example, the principle of exclusion — two objects cannot occupy the same place at the same time — is "true" only if we limit our experience to the realm of physical matter. Neither can we consider "true" the postulate that "laws of nature" operate in exactly the same manner at all times and in all regions of space. What we call laws of nature may not be inherent in "nature" at all: they may be exteriorizations of the basic structures of the human mind, or at least of the dominant mentality of the culture formulating and accepting such "laws." Time and space — as we experience and measure them — may exist only in the universe our senses perceive and to which our intellect gives rational form.

If one realizes the validity of the above, one has to accept the relativity of what we call knowledge. This relativity is certainly one of the first manifestations of new age thinking, but its implications are vast and inherently disruptive. They force us to consider that the complex of ideas and assumptions on which any culture is based are valid for the people of that culture but not necessarily for people outside it. Even if most recent cultures and religions agree on the "truth" or validity of some basic concepts and modes of behavior, this apparent universality applies only to the human species at this particular stage of evolution. *Any* mode of motion, behavior, feeling, or thinking

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the founder of the religion gave his charismatic revelation, the religion acquires a different quality — for example, Japanese Zen is very different from Indian Buddhism.



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can have value at a particular time, in a particular place, and for a particular entity. A human being, however, is only a particular kind of entity existing at a particular level of consciousness and activity during a particular phase of a whole cycle of evolution.

The recent conflict between theories of "scientific" evolution and "divine" creation is a remarkable manifestation of the fundamental limitations and exclusivism of some of the principles on which modern Western civilization is based. Creation in no way denies evolution; for many years I have said that what we see as evolution is a two-way process better characterized by two terms, involution and evolution. Archetypal structures — that is, specific types of principles of organization or "ideal forms" — presumably are *created* by cosmic or divine beings; but the way one pictures such beings (or Being) and the nature and role of archetypes can be crude or extremely abstract. On the other hand, biological organisms integrating an enormous number of material elements (which may be considered nodes of waves of interacting energies) *evolve* out of whatever our mind is able to conceive as the *prima materia* of the space-field of a new universe being born — whether in a big bang, in a number of cosmogenetic "bubbles," or as the slow growth out of a "cosmic seed." In religious terms, God descends toward man as earth-matter synchronously ascends toward perfection — toward the perfect Person, the Son of Man of whom the Gospels speak. The goal of this two-way process is the union of the precisely differentiated divine and the perfectly integrated human — an Avatar or divine Manifestation. This is the "marriage of heaven and earth," the Son of God transfiguring the Son of Man on the high Mount of consciousness and power. While the Euro-American culture became dominated by the dramatic Pauline concepts of the Crucifixion and Atonement, a new age Christianity should stress the Transfiguration — a Johannine or Gnostic Christianity.\*

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\*See my book *Fire Out of the Stone: A Reinterpretation of the Basic Images of the Christian Tradition*, in which I outline a new interpretation of biblical narratives and the Gospels.

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## A Multilevel Philosophy of Wholeness

In previous writings, to which the reader of this essay is referred, I have formulated the broad outlines of a new age philosophy.† A forthcoming volume, *The Rhythm of Wholeness*, will present a more complete formulation of such a philosophy and its application to the ideal of transpersonal living. Here, however, I shall merely restate, as succinctly as possible, the most basic concepts which should be remembered by anyone seriously interested in what the Rudhyar Institute for Transpersonal Activity stands for.

Two essential concepts constitute the ideological foundation of the philosophy of wholeness I have presented: (1) the concept — which can and should become a powerful, living feeling-realization — of *Wholeness*, and (2) that of *cyclic activity* based on the unceasing interplay of two principles (or "trends" of motion), the principle of Unity and the principle of Multiplicity. These two principles are of equal strength and significance, and they complement and (in terms of the entire cycle of being) balance each other. Wholeness is, in an abstract sense, perfect, all-inclusive Harmony; it is the harmony of the nearly infinite (or more precisely, undefinable) multiplicity of wholes operating at many levels, through time and space.

Time is the abstraction of change, and the experience of change is the primary foundation of all conscious living. Change can be given meaning, consistency, and purpose only if it is interpreted in terms of *wholes of time* — cycles. Cyclic activity is to be considered a process, the essential purpose of which is to answer a fundamental need. Cyclic processes affect, develop, and integrate the energies and movements of *wholes of space* — force fields and entities — at various levels of structural organization. They can also be called "systems." Wholes of activities have consciousness, whether it be a diffuse consciousness within a force field (a nonphysical or pre-physical entity) or a focused

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†*The Planetarization of Consciousness* (Aurora Books, New York, 1970). and its prelude, *The Rhythm of Human Fulfillment* (Seed Center, Garberville, California, 1966).



consciousness centralized by a dynamic, integrative core ( a particular form of individual selfhood, an ego or "I") — and the quality of a whole's consciousness depends upon the *level* at which it is primarily active.

At the *physical* level there are atoms and molecules; at the level of *life*, biological organisms. Inasmuch as human beings belong to a biological species developing in the earth's biosphere we, too, operate at the level of life as biological organisms. Yet mankind also operates at the levels of *psychic* and *mental* activities. This is possible because human beings are born, educated, and develop within *cultures* enabling them to unfold their inherent psychic and mental potentialities according to the culture's collective interpretation of existence — its language, religion, and science.

Thus we can interpret the universe we live in as an immense field of space within which wholes operate *hierarchically* — that is, greater wholes contain many lesser wholes, while being themselves one of many lesser wholes within a still greater whole. This hierarchy is one of containment (not of command as in the military or a bureaucracy), and greater and lesser wholes constantly *interact*. Through this interaction, wholes evolve from level to level of activity and consciousness — without any intellectually or rationally conceivable end to the process.

There is no reason why the series atom, molecule, biological organism, human person should end with the human being as the most evolved whole of the universe. Yet in his seminal book *Holism and Evolution* — which was the origin of all the ways the adjective "holistic" is now being used — Jan Smuts did stop at what he considered the most complex evolutionary whole, "personality." Why? Is not the planet earth — which besides its material constituents (rock, soil, water, and gas) contains countless species of life and currents of energies, plus billions of human persons — also a definite whole? Why not solar systems, galaxies, and metagalaxies — possibly even finite universes, perhaps of matter and/or antimatter? Nevertheless, the difference between these levels of wholeness (thus of structural organization) is not merely quantitative (that is, referring to size); it is primarily qualitative, and it involves the capacity to operate through the organization of ever more complex and subtle matter or substance, as well as in terms of ever more encompassing modes of consciousness.

To Smut's concept of holism I have substituted that of *holar-*

*chy*. As I use this term, it defines a principle of operation referring to the hierarchical interactions of wholes. While Smuts, at the same time C. G. Jung, and now the philosophers of science developing a "systems philosophy" (Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Ervin Laszlo, and others) consider the human personality the highest level of evolution — and beyond it only what groups of persons and societies as wholes can produce — I have accepted the much older, traditional concept of the existence of a superhuman level of beings.

The existence of such beings can be understood and is logical and meaningful if they are seen, *in their togetherness*, as differentiated, functional aspects of a vast planetary being of whom the physical globe of the earth is only the physical body. This body includes the biosphere (the realm of life) and is the foundation for a noosphere (a realm of psychic and mental activity). Beyond yet including these spheres is a spiritual sphere of activity which I call the Pleroma. Operating at that level are planetary Pleroma beings who have evolved through and beyond the human stage — and this evolutionary possibility is latent in all human beings, once they have reached the stage of individualized, autonomous, and responsible selfhood free from bondage to both biology and culture.\*

The realization that such a possibility exists is today the basis on which a valid, meaningful, and practical transformation of all the implications of human existence can gradually and consistently occur. All my activities and writings, at least since 1920, have been inspired and given meaning and purpose by this, to me, unquestionable realization: a state of being exists beyond the "human condition," yet it operates through (*trans*) human beings when the latter are open and definitely committed to the possibility of reaching at least the threshold of such a state.

Today, however, when an indiscriminate mixture of cultural and religious traditions presents searching and dissatisfied persons with a confusing multiplicity of claims and options, one must be consistent when trying to envision and present to others an image of the evolutionary stage one perceives beyond the level at which most people today, even new age enthusiasts,

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\*The term *Pleroma* was used by the Greek Gnostics and by St. Paul in his Epistles, to convey the idea of fullness and fulfillment at the end of time. Unfortunately, some recent writers have misused the term by making it refer to a primordial state of undifferentiated being.



actually operate. Different as the image may be from the traditional standard, it is not absolutely "new." But its *formulation* must be new, because it must provide an adequate answer to new existential problems calling for unparalleled, because previously impossible solutions, even though the latter must be based on relatively persistent principles. The image should be one that can be at least partially embodied in concrete living and in a freer, less personalized type of relationships. Its transformative power should be released through sustained activities whose radiance can illumine a path, however small, through the darkness of our materialistic and profit-haunted society. Yet such an image can be effective only if it is based on well defined concepts. These require formulation and expression through words and statements which, in turn, can be effective only if imbued with the new *quality* of consciousness from which the necessary mental processes are derived. Each word used to formulate the image should be clearly and consistently defined; each statement should be as unambiguous as possible.

This is especially crucial today because many important cultural images and philosophical words have been popularized, debased by colloquial use, and thereby deprived of vital and spiritually effective meaning. For this reason, one of the main aims of these communications from RITA is to clarify words, both familiar words and new words built on old, understandable roots; words to give form and direction to mental and intuitive processes, many of which were until very recently unfamiliar to our Euro-American mentality. Words may be only signposts, but they are also powerful symbols that can evoke illumining realizations in the collective mind of a generation or even a whole people. Let us now explore some words whose magic may be either constructive or destructive.

## Personhood and Individuality

Two of the most important words in constant use today are *person* and *personal*. Lately a third term, *personhood*, has become current as a substitute for *personality*, which when it was the main word used in the past had both a subjective and an objective meaning. If personhood is the state of being, feeling, and

acting as a person, what then is a person?

*Being a person depends essentially on participating, actively or passively, in a sociocultural collectivity of human beings.* I stress this point because it is basic, although most people pay little attention to it. I use the term *sociocultural* because at the level of human evolution the development of an enduring society — an organized community able to maintain itself in the earth's biosphere — requires the development and collective acceptance of a culture. A culture is a set of concepts defining a particular sense of order, a way of life, and an approach to human relationships that give rise to characteristic feeling-responses. Every culture (or even subculture) has its own language, characteristic gestures, and vocal intonations. Its innermost aspect is the religion the society accepts as a basic, taken-for-granted frame of reference. All institutionalized religions have a sociocultural character. They are the original sources of the most important myths, symbols and rituals of a culture and of a society's collective approach to meeting life's problems, especially at the psychological level. At this level, a culture is animated by *collective psychism*, very much as a living body is animated by a particular type of vitality or life-energy (prana in India, chi in China). All participants in a healthy sociocultural whole are moved and psychically controlled by the energy of the psychism generated by the multitude of unceasing interpersonal and intergroup relationships operating according to specific principles of activity — paradigms, moral laws, unquestioned religious beliefs. These are *always* exclusivistic: in tribal societies and cultures the foreigner is the enemy, tribal gods are jealous gods, and religious leaders and their spiritual aristocracy stress the differences between their practices and those of other religions. Political systems can change more easily than religious institutions and the values that are taken for granted in a culture. Nevertheless, sooner or later a class of people within society challenges the validity of its particular religious beliefs and of the control the religious institutions and their leaders have over social, political, and strictly cultural processes. When the symbols and myths of the original religion lose their power to integrate the cultural whole, inspire its members, and enable them to experience their togetherness vividly and deeply, the culture loses its numinous-ity and begins to decay.

*Without active or passive participation in a culture there can be no personhood.* If an infant survived its mother's death in a lush tropical environment offering easily accessible, life-sustaining



fruits, the baby would not be a person, only an animal belonging to the human species. The baby's organism would have an innate genetic *potentiality* of becoming a person, but potentiality is not *actuality*. Confusing the two is misleading, and it is done all too frequently, especially in so-called spiritual or esoteric circles. Every human being is potentially a person, simply because of being human; but in order to become an actuality this potentiality must be developed through language and culture. Language is symbolic communication based on the interorganismic relationships, the coordinated behavior, and the shared feeling-responses (especially a common fear and will to survive) culture integrates. Personhood develops on the basis of symbols and relationships making communication and concerted action possible. Thus personhood and culture are totally interrelated and interdependent.

The etymology of the term *person* — the Latin *persona* — refers to the masks used by theatrical actors, first, to establish clearly the archetypal character of the role they portrayed in equally archetypal circumstances; second, to amplify the carrying power of the actor's voice in the large, open-air stadiums a particular climate made possible. Thus personhood essentially refers to the role or *function* a person fulfills (or should fulfill) in the sociocultural organism of which he or she can be considered a cell — a functional unit charged with performing a particular role. In ancient societies, and to a lesser extent in traditional Europe, this role was determined, or at least conditioned, by heredity. It usually was defined by paternal inheritance, particularly according to the principle of primogeniture (that is, of being the first born or the first son).

The psychologist C. G. Jung used the Latin word *persona* to refer to the character a particular sociocultural role — for example, a particular profession — imposes upon a person's behavior, feelings, and modes of thinking. In a sense, every member of a tribal society is molded by his or her persona, because each member fulfills a particular role within the closely structured tribal organism, according to his or her biological nature (temperament) and hereditary propensities. However, because of being human, each member of society and participant in culture has the innate possibility not only of developing personhood or personality, but of doing so in an *individual* way. This individuality may, but very often does not, fit the traditional role family and culture had in store for the person. New problems thus arise, a new type of consciousness and activity is needed,

and a new level of reality is thereby reached.

The term *individual* literally means undivided, and in an absolute sense, indivisible. Existentially, however, it refers to the apparent fact that no two units of being (or existential wholes) are *exactly* identical. This observation compels us to distinguish between features that are common and those that are unique, and from this distinction we infer the dualism of collective and individual. This dualism is truly universal; it operates at every level of being. It is therefore logical to assume that even atomic and molecular structures have some degree of individuality — individuality at the level of existential activity we call matter, the level of strictly *material* organization. Units of activity at this level — particles, atoms, molecules — belong to one of a relatively few types of organization and display a minimum of individual features. But we are told that no two snowflakes ever have identical geometrical forms. If there is consciousness in an atom, its character must be almost exclusively collective: there is to us no recognizable difference between atoms of the same atomic type.

At the level of what we call life — the *biological* level — the forms of biological organisms are differentiated enough for us to define and classify species and varieties, which we can philosophically call archetypal structures; yet each particular specimen, while it embodies the archetypal structure of its species, does so in an ever so slightly different way. Thus the leaves and the overall shape of no two trees are ever exactly identical. The many cells that perform the same functional activities within an organism seem to be nearly indistinguishable from one another; yet a process of differentiation has taken place to distinguish cells of one type from cells of another type. Moreover, some cells of a particular organ may function anomalously, differing from the archetypal norm. Some may become cancerous, perhaps driven to such a condition by forces or chemical processes yet unknown. The individual activities of these cells are nonfunctional or dysfunctional. As activity and consciousness are interrelated and interdependent, we may infer that such anomalous behavior implies a relatively individualized consciousness that differs and separates itself from the consciousness of healthy cells — cells that perform the functionally and archetypally "right" types of activities.

In primitive tribal societies of human beings, as in many animal societies having well-defined organizational structures,



the behavior of social units follows functional biological patterns. A collective power of psychism emerges from these biological imperatives and dominates the coordinated activities as well as the consciousness of the tribe. Each tribal member feels this power internally and normally cannot disobey or challenge its orientation and directives. It is projected by the mythopoetic (myth-creating) mind as the god of the tribe, whose presence is felt within every member's psyche. Every man, woman, and child in the tribe has his or her "natural," vitalistically defined, unquestionably valid function in the biopsychic organism of the tribe. But because the tribal society is human, it allows for the gradual development of an equally human feeling-realization of relative uniqueness of being — of individuality.

It is at this strictly human *cultural* level that individuality manifests most characteristically — and most crucially, because human individuality can be understood and acted upon in two opposite ways: it can be given absolute value as an *end* in itself, or it can be considered a *means* to the eventual achievement of a more-than-individual state of being.

The feeling-realization of being in some way essentially different from other members of the tribe, even those engaged in the same functional activity, can develop in many ways. One may feel undefinably superior to other members of the tribe or specifically "special" in one's ability to invent, discover, or perfect certain important acts. In other cases, physical inferiority may be compensated for by developing unusual capacities, perhaps the ability to enter into states of consciousness whose outer manifestations single one out as valuable to the community in an uncommon way.

As human beings live in increasingly large cities; as life in these cities requires the development of complex activities transcending the biopsychic necessities of existence; as intercultural contacts stress the mental ability to deal constructively with unfamiliar and alien concepts and ways of life; and as intertribal wars give rise to the institution of slavery and the possibility of gaining sociopolitical power and wealth as a separate person uncontrolled by collective rules: the *process of individualization* spreads and poses basic problems. Men and women, who once were only biopsychically defined persons satisfied to fulfill social and cultural functions that were collectively and often hereditarily determined, find themselves motivated, and often driven, by the urge to develop, stress, and express their individuality, their uniqueness of being.

Today, unfortunately, individuality is often confused with personhood, which is assumed to transcend function. Yet the basic meaning of the very word person refers to the performance of a role within the field of a particular culture. Today's confusion, especially in the United States, results from most persons' unwillingness to be attached to, and especially to be identified with, the performance of their work, which they usually consider only a "job," mainly characterized by the amount of money it brings. Probably a majority of people are ready at any time to change jobs, professions, or even family and sexual roles. *Something* in them demands utter independence from any particular function. Yet this *something* also demands satisfaction, fulfillment, and even success at the sociocultural level, especially in interpersonal relationships that fulfill collectively conditioned expectations or ideals. Such a person's situation is therefore ambiguous: the *something* that refuses to be identified with any particular function nevertheless is driven by a need to function in a personal (that is, socioculturally defined) manner.

The contrast between individuality and functionality is an aspect of the basic and universal dualism between individual and collective; all existence is based on the rhythmic and cyclic interaction of these two principles. They also manifest as the dualism of consciousness and activity or (as Arthur Avalon has emphasized in his books on the Tantra) of consciousness and power. At least from the Western point of view, consciousness presupposes a center, a subject, "I." Activity (and the exercise of power), on the other hand, implies a space-field (a whole) in which to be active, and it affects whatever this field contains. Activity within a whole — within an organized system of relationships — is always functional, even though a particular function may be destructive. This is so whether we consider activity within a personality — a biopsychic whole — or if we consider interpersonal activity within a sociocultural whole.

In metaphysical terms, the great problem has always been how to define the relationship between what is assumed to be a universal Self — or religiously speaking, God — and the world of immensely varied interactions and modes of activity we experience as the universe. In psychological terms, this relationship takes the form of the one between the principle of individual selfhood defined in terms of *consciousness* (the "I") and the state of sociocultural *activity* requiring the performance of the many roles which, as persons living among other persons, we can



hardly avoid. The roles a person plays are functional, even if they are negative or catabolic; but the "I," the principle of individual selfhood latent within every human being, need not become identified with any of these roles, constructive or destructive, because individual selfhood is not personhood. The *potentiality* of individual selfhood requires personhood as a foundation for its actualization, just as personhood requires a physical organism for its manifestation in functional, sociocultural terms. But because a human being inevitably operates in a society and culture, which impresses its rules of behavior, feeling, and thought on the consciousness since birth, the "I" is at first almost entirely enveloped in layers of images and concepts produced by family and culture seeking to make the growing person fulfill the roles they had ready for him or her. Thus both the body of the newborn and the principle of individual selfhood latent in it have to adjust to the situation. The outcome of the effort to adapt to the patterns of functional activity imposed by the family and society is the *ego*.

As this term is commonly used today, it is also quite ambiguous, and its nature and function is often radically misunderstood by both materialist psychologists and spiritually-minded seekers conditioned by religious traditions. When a child or teenager rebels against the type of behavior and thinking-feeling family or society expects him or her to follow and is determined to do his or her "own thing," we say that this revolt is the manifestation of the young person's ego; and so it is. But what often is not understood is, on the one hand, the relationship between the ego and the "true I" and, on the other hand, the essential need (or function) the ego fills in the development of a conscious and potentially individualized human being living in society. Today, in view of the relatively new possibilities of transpersonal development having been opened to mankind as a whole, a basic question has to be answered: is the ego a psychomental structure that must be destroyed or surrendered if one is following a spiritual path — or is it the natural way individuality has to operate at first, a way eventually to be reoriented and transformed by the realization that a more-than-human, transindividual state of consciousness and activity exists and that it constitutes the next stage in human evolution?

The concept of transpersonal activity, and therefore the value of the message RITA is attempting to communicate convincingly, depend on it. This concept can be clearly understood only if we realize that the development of an ego at the level of

psychism is a necessary phase of *human* evolution, but that this development can operate in several directions. Three possible lines of development can be identified, and I shall outline their main characteristics.

## Three Lines of Development of The Ego

The first point I must make — though in our legalistic and materialistic American culture it recently has become a highly controversial and emotionally charged issue — is that until a baby is able to relate itself to other existing entities by breathing the same air and emitting vocal sounds (the "first cry") it cannot be considered a person. A foetus is a biological organism which is *potentially* not only a person but far more than a person; yet — I repeat — potentiality is not actuality. An unborn foetus is an animal organism belonging to the species *homo sapiens*. It actually becomes a person only by virtue of its participation in social processes endowed with a *human* character. This human character is based on the development of at least the rudiments of individuality, the capacity to develop a conscious and objective sense of self — that is, to consciously refer a vast number of experiences (though usually not all) to a center, "I myself." This capacity is *the* one essential determinant of the human condition. It hardly exists as an actuality in a newborn baby, but it begins to take form immediately after birth, presumably in connection with the way the newborn is handled and fed (hence the importance of these initial experiences for the development of the ego).

After a newborn emerges from the material womb within which it developed at the strictly biological level, an infant remains enfolded within a higher (because more inclusive) and subtler matrix, the parental culture and its psychism. Psychism is the power generated by the vast variety of interorganismic and interpersonal relationships that operate within the field of a culture. Every culture is based on a set of racial characteristics, religious-ethical symbols and myths, and emotional as well as conceptual paradigms that in their totality constitute a way of life.



However, such a collective way of life is always exclusivistic: all cultures demand implicit obedience to their particular approach to all the relationships constituting the warp and woof of human existence, and all cultures constantly emphasize how their approach differs from all other approaches. Culture is a separative factor, simply because it defines and, by defining, limits and strengthens the feeling-realization of *belonging* to a special collectivity. This collectivity of interrelated persons usually believes itself to be inherently superior to other cultures, at least insofar as it is directly related to and favored by "the only true God." If forced into a position of inferiority by a superior military or political power, the culture develops psychic mechanisms of compensation; a collective state of neurosis and more or less rapid disintegration usually follow.

Similar mechanisms of compensation develop in a growing child or adolescent and constitute his or her ego. But such a process is normal: an ego *always* develops in a human being. It can, however, develop in several ways. Some ways can be most harmonious; they lead to the progressive formation of a satisfied, smoothly developing, happy ego — a formation based on the imitation and duplication of the ways considered "right" and effective by the parents, religion, school, and culture of the society or the sub-culture of a particular social class. In such a case the ego is built on the realization of being, *as an "I,"* a secure and happy participant in the activities of a group of persons whose motivations for action are unquestionably accepted. The group's *unity of psychism* becomes the basic fact of personal existence and is taken for granted, just as health is taken for granted by a child who has not directly or vicariously experienced illness.

In many instances, an unquestioned acceptance of and submission to the values and traditional way of life of one's culture and religion are only indications that the principle of individuality is as yet hardly active in a passive and perhaps dull personality. On the other hand, a dynamic individuality may freely, consciously, and deliberately accept the principles of its ancestral tradition and seek either to adjust the values of the cultural-religious past to superficially changing social circumstances or to purify the tradition from distorting accretions or perversions and to bring renewed vitality to ancestral values. This can occur particularly when, during a culture-cycle's autumnal, disintegrative phase, a temporary recovery — an "Indian summer" — summons, as it were, brilliant persons in

whose lives and works the past shines with an evanescent yet poignant glow.

On the other hand, throughout a culture's span of life, especially during its last phase, or in disruptive family situations, the imitative, security-guaranteeing, harmonious development of the ego may be thwarted, confused, or destroyed by a variety of childhood experiences. The German psychologist Fritz Kunkel, who developed a "We-psychology" which was once well regarded, stressed the crucial importance of what he called the first breakdown of the We-consciousness, usually through some action of the parents that destroyed the child's feeling of confidence and security. The disruption of the previously unquestioned acceptance of and dependence upon the love, the way of life, or the religious beliefs of the father, the mother, or the close environmental group is for the young child's developing ego what the experience of serious illness is for the biological growth of the body. This breakdown of the primordial We-consciousness, and of a totally satisfying and secure state of belonging to a sociocultural community energized by a unified psychism in which all share, constitute a psychic illness. The effects of such an illness may last throughout the entire life of the person experiencing it. It usually creates what modern psychology calls "complexes" by introducing some kind of obstacle into the steady flow of the inner life — the current of psychic energy. Around this obstacle a whirlpool is formed having its own unnatural, tense vibration. Any new experience somehow resonating to that vibration is drawn to the whirlpool, giving it more power and making it more difficult for the ego to adjust to what is required. Complexes therefore, give to the ego a more or less tense, neurotic, and to some extent catabolic, often sharply antisocial, antireligious, or anticultural character.

The special circumstances and the nature of the breakdown of the original We-feeling and of an unquestioned dependence upon the family's psychism forces the ego to discover and gradually make ever more definite and rigid its individualized — that is, more or less unique reactions. Then, under stress, an ego is built that is *structurally different* from other egos. Differences accentuate the feeling of separation, isolation, or even total alienation — perhaps the sense of being "special," with a strictly individual function in life. This function may be that of sharply criticizing, challenging, or even destroying one's native culture. There may also be no sense of having a special individual function. Instead, a cynical eagerness to get out of society whatever it



can be made to give may develop. The isolated person turns into a predator operating in what the ego sees as a social jungle where only power counts. In a society dominated by such egos, the energy of collective psychism sooner or later takes the form of money — the ultimate symbol of inorganic power at the sociocultural level; the developing ego becomes power-drunk and money-mad. The kind of egocentric individuality being produced in fateful and essentially tragic isolation *has to* see itself as an end-in-itself; it operates amid the total collapse of the ability to harmoniously relate to other individuals, to truly love, and to mentally envision any state of being above and beyond the level of individual autarchy and total alienation.

Such a separative, antisocial, and potentially or even actively destructive condition may nevertheless be avoided. An internal psychic reaction against the ego may occur, perhaps because the mind comes to realize where the development of such an ego can or even must lead. Other forces within the total person may also be operating. From unconscious biological roots, the will to survive may challenge the dysfunctional revolt of the ego, and (as we shall presently see) higher pressures may also induce a reconsideration of the ego's attitude. The process of individualization indeed need not dominate the whole consciousness of the person. The opposite natural polarity of being — the trend toward belonging to a well-organized and secure community, toward the relatedness of love and the actualization of an imprecise yet deeply moving vision of all-human unity and peace — can assert itself powerfully, especially during tragic experiences of ego-failure and power deprivation, or when a profoundly felt love breaks down.

In such a case, modern psychology speaks of an "identity crisis." What actually is at stake is an emotional as well as conceptual redefinition of what should be the meaningful and wholesome balance between the individualizing and communalizing trends in human existence. When a strongly motivated and dynamic individual sees the society and culture to which he or she belongs by birth or education show signs of deterioration and perhaps irrevocable psychic disintegration, the individual may feel poignantly isolated. Yet if he or she refuses to accept this isolation as inescapable or to glorify it proudly as an end in itself, he or she may have experiences compelling the realization that it is not merely his or her particular culture that has to be transcended and another new and fresh culture built; what can, and eventually must, be transcended is

*the state of culture itself.* A still more disturbing and awesome realization is that, if the state of culture is to be transcended so must the state of personhood (as our present Western mentality understands it) and the kind of individuality we normally experience as our ego, as "I myself."

I repeat: in our modern world, a culture and a family tradition constitute the psychic womb out of which an ego-defined, exclusivistic individuality emerges. The emergence may be smooth, secure and happiness-producing, or it may engender a tense, discordant, violent, and uncontrollably proud ego structuring an antisocial and resentful personality. In the process of counteracting the neurotic and destructive (or self-destructive) manifestations of the latter kind of ego, contemporary therapists try to smooth out the rough edges of the ego-structure, to make it come to terms with the society and culture from which it individualized, so that it can function somewhat effectively and constructively and cause as few problems as possible to the society as well as to the personality. In its extreme form this policy leads to the use of toxic psychoactive drugs or even lobotomy. The aims of psychoanalysis and other procedures involving action at the level of psychism — a level interpreted as that of the "collective unconscious" — and even the subtler practices of Jungian psychology are not fundamentally different. They seek to "heal" a person they regard mainly as a sociocultural entity. They try to help the person function better, more happily or creatively in society. But no serious attention is given to whether or not the society's culture is worth accepting as a frame of reference in which to function in a normal (that is, collectively approved) manner.

The psychiatrist would probably counter such a remark by saying that whether we like it or not we have to function in our society in terms of our collective culture. Escaping from such a necessity to remote places (soon to be if not already contaminated by Western ways of life) is in most instances no significant solution. However, the point either not raised or not seriously considered is that functioning in a society need not be monolithic or one-directional insofar as an individual's subjective approach and the value he or she gives to this functioning are concerned. One can function socially, culturally, and even in business just as one functions biologically by eating, excreting waste products, and keeping body healthy by exercise and by refusing to indulge in deleterious habits. Neither biological nor sociocultural functioning need affect, or even less determine, the



responses and deep rhythms of the dynamically transformative core of an individual's life — the individualized will — once his or her illumined mind realizes that, even on this planet, there is a level of being beyond personhood and culture.

The belief that such a level exists is supremely important at this time in human evolution, because the process of individualization — if successfully and positively experienced — has brought mankind to a stage at which this more-than-human level *can* be reached. It can be reached through conscious, deliberate, and consistent efforts, if we understand, unemotionally, objectively as well as subjectively, its nature and the character of the beings operating there. The basic element in such an understanding is the realization that these more-than-individual beings are *planetary beings*. They do not operate at the level of exclusivistic cultures, but in terms of the total being of the earth, thus of humanity-as-a-whole. Because they are planetary beings, their consciousness and love must include all human beings. Because all human beings are included in their all-encompassing, planetary consciousness, they *must*, simply because they are what they are, seek to reach us, whenever we are ready for actual contact. Stated in human terms, they are moved by a quasi-absolute compassion for all living beings on this globe, which has been their home and remains their field of activity.

Whatever else might be said concerning the character of this activity, it is planetary. It includes all biopsychic, cultural, and individualized forms and modes of existence on earth yet is neither limited nor determined by them. It has its own field or sphere of activity; nevertheless it must respond to the needs of whatever operates at lower levels, particularly at that of a human evolution which has provided the foundation for the process of metamorphosis into the state of more-than-man. These beings therefore are impelled to seek every possible means of assisting persons and cultures in their evolution toward the higher, planetary level of consciousness and activity they have reached. Yet it should be clear that such an assistance can be given only when individuals and/or cultures are ready for a transformation which is as difficult as it is radical and irreversible.

Individual readiness alone makes truly "transpersonal" activity possible. But this possibility becomes greatly (or at least significantly) multiplied when the culture itself has gone beyond its state of maturity and crystallization (its "classical" stage rep-

resented in the European culture-cycle by the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries). The culture then reaches a state of tension and crisis *allowing* the possibility of a self-induced and deliberately sustained metamorphosis for a sizeable number of individuals. Then, we might say, the gates to a higher state of being on earth are open to whoever is willing, able, and ready to take the necessary steps. These, however, are irrevocable, and no human being can honestly and effectively take them until he or she has become deeply and irreversibly dissatisfied with and frustrated by the cultural matrices which, since birth, have enfolded not only his or her consciousness, but his or her *will*. The transformation of which I am speaking requires both an open and well-formed mind — a "mind of wholeness" able to reach the level of archetypal principles — and an individualized and focused will rooted in the deepest realization of centrality, peace, and inner security a human being can reach as an autonomous, self-reliant, and responsible individual.

When the individual is ready, the way of transformation is revealed — the Path of which all true esoteric traditions speak. It may be revealed only as an opportunity to move in a direction one feels deeply urged to follow, perhaps at first for unclear reasons. Ultimate success nevertheless demands the clarification of these reasons. A devotional attraction to some personage who seems to embody an ideal of human transcendence and radiates an unusual and fascinating power is, in most cases today, insufficient to achieve a truly autonomous, spiritual transformation. Principles are far more important than persons; nevertheless contact with a person (or a few persons) who act as "carriers" of a future-oriented impulsion and the power needed to make it effectual is often a conditioning if not determining factor. The difficult question one has to answer is always: how can I be sure this person is truly an *agent* through whom the reality and power of a transcendent, planetary state of being is being focused? Is he or she really a "transpersonal" intermediary or only an unusual, fascinating personality?

Every seeker, every traveler on the Path toward a higher stage of being and a more inclusive quality of interpersonal relationship, must answer these questions *as an individual*. A significant, valid answer should well up from the depths of his or her being. But the mental and emotional channels for it are often so deviated or blocked by self-indulgence that the answer is hesitant, insecure, or even wrong. The points I present in the following pages may, if carefully considered, clarify some situa-



tions which current beliefs, societal values, and the confusion produced by a myriad of options and "spiritual" claims make so difficult to understand and assess unemotionally and impersonally.

## The Level Beyond Personhood

Recapitulating briefly: three levels of organization can be identified as the basic order underlying the multiplicity of our perceptions and experiences. *Matter* is the organization of a multitude of elements (of still-unknown nature) into atoms and molecules. *Life* refers to the sustained and self-multiplying organization of cells and multicellular organisms which, in their interrelated and interdependent activity, constitute or operate in the earth's biosphere, which itself is an organized system able not only to sustain and repair itself, but also, most likely, to evolve as a whole and to transform itself.

Mankind-as-a-whole operates most characteristically at the third level of *culture and personhood*; but human beings are also organismic and material systems. The general principle is always that wholes operating at higher levels do not lose their rootedness in preceding evolutionary levels. Life is based on material units; and human societies, out of which cultures and persons are born, are deeply affected by material resources and the presence or absence of biological products, which in turn are affected by climate and chemistry.

The belief in a *fourth level* of existence has been a powerful factor in the development of human consciousness and the establishment of all cultures. Esoteric traditions, either in their essential purity or in the mythologized and personalized forms we call religions, have always assumed, on the basis of special experiences (in religious terms, "revelations") the existence of a realm of "spirits" or "divine beings" transcending the physical nature our senses perceive and our minds parcel into a multitude of separate entities. But the endlessly disputed questions have been how to define the character of this transcendence, the nature of these spiritual beings, and (recently) whether or not they exist as objective entities.

Primitive animistic cults considered spirits as beings involved in the production of natural phenomena and in all processes of life. Because these phenomena and processes were numerous, a multiplicity of spirits were identified, named, sacrificed to, and worshipped for the purpose of insuring better living conditions. At a higher level of cultural evolution, when the power of collective psychism took more complex and more metaphysical forms, religious seers, poets, and philosophers spoke of hierarchies of divine beings and built intricate mythologies and theologies. When human beings became increasingly individualized, the concept of a "one and only" personal God, creator of the universe, spread; in one form or another it has dominated most of mankind ever since.

Religion, in the organized, institutionalized sense of the term, is a cultural phenomenon. In a deeper sense it is the foundation of culture, because the great symbols, myths, and assumptions of all cultures are rooted in the belief in the existence and teachings of a divine Founder in whom God (or a god) manifested and revealed his (or in some cases her) presence and love for a special race or collectivity of human beings — and more recently for humanity-as-a-whole. From the sociocultural point of view, the function of religion is to bring inner psychic cohesion to a community of socially organized human beings. Indeed religion is the "soul" (the integrative principle) of society. But this soul has a strongly particularized and usually rigid character. Religion is as exclusivistic, and indeed often more so, than culture. The "unbeliever" is as much an enemy as the "foreigner." Even relatively recent theistic and theoretically universal religions have given rise to cruel "holy wars," because the enmities between persons, the ambitions of kings and politicians, and the fear of the unfamiliar so typical of homogenous groups have been projected psychically upon the world of gods, and upon the doctrines of the earliest promoters of institutionalized religions, transforming slight differences of meaning into monstrous theological conflicts.

The great esoteric Tradition (sometimes called true Occultism, in the highest and most basic sense of the term) accepts the religious concept of the existence of spiritual or divine beings but gives it a different meaning. As this Tradition has become more widely known (but not necessarily understood), this meaning has become heavily colored by traditionally religious or sensationalistic mental attitudes, or by emotional devotionism



rooted in psychic or personal insecurity. Acceptance of the concept, even in a popularized form, is usually founded on relatively blind, nonrational faith, and on the belief that the divine, spiritual realm and the world of humanity are, if not opposite in nature and irreconcilable, at least so basically different that what is human can never reach the divine state. Nevertheless, mystics of all religions have claimed to have reached states of union — some have said “identification” — with God. The greatest mystics have been so deeply transformed or transfigured by their experiences that they radiated a light, joy, power and beneficence whose character was truly “divine.” Nevertheless, when trying mentally and verbally to interpret these experiences, the mystic seems obliged to give to the formulation the special character of the religion and theology that had formed his or her mind.

As a result, a great deal of confusion has existed and still exists concerning the nature of mystical experiences, their causes, and their ultimate significance for mankind-as-a-whole. Are they rare phenomenon available only to special persons born with a particular temperament? Are they produced only under unusual biopsychological stress? Or are they temporary manifestations of a state of being — of controllable activity as well as of intentional consciousness — representing a future stage of human evolution which perhaps all human beings eventually will reach? If the last hypothesis is correct, what will such an evolutionary process entail? How and why do a few persons reach it, apparently even today, ahead of the masses?

Answers to these and similar questions have been given by persons popularly known as “spiritual teachers.” Most religious traditions have had, and probably still have, esoteric (secret) doctrines and arduous ways of training intensely dedicated persons to reach and understand states of mystical unity and mental illumination — and probably also in many instances to acquire supernormal powers. Such esoteric doctrines often are obscure and difficult for the modern mind to understand and, even more, to accept, because of the empirical, rationalistic nature of what Western civilization calls knowledge and accepts as “objective proofs.” On the other hand, a fast-growing number of psychologically confused, intellectually curious, psychically depressed, and emotionally insecure individuals (or would-be individuals!) has recently been attracted to popularized versions of Asian or Western mystical or occult philosophies, for the purpose of trying to develop as yet unactualized levels of what is

now assumed to be the full range of “human potential.” The result is often greater confusion and a total focusing of the mind — indeed of the ego — upon “personal growth.”

What I, on the other hand, have tried to do, directly through the formulation of philosophical ideas and indirectly through the symbolism of a basically transformed astrology, is to formulate as clearly as possible a new interpretation of esoteric *concepts*. These concepts are now easier to understand, because the new world-view made possible by modern physics and astronomy has given their previously subjective, unusual, and mystical character a more objective reality. The experience of astronauts and the evidence sent back by interplanetary probes, which all people now can share via television and photographs, has provided a concrete foundation for the realization that the earth is a whole. The title of my book, *The Planetarization of Consciousness*, indicates the approach I have sought to promote. Occultism, theosophy, and even mystical experiences can be understood far more easily and concretely if interpreted on the basis of the workings of a planetary system of organization, on the basis of understanding the earth as a living organism encompassing psychomental and spiritual levels (or spheres) of activity and consciousness. This system of organization radically differs from and transcends past and present sociocultural systems; it is the sphere of manifestation of the next stage in the evolution of humanity and of the entire planet.

Today many people speak rather glibly and in personal terms of Masters of Wisdom, Elder Brothers, mysterious Mahatmas; actual contacts with such beings — or at least with the form they take when dealing with us — have been reported convincingly. The extreme rarity of such contacts and the mystery usually surrounding them can be understood if we consider what would happen if superhuman, planetary beings appeared publicly. How would the media (and indeed our and other governments!) react to such sensational events? To turn the question around, what would a philosopher of some peaceful university (if any still exists) do if suddenly transported, alone, into the midst of a jungle infested with tigers, snakes, and poisonous vines? Different levels of being do interact, but these interactions must operate under definite, well-organized conditions. Premature interactions can be disastrous for participants at both levels. Horizontal relationships (that is, relationships between persons and systems operating at the same level) turn out destructive often enough; but vertical relationships (those



involving different levels of being) are far more likely to be dangerous. Unless they operate within a traditional, hierarchical system whose *validity is accepted by beings of the lower level*, they lead to absurdly emotional interpretations, uncontrollable reactions, and the perversion of whatever energy is released from the higher to the lower level.

Therefore, I am outlining a hierarchical structure of levels of being which provides a necessary (indeed indispensable) frame of reference for all vertical relationships. Above the level at which presentday mankind normally operates, thinks, and feels, I present the concept of a planetary level of spiritual-existence, the Pleroma. At that level, Pleroma beings operate according to their more evolved nature and their planetary function. Because of this inclusive nature and function, they are compassionately ready, able, and eager to interact with human beings. They too were "human" once, and they possess material bodies, biopsychic powers, and mind. But their bodies are composed of a different type of matter, they use different modes of energy, and their minds operate at the level of archetypes and creative-formative processes as yet unknown to presentday human minds.

How can the existence of Pleroma beings be "proven?" Evidently not by what modern science considers "proofs" and not as long as "true knowledge" for scientists is restricted not only to empirical "facts" recorded by our physical senses and machines, but to events which can be repeated at will at any time in formally devised laboratory experiments.\* Such a technical approach may "work" when we deal with the level of matter, but it is bound to create a reaction by making man see himself as an exclusively material entity. Whatever can be entirely controlled by technical means in a vertical type of relationship eventually

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\*This scientific view has been based on the particular premises and assumptions of the Western world since the days of Francis Bacon (the seventeenth century) and the triumph of empiricism, on a materialistic approach to history and sociocultural processes, and on a strictly psychological approach to ego-individualization. The meaning — and limitations — of science have been clarified by recent philosophers of science. One of the most important of them, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, has written, "In the modern view, science does not make metaphysical statements, either of the materialistic, idealistic, or positivistic sense-data variety. It is a conceptual construct to reproduce limited aspects of existence in their formal structure." (*General System Theory*, New York, 1968, p. 220).

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remakes the controller in its own image: the master is bound to his slaves, for without them he could not "prove" his mastery.

The problem of coming into significant, valid, and wholesome vertical relationship with any being operating above and beyond the human stage of evolution is complex. A valid solution has first of all to be based upon the understanding that there can be different sources of subliminal (occult or mystical) experiences. Even if we take for granted that such experiences involve contacts with spiritually superior beings, we should realize that these beings may operate at four levels of attainment. They may be

(1) human beings who, though still only on the way leading to the Pleroma state, already reflect or radiate some of the power and characteristics of that state and therefore seem to transcend the human stage of evolution;

(2) human beings who, through special evolutionary development ahead of the majority of humanity, have become consciously or half-consciously *agents through whom* the Pleroma focuses some of its power for the purpose of producing certain effects at the level of human society and culture;

(3) beings who, as full participants in the Pleroma state, should no longer be considered individual persons yet who, in order to meet certain planetary situations at certain times, or even to communicate with presentday human minds, *reassume* the personal features of their last embodiment by projecting, as it were, an image of what they had been as human beings. The projection may be so *objectively* perfect and three-dimensional that it is seen as a natural physical body by those to whom it is addressed; or the image may be projected into the *subjective* consciousness of, let us say, a "disciple" needing assistance or instruction;

(4) the willful and conscious reembodiment of a Pleroma being in a newborn human body in order to perform a definite function at a time of sociocultural transformation. But what is reembodied through actual birth presumably is *not* the essential Pleroma being, who remains conscious and active at the Pleroma level; it is rather a concentration of power (the *shakti* of the being) needed to catalyze psychic, even telluric, processes of transformation at a particular stage and time of human and planetary evolution. One can then speak of an Avatar or "divine manifestation," the greater ones dealing with the most radical and extensive planetary mutations.

The existence of what has become quite widely known as



the White Lodge was brought to public attention by H. P. Blavatsky after 1875. After her death in 1892, the writings of C. W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant, and still later the work of Alice Bailey and others, gave much publicity to the concept of a Hierarchy of adepts and openly mentioned some of their names and occult functions. Though the Hierarchy is presented as planetary in scope, pictures made of it often resemble typical governmental or business organizations and fail to convey the essential difference which I believe exists between the White Lodge and the planetary Hierarchy. From the point of view of a philosophy of cyclic evolution, this distinction is important. The White Lodge refers essentially to a state of being, and more specifically to a state of consciousness representing the final consummation — the omega state — of human evolution. The Hierarchy, on the other hand, is a system of "offices" (or functions) in descending order. These offices can be filled only by beings who have attained planetary consciousness and who "belong" to the White Lodge stage of evolution. But beings belonging to the White Lodge are not necessarily members of the Hierarchy. The latter level of functioning need not be reached, and apparently for a very long time on our planet was not fulfilled, by beings having evolved from the scheme of earth-nature.

In other words, the spiritual Hierarchy of the planet deals with structural processes, the purpose of which is to bring the archetypes of the earth's multilevelled being down to the realm of material and biological formation. These processes are *involutionary*; they imply a "descent" or concretization of power. On the other hand, the White Lodge is the end-manifestation of human *evolution*. It is essentially a state of consciousness illumined by the power of the creative One (the Word, according to John's Gospel) "in the beginning." It is a state of multi-unity reflecting the unity of the divine power that had set the planetary cycle into motion. Omega reflects alpha: the autumnal harvest multiplies, as it were, the vernal seed, adding to it an accumulation of existential experiences and the promise of creative mutation in the future.

Thus, to fulfill an "office" in the planetary Hierarchy, a being must have reached the level of consciousness and power of the White Lodge. He (or rather "It") must be a planetary being. Yet no human being on earth could reach such a state while the planet was still in its infancy or even early maturity. Therefore, until relatively recently (probably until the sixth century B.C.

and Gautama Buddha), the members of the Hierarchy were beings who attained a state of being comparable to that of the White Lodge *on another planet* that was completing or had completed its cycle of biopsychic and spiritual existence.\*

Instead of using the term White Lodge, I prefer to use Pleroma to indicate that I am referring to a final "omega" state of being reached during the last phases of the evolution of any planet on which life and at least quasi-human modes of existence have developed. Modern astronomy and data from space probes may "prove" that no fully evolved living beings exist on the other planets of our solar system, yet we should not jump to conclusions based on strictly physical data. It is quite possible that only one planet in a solar system has the potential for biological and mental development *at any particular time*. Moreover, "physicality" may well include a much wider spectrum of vibrations than our senses or instruments presently can register. Traditional Occultism, yogic experiences, and the testimonies of a multitude of clairvoyants of all cultures and times should convince any open mind of the existence of a subtle type of physical matter often called etheric. Currents of this kind of matter-energy pass through and apparently vitalize all living organisms, human beings included. Chinese philosophy and medicine, (specifically acupuncture) are based on such currents, which may not refer to the highest or most subtle level of

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\*According to occult Hindu tradition, this planet was Venus, the closer of the two planets within the earth's orbit. Whether the term Venus (*sukra* in Sanskrit) refers to the physical planet or it symbolizes a level of consciousness may not be crucially important. The planet we have begun recently to investigate may have ended its life-supporting phase millions of years ago and become superheated. An article in Science magazine (July/August 1982, p. 11) speculates that an "ocean existed on Venus some four billion years ago." Our solar system may contain planets which are invisible to us and which, when the proper time in their cycle of being comes, may rematerialize, perhaps as a result of the impact of large comets or other cosmic materials from outside the solar system. Let us not forget that the solar system itself moves ceaselessly through space, some regions of which it may never have traversed before. While our sun circles around the galactic center (its orbital cycle presumably being two hundred million years), the galaxy itself also moves — but toward or around what, no one knows. All such motions and speeds obviously are relative, and the concept of "regions of space" may have little real meaning. It actually refers to the apparent distance between a mass of physical matter-energy and our instruments, and the concept of "distance" also can be interpreted in several ways.



the spectrum of physical vibrations. The "subtle bodies" of beings fully operating at the Pleroma level presumably are made of such etheric matter, which still belongs to the physical realm. Asian cultures have not been alone in accepting the existence of such bodies, for Christianity speaks of the "risen body" of Christ. Pleroma beings may be able to lower their material vibrations and become visible to our senses, but other phenomena also may be involved in the recorded appearances of spiritual beings.

All statements purporting to refer to the Pleroma level and to beings said to fully operate there evidently can be only tentative. They are interpretations involving a translation of supernal realities into the language our lower level minds can understand. They are essentially symbolic, even if legitimized by "personal" experiences. These experiences may seem completely objective to the experiencer, but this objectivity inevitably includes a high degree of subjectivity, and the particular mental pictures and feelings the experience evokes inevitably are conditioned by many personal, impersonal, and transpersonal factors.

If the term transpersonal refers to an activity (or even a feeling or thought) *through which* a personhood-transcending power and level of consciousness operate, anyone seeking to lead a transpersonal life has to accept, at least intellectually, and if possible to be aware of, the existence of a state of being above or beyond his or her strictly personal consciousness, will, and individual ability to make decisions and translate them into acts. The way the person pictures the superpersonal realm, the source of transpersonal activity, obviously is most important. It largely determines whether one is drawn toward a condition of passive mediumship or if one seeks to become a conscious, responsible agent for a Pleroma-initiated purpose. In most cases, one cannot be such an agent unless one has at least a subjective contact (or communication) with a Pleroma being. One can, however, sincerely and truthfully think of oneself as a channel or focusing instrumentality for a more generally and impersonally understood dynamism of the process of planetary, all-human evolution; and this may be the safer way. It is indeed important to realize that the term transpersonal can be used to characterize many kinds of processes. I shall discuss them presently; but first I should clarify my use of the term *archetype*.

## Archetypes

The word archetype can be defined generally as a basic and primordial *form of organization*. The "systems philosophy" formulated by philosophers of science like von Bertalanffy, Laszlo, Whyte, and others speaks of the universe as a hierarchical series of structural systems of organization. As abstract and universal formulas of relationship between essential elements, these systems can be considered archetypes; they are models or matrices from which an immense multiplicity of cosmic, material, biological, and social forms are produced. A variety of answers can be given to questions regarding the origin of these archetypes and whether or not one should speak of a *realm* of archetypes, especially if it is considered "real" in contrast to the external world in which persons operate.

Esoteric traditions mention several levels at which archetypes are created by hierarchies of cosmic beings. Theistic religions have produced various myths dealing with the creation of a realm of archetypes preceding the formation of the material universe. For most students of Occultism, the first chapter of Genesis deals only with the creation of archetypes, including, on the "sixth day," the archetype Man (or Anthropos). The creator in Genesis I is Elohim, in Hebrew a plural noun suggesting that God the Creator is a unified Host of beings. Genesis II refers to the formation of biological human beings out of the material of the earth. The builder is JHVH (Yahweh or Jehovah) Elohim, only one of the creative Host.

Philosophically speaking, the words form and structure refer to *formulas of relationships* among the various elements drawn into existential wholes (or systems) by cosmic forces, life, or mind. The word shape, on the other hand, should be used only to describe physical objects. Formulas of relationships are, however, secondary manifestations of *principles of relatedness*. Principles of relatedness are different from formulas of relationships in the same way that numbers differ from geometrical forms. But archetypes are much more than geometrical forms; they are "inspired" by spiritual Qualities seeking concrete manifestation through forms which can adequately reveal their essential nature, meaning, and purpose. Spiritual Qualities represent the many aspects of the creative principle (in a religious sense, the many names of God). Spiritual Qualities, numbers, and archetypal forms constitute the fundamental trinity of being — number referring to the frequency of vibratory



motion, the foundation of all there is.

Spiritual Qualities seek concrete, existential manifestation through archetypal forms. These forms are not rigid models to be imitated or reproduced exactly in material substances. They are rather *guiding fields* prevailing all existential wholes, from atoms to human beings to galaxies. Every whole has a guiding field, a network of formative, form-maintaining, and form-expanding (or form-replicating) energies according to principles of relatedness.

The Platonic concept of archetypes (at least as usually understood) does not make much sense, because instead of dealing with the involutionary *process* of formation leading from a spiritual Quality to a concrete, physical organism, it creates the dualism of two separate worlds, one "real," the other "unreal." Plato's famous allegory of the cave, in which conscious human beings are chained with their backs to the light, opposes a realm of shadows to one of real bodies; but there is no such opposition, except in the Western mind. The beginning, middle and end of a process are not opposite realities. There is only one reality — the cyclic process.

At the beginning of the cycle a two-way movement operates: archetypal forms are "projected" (probably a most inadequate term!) into the inert or seething precosmic substance, decomposed remains of past universes. The creative activity of unified spiritual beings takes the simplest, most repetitive form motion can take, a whorl of released energy, and induces a reaction from chaos ("the dark waters of space," says Genesis). Gradually, as action and reaction interpenetrate, the inchoate substance accepts form according to basic, then gradually more differentiated, archetypes. As simple forms become increasingly more differentiated, an amazing multiplicity of formations is produced by what the intuitive American philosopher Oliver Reiser called "Cosmic Imagination."<sup>\*</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup>Apparently, every possible interrelationship and interplay is tried out. In *The Planetaryization of Consciousness* (New York, 1970) I spoke of the "infinite Ocean of potentiality" as the metacosmic matrix from which emerges the seeming infinity of actual modes of existence. Yet the concept of infinity may be meaningless, as are all negative concepts, including that of nothingness (in French, *le Néant*). As I point out in the Epilogue of *The Rhythm of Wholeness*, it is much more sound and realistic to speak of "the undefinable" than of "the infinite."

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In the early stages of the cosmic cycles, simple, geometrical archetypes must be forcefully, irresistibly, and compulsively impressed upon the substance of chaos, because this protomatter is totally disintegrated, totally inert, and indifferent to any direction. It therefore has to be whirled around in simple motions in extended repetition. Repetitive magical procedures in primitive cultures reflect this cosmic process, as do repetitive advertisements or brainwashing (or even repetitive minimal music) in today's chaotic society. As the cyclic process proceeds, a similar but attenuated compulsivity operates as biological instinct, which no wild animal can disobey. Neither can members of primitive tribes disobey tribal taboos. Disobedience becomes possible only when the process of individualization begins. Then, gradually, human beings are born who, from mere persons compulsively bound to their culture, emerge as "free" individuals.

In relation to such individuals, archetypes are guiding fields. As a particular archetype becomes *linked* to a series of progressively more evolved and more individualized personalities, the *spiritual harvest* of the personalities' life-experiences and relationships is absorbed and assimilated by the guiding field, which in the process becomes increasingly organized and differentiated. It becomes what some occultists call the *Augoeides*, others the Solar Angel. In Bulwer-Lytton's famous novel *Zanoni* (1842), the future initiate has a vision of his Augoeides, his "higher Self."

In relation to this "higher Self" or guiding field, individual freedom is quite illusory. When the individualized "mind of wholeness" apprehends the archetype which is his or her guiding field and begins to resonate to the spiritual Quality of his or her innermost beingness, then individual freedom can only mean choosing the best way to actualize this archetype. In this sense, the truly "liberated" person — especially the avatar-type — is consciously and willingly determined by his or her archetype. Freedom and determinism merge, just as in higher forms of Buddhism *nirvana* and *samsara* are considered a single reality.

Nevertheless, an individual's archetypal form does not exercise a rigidly compelling power. Archetypes are "open systems," because they are in unceasing interaction. They express specialized principles of relatedness enabling spiritual Qualities to actualize fully their potential of being within and through individualized human beings who, free from bondage to particu-



lar cultures, can totally respond to all the implications of this Quality — at least insofar as the society they live in permits. When the society precludes such an actualization, the illumined, "transindividual" being must either withdraw to a place of safety or work from inner planes of existence until a more favorable culture reaches a level of development at which the spiritual Quality can operate effectively. When the society permits such a full actualization, the illumined, transindividual being operates as a transformative factor at the level of physical, social, and cultural living.

In closing this all-too-brief and condensed section on archetypes, I feel I should mention the somewhat ambiguous use C. G. Jung made of the term. In his earlier writings he spoke of archetypes as products (or concentrates) of the experiences of countless generations of human beings. He later implied that archetypes could be considered pre-existent structures, in which case they would be somewhat like various aspects of what I call archetypal Man. For Jung, archetypes operate in the "collective unconscious," but he never made a clear distinction between it and what I call the generic unconscious — the latter referring to mankind as a whole, the former to the psychism of a particular culture. Although many people today almost automatically think of Jung when the word archetype is mentioned, it would be best for the reader not to try to establish correspondences between two very different approaches — Jung's empirical and strictly psychological approach and mine based on cosmological and metaphysical principles.\*

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\*That Jung had no interest in what he summarily dismissed as metaphysics is amply attested to by the following quotation from his Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (New York, 1931, pp. 128ff), an occult Chinese Alchemical treatise which he insisted on interpreting exclusively psychologically:

"It is my firm intention to bring into the daylight of psychological understanding, things which have a metaphysical sound . . . To understand metaphysically is impossible; it can only be done psychologically. I therefore strip things of their metaphysical wrappings in order to make them objects of psychology . . . [The accusation of] 'psychologism' is simply the counterpart of the over-reaching attitude of metaphysics, and just as childish as the latter."

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## Transpersonal Living As A Performance

To me, the word *transpersonal* essentially means "through the person." Of itself, however, the term does not necessarily indicate the nature, level of spiritual attainment, or essential worth of whatever "passes through" a person, nor does it reveal *how* the "passing through" operates. Neither does it indicate the character of the person's general attitude towards or reactions resulting from an influx of power originating, the person feels, outside the field of his or her normal (as our culture defines normality) experience or in another dimension of reality. The person may consciously watch and fully assent to what takes place "through" him or her, but the "passing through" may also occur as an unconscious compulsion to act, similar to the instinctive reactions to suddenly changing circumstances which occur not only in plants and animals but in human beings faced with situations challenging the biological or social root-energies of their nature.

In a situation definitely presenting the possibility of death or survival, "life," as it were, takes hold of a person's organs of action and controls his or her responses. Here "life" refers to the power which a greater whole — the human species — can exercise to completely dominate or override the personal will. In such a case one might speak of a "transpersonal" act or reaction. At the sociocultural level, if a nation is invaded by a powerful enemy, the greater whole the nation constitutes may drive an individual to enlist in the army; moreover, it can generate a passionate collective emotion leading to actual self-sacrifice "beyond the call of duty." In such a case, the national spirit "possesses" the person, who becomes its willing tool, even though the person may be unaware of the war's causes. Religious fanaticism, and even the psychic power of an aroused mob (actually a fictitious and only temporary "greater whole" imposing its irrational collective will upon a normally individualized person), can seize and thus "act through" a person. In ancient times, a prophet's organs of speech were said to be seized by a god (or God). Today, a trance medium's voice is



altered when "possessed" by his or her "control." Similar phenomena may occur in psychotic episodes.

In all these situations, a person's biological responses, will, and/or faculties for self-expression are overwhelmed by a power, the nature and purpose of which the person's ego-mind may not (or cannot) be conscious. The power may be that of a divine being seeking to inspire and guide an individual who is ready for a radical transformation yet who is still unaware of what it implies. It may be the structural power of an archetype revealing itself, perhaps in a sudden visionary experience, in order to neutralize the resistance of the concrete mind and thereby induce a timely change. But it may also be the dark power of a nefarious being (human, subhuman, or even superhuman) compelled to subjugate or feed upon the psychic energies of living men and women in order to maintain its own existence. In less extreme situations, the protective shell which culture and ego should normally have built around the consciousness and the psychic contents of the personality may prove too weak or too unsteady to deal successfully with external or internal pressures; the result may be a temporary "invasion" of the personality by various forms or currents of psychism or elemental (subhuman) energy. These invading forces may overwhelm the person's organs of action and even the cerebral mechanisms through which the mind operates, producing the various phenomena of "mediumship."

Higher manifestations of mediumship are difficult to distinguish from a transpersonal activity which involves nonpossessive and at least partially conscious interactions between two radically different levels of being. For example, while everyday we experience mental images or states of consciousness that generate biological reactions, we still do not know how a phrase we hear causes the muscles of our hand to tighten in angry readiness to inflict a blow, or how a thought passing through our mind arouses a physical, sexual reaction. We accept the evident fact that the levels of personhood and biology constantly interact, yet the average modern intellectual has difficulty believing that the Pleroma level and that of personal selfhood may also interact.

If we accept the possibility of such interactions, because we experience *ourselves* as individual persons we tend to personify any current of energy whose source we believe exists at the Pleroma level: a Pleroma being is communicating with our in-

dividualized consciousness — "he" is talking to "me." We even speak of a "dialogue" between man and a God we personify (Martin Buber's *I and Thou*). Devotees of esoteric traditions receive communications from "Masters" whose names they know and invoke and whose features have been portrayed by artists claiming to have had their hands guided by such transcendent personages. Such beliefs are not essentially irrational or fallacious as long as one pole of the contact, the person, can think of and picture reality only in terms of the state of individual selfhood in which he or she functions. The person *has to* project this sense of individuality upon the source of the communication he (or she) feels addressed to himself, and through himself to other persons like himself. But while a superpersonal Pleroma being must retain enough of the personalizing power of his past level of being to be able to enter into effective contact with persons who are still only personal and must personalize everything, the danger is that the source of the contact may not, in fact, be a Pleroma being. Instead it may be an ultrapersonal superego — a powerful individual existing mainly at the superphysical or mental level. Such a being may have the power to act upon an ordinary human being by controlling, subjugating, or deviating the person's mental processes, perhaps by affecting the currents of energy animating the person's body, psyche, or mind.

A less dramatic but more frequent consideration in any truly transpersonal interplay arises from the inadequacy of the portion of the means of communication which have to be anchored in the still culture-bound and partially egocentric mind of the human recipient. The transpersonal communication has to be incorporated in the language the recipient's culture has produced; the words and syntax of the language form patterns of organization that are too limited or rigid to be remolded by the powerful currents of energy moved by the interpenetrating rhythms of the Pleroma level of being. Even if the contact with a Pleroma being manifests as physical gestures and actions, muscles too have their own kind of rigidity. Old habits and ancestral responses to external challenges have intense inertia.

All of this points to the crucial importance of thinking of transpersonal communication essentially in terms of the gradual *revelation of archetypes* — and primarily of those archetypes which it is the individual's destiny (dharma) to actualize in concrete form in the substance of everyday living. Today "everyday living" usually means living in a society whose cultural paradigms have to be radically transformed because the present phase of



the culture's cycle (or life-span) *demands* such a transformation.

The implications of the last paragraph may be clarified if we think of transpersonal living as an unceasing *performance* — as activity through (*per*) a form. This form is the archetype of one's essential being, which is inspirited by what I have called a spiritual Quality. For many theologians, such a Quality is one of the myriad "names of God." If, as stated in the opening sentence of the Gospel of John, God is considered "the Word" that was "in the beginning," this immense cosmic (or rather cosmogenetic) Word evidently has a myriad of "Letters," each of which represents one aspect of the divine. In the beginning of the universe, these Qualities are only potential. The destiny and purpose of the entire cosmos, and particularly of Man (archetypally speaking), is to actualize and give substance to them.

Human life, once it has reached the level of fully conscious, autonomous, and responsible personhood, should be understood and evaluated as a performance. The quality of a particular person's performance is preconditioned by the temperament of his or her body, the character of his or her personality, and the line of development taken by the process of ego-formation. A time comes, however, when all this conditioning has to face the test of *adequacy to the archetype* to which the individual is meant fully and irrevocably to attune himself or herself. Before this moment, everything is merely preparation. Then comes the moment of performance, the "hour of truth."

In a musical performance, the musical score is analogous to the archetype. As an ideal form, the music itself should speak *through* the orchestra leader, who by then should have proven his or her ability to integrate and harmonize the various elements of the complex instrumentality (the orchestra) he or she was selected to conduct. In everyday life, birth is the process of selection, and humanity-as-a-whole does the selecting. Indeed, the full meaning of the music can be revealed only by the interaction of the orchestra and the audience. Any individual's dharma reveals what it is *for* in the performance, *if* it is truly a transpersonal, thus "re-vealing," series of acts. Before the performance, the performer may know *intellectually* all about the musical score he or she has to perform, but a truly inspired, truly transpersonal act *performs itself through* the performer. One prepares for it through training, self-discipline, and the steadying of the will; but the type of consciousness rooted in the superpersonal Pleroma level does not result from before-the-act, argumentative

decisions. It is consciousness *in* the act, *through* the act. It is consciousness born of the actualized relationship of an archetypal reality (illuminated by a spiritual Quality) to an individual person in control of human nature and thus able to overcome its inertia and repolarize the entropy of all material aggregates.

In its true character, transpersonal activity reveals, and at the same time consolidates, the until then only implicit relatedness of a single spiritual Quality to a human being that biology, culture, and the process of individualization in and through an ego have produced — one in a series of previous attempts, at best only partially successful.\* Neither the person nor the culture that gave form and solidity to the mind, and still less the biological organism, have *in and of themselves* an essentially spiritual value. They constitute means to an end. But neither is the spiritual Quality really the end. Spirit is no more an end in itself than matter — or than the mind providing the means for the fulfillment of their relationship, the "divine Marriage." The supreme reality is their essentially threefold relatedness. The field for the "meeting" of spirit and matter is the person. The nuptial chamber is the true mind, the mind of wholeness. Relatedness is "love" — the cyclic Motion of being, the "great Breath," the pulsation of "eternity."

Transpersonal living is the life of ever-renewed, open, fearless, and illumined relationships. In these relationships all opposites discover their harmonizing meaning; and the discoverer is Man, in whatever form and on whatever planet he-she operates. In Man, spirit and matter, unity and multiplicity, the subjective and the concrete, participate as partners in a planetary performance in which individual freedom realizes itself a dynamic aspect of the determinism of archetypal structure. Man is the performer; and every performance a potential transpersonal revelation of an aspect, however limited, of the all-encompassing Wholeness that alone is reality.

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\*For a discussion of what is rather inaccurately called reincarnation see *The Planetarization of Consciousness* (pp. 151-88) and especially the forthcoming book *The Rhythm of Wholeness* (Part Two).