

Man and his Souls

Nicolas N. Tereshchenko ©

Is there such a thing as a human "Soul" ?

An important question which since time immemorial has been asked by many people, caused much argument and even led to actual strife.

Religious people have answered this question in the affirmative, usually also additionally asserting that the Soul is given by "God" to every man and is immortal - this latter claim being made in spite of such clear and unequivocal statements in the "Holy Bible" as : "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4) and "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body" (Matthew 10:28), for example.

Others, who call themselves materialists, have answered this question in the negative, boldly asserting that there is no such thing as the "soul", and that what is misguidedly called by that term is simply the by-product of the activity of man's material physical body.

If the answer to the question "Have men souls?" is indeed "No!", then no further question arises. But if it is "Yes!", then two further questions become imperative. These are : "What is the Soul?", and "What purpose does it serve?". Possible answers to these questions will be suggested in this paper, but by implication only.

Actually, to start with, the answers "Yes" and "No" are both right. In the various religions and other "philosophies" using this term, the word "Soul" is never adequately and clearly defined, and it is always assumed that all men each have a soul and moreover that all these souls are of the same kind. But this is not the fact, as it is hoped to indicate in this essay. The fact is that some men have a soul, others do not have one ; and even those who do have a soul, have different kinds of "soul".

But what is true, also, is that every man is born with the possibility of acquiring a Soul by his own conscious efforts. It does not, though, grow mechanically and automatically as the body does.

In reality three possibilities exist and there are human souls of three different types, only one of which is truly immortal and deserves fully to be called "Soul". Of the other two, one is called "soul" only by courtesy and habit, while the other one is an incomplete, immature Soul, only on the way of truly becoming one, without any certainty that it ever will.

But before going any further, let us be clear on the following points :

First of all, being male, the author intends to use the male noun "man" and the male pronoun "he" throughout this article with the understanding that whatever applies to a he/man equally applies to a she/woman (God bless her ! May her charms never grow less).

Secondly, will the reader please accept the "technical" terminology used without immediately disagreeing with the meaning given here to some quite common words? I shall try and define every term in so far as I am able to do so, but undoubtedly the very same word used by me with a specific meaning is used quite differently in some other system of thought as valid as mine. Once the meaning of each word as used here is clearly understood, let each reader translate it into his own habitual term or word for the same thing, event or process.

Thirdly, what is set out here is not an invention, phantasy or speculation of my own, but my understanding of the "Truth" about the Soul, based on the study of many religious and other systems, and particularly that of George Ivanovich GURDJIEFF. It is thus not in any way patented or copyright and everyone of you is welcome to adopt it as his own and make use of it if he can.

Every man from the moment of conception of his physical body (made of the same chemical substances as our planet, the Earth, and therefore a "planetary" body) acquires an "essence". Indeed it is probable that what we call "conception" can occur only if and when such an "essence" is available for use at that particular place and moment of time. This essence is an imponderable, impalpable and invisible something which is recognised only by its manifestation, in that it makes the human being not only different from all animals, but also makes the new man, once he is born as a baby, behave in his own individual way. The essence grows and develops just as the body grows and develops, but not at the same rate.

In addition, right from the moment of birth, to his essence is added the result of what happens to the baby, that is, the effect on him of his mother, father, siblings, relatives, family friends and others, the type of house and home he lives in, the society around him, etc. This addition we shall call "personality", and it is clear that though the essence is something which belongs to the man and is wholly his own, the personality is made up of external, environmental things and factors, and thus is not something that is "his very own", but is a patchwork imposed and imprinted on him from outside. Nevertheless, this developing personality greatly affects his behaviour and reactions. Do not forget that the word "persona" is Latin for "mask", being originally applied to the set masks worn by the actors on the stage to indicate the nature of the character they were representing in the play being performed.

As the personality grows, it surrounds and overshadows the essence, which gradually stops growing and finally swoons and becomes dormant, most usually at about the age of four or five years of chronological life time. While thus "asleep", the essence does not develop any further and remains static at whatever stage it has reached, at best, and may even regress right back to where it was at birth.

The personality, on the other hand, takes over all the ways in which the child behaves and acts, and it may be a very successful "life manager" for the man from the purely worldly point of view. Perhaps even the earlier one's essence has gone to sleep, the easier it is to become "someone" in our type of civilization.

While in this state of suspended animation, the essence may even shrivel and die. But this is not at all an impediment to the personality. To the contrary : it is quite possible, indeed most likely, that only those whose essences have died can become such personages as politicians, criminals, customs officers, tax-gatherers, actors and others. It is also highly probable that the overwhelming majority of the people now living on Earth house only essences in deep coma, if not in the process of dying.

When the physical (planetary) body of a man whose essence is already dead also dies, this body's constituents return to the Mother Earth from which they were obtained in the first place, unless artificially, unnaturally and criminally prevented from doing this by some procedure such as embalming. It is quite probable that the great Egyptian civilization did perish because of the then prevalent religious practice of preserving dead bodies as intact as possible, preventing them from decaying almost indefinitely. This was an unwarranted interference with the Life-processes of our planet, who is (whether we believe it or not) a Living Being in her own right - but this is not the subject of the present paper and so will not be discussed any further.

The only part left of a man whose essence is dead and whose body is dead is his personality. It is not possible to demonstrate its physical existence (either before or after death), though there have been some experiments performed which suggest that it may have a certain registerable weight/mass. But we do know that during life it existed (as expressed by its manifestations towards others) and our Universe never wastes anything. So this bodyless personality must be used in some way, and is said to serve as "food" for our Earth's satellite, the Moon (just in the same way as the planetary body when dead serves as food-fertiliser for the Earth itself). What exactly this means and how the Moon takes and uses it is not the subject of this essay either. Sometimes, loosely, this personality is described as a "soul", thus creating confusion and introducing apparent inconsistencies.

But to do so is wrong, for from such a man - that is, a man whose essence died during the life of his planetary (physical) body - nothing remains. Dust he was and to dust he returns. These are the people about whom Our Lord and Master Jesus the Christ said ; "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew 8:22). They never had a soul of any kind, hence in their case the question "Has man a Soul ?" can and must be answered by a categorical "No".

When the planetary body of a man whose essence is alive but sleeping itself dies, then his personality in the same way goes "to feed the Moon", but his essence wakes up and is now available for rebirth in another body, thus getting a further chance of growing to maturity. Depending on how much this essence has developed before becoming dormant, the new baby will be more "advanced" or "smarter" than others of the same chronological body age. It is said also that in such a case, the essence is actually reborn (in a way incomprehensible and even totally unacceptable to a logical mind) in precisely the same baby, conceived by precisely the same parents at precisely the same time and place as previously (this is what P.D. OUSPENSKY calls "re-currence" and Alice BAILLY "re-iteration") and lives much the same kind of life as before, but with some added potentialities - such as perhaps this time round waking-up before death. It is idle at present to waste time on speculating at length about this, but the possibility exists and should not be forgotten or brushed aside.

Now let us come back to our sleeping essence. It can wake up again during the life of the planetary body. This can happen as the result of some sudden shock, such as a religious conversion, a severe illness or accident, and otherwise. Most frequently this awakening is the result of thinking deeply and often about the meaning of this world, the nature of life, the purpose of mankind on Earth, and other such questions. When a man meditates, concentrates and gives some of his time to the study of this type of subject (usually called "occult" and/or "esoteric"), he develops inside himself something which wakes up the essence and makes it active again. This "something" is sometimes called the "Magnetic Centre". Once awakened, the essence begins to grow again and develop further, but this new growth and development can happen in one of two ways.

It may grow haphazardly and unevenly, now developing in one way, now in another, inconsistently, according to the latest unguided or even misguided efforts by the man who earnestly feels that ordinary everyday life is not enough and that he needs something more, but is ignorant of where and how to get it. Or it may grow and develop in a controlled and disciplined, well balanced way.

This latter only happens in a man who has been lucky enough to have found a genuine Teacher (and - alas! - most of the self-appointed so-called "teachers" are far from being genuine and live in a state of grievous "sin" through misleading their deluded followers) or at least a real "Esoteric School".

An essence to be able to grow when it wakes must be fed, and it uses as food the personality of the man as already formed, all the impressions which enter into him through his sense organs and mind, and also the products of the air he breathes and of the ordinary food he eats. But in order for these foods to be made available in the right form and quantity to the essence, an intermediary must be built first. This intermediary is what is currently called the "Astral" body (not to be confused, as many do, with the "Etheric" body which is present in everyone and is the absolutely necessary force-field around which the planetary substances congregate to build up the outer physical body we see, feel, smell and taste). Such an Astral body begins to develop only in those who have an awakened essence, and continues to develop only while the man consciously and deliberately attends to this sufficiently often. Fortunately, even a few seconds a day of the right effort is enough for such a body to develop in time.

The essence and the new Astral body develop together, though the essence develops much more slowly, at first at least, as certain foods it must have can reach it only through a sufficiently developed Astral body. It can even happen that the Astral body develops fully or almost, but the essence again stops growing and goes back to sleep again. When such a man's planetary body dies, whatever is left of his personality goes to the Moon, as in all cases a personality must do, but his Astral body (being relatively "immortal") with its contained essence, begins to seek a suitable planetary body in which to reincarnate and continue its further growth and development. This may be the explanation for "infant prodigies" as the Astral body preserves all the knowledge, skills and capabilities of its previous host or hosts. Also it may explain some cases of "possession" and the many documented cases who genuinely remember a recent "past life".

It is possible to call such an Astral body a "soul" (let us add: Type 1) and the essence within it may also be quite legitimately called "soul" (in this case let us add: Type 2). But if a suitable body is not found within a certain finite period of time, or if, for one reason or another, no further development of the essence occurs in the new body, then the Astral body ultimately disintegrates and disappears, the essence being liberated to start again afresh in some other body.

In any case, once an essence is awakened and begins to grow again, when it has reached a certain stage, it begins to influence the physiological processes of the planetary body in order to obtain certain substances it needs for further growth. These substances are normally either not made by the man's physical organs (though these are quite capable of manufacturing them when called on to do so) or are manufactured in but very small quantities which are simply wasted in the absence of a growing essence to use them. Once an essence is sufficiently grown up (which happens only if and when the Astral body is fully developed), it can take over at will all the physiological processes of the planetary body, and even introduce new functions or build new organs, not previously existing in the man, if it needs them.

When an essence grows without the assistance and guidance of a Teacher and without the knowledge of how to properly feed and look after an essence, such as is available in Esoteric Schools, it is usually more or less mishapen and incomplete, and may even grow into a lop-sided monster which wastes the man's vital energies, often causing severe physical and/or mental illness. It is therefore potentially dangerous to use effective exercises or techniques, taken from books or other indirect (and perhaps even mistaken or erroneous) sources, on one's own. This particularly applies to unsupervised breathing exercises.

On the other hand, an essence growing under proper direction and as it should grow, is beneficial to the planetary body and not only improves its normal functions and efficiency, but can correct all existing disabilities, including the ageing process. Whether called by this or any other name, growth of essence

(Prima Materia) and its transformation/transmutation into a Soul(Gold) is the real work (Magnum Opus) and goal of all true Alchemy.

Ultimately, the essence uses us all the personality and takes over its functions - which it can perform much better and more efficiently. At this stage it no longer needs the Astral body, but mostly keeps and preserves it as a useful instrument for certain types of manifestations it may wish to indulge in (such as bilocation). Also at this stage it ceases to be an "essence" and becomes truly an Immortal Soul, which can no longer be put to sleep nor regress.

But growing an essence (or rather, growing the Soul of which the essence is the "seed") is not so easy and takes much time. So usually therefore, in fact in the overwhelming majority of cases, a man's planetary body dies before the essence has fully grown and become the Soul. Such an essence within its Astral body does not go to feed the Moon (though any remnant of personality does) or back to sleep, but remains available for a suitable incarnation, either on Earth or perhaps also elsewhere - this point has not been clearly and definitely settled and both views are acceptable. Unfortunately, if the re-incarnating immature Soul developed incorrectly, it may make the man it inhabits a monster such as Hitler or Manson.

It is said though, that in moments of great stress and/or suffering, it is possible for an essence to grow extremely fast, and perhaps even to full maturity, in what by clock time is only a few brief seconds. In such a case, depending on the cause of its accelerated growth and on the "emotional" impact of this cause on the essence during its forcible rapid development, the essence may remain Earth-bound as a Ghost - either just a lost afflicted Soul not knowing what to do, or as a Phantom seeking to redress some wrong, or even as a malignant entity pursuing some goal of vengeance. But also it may - as in the case of Christian Martyrs, for example - acquire all the stature and powers of a "Saint", whatever this state really is.

At any rate, note that if one calls the Astral body a "soul", then man can be said to be a being able to have two souls at the same time - but they are not identical.

Now we come back to the man who has found an Esoteric School and a Teacher, and who consequently has (in one or more "lives") succeeded in achieving the complete normal growth of his essence to its full maturity. Such a man can now be truly said to have an Immortal Soul, the ultimate and final product of his conscious efforts and deliberate conscientious work on his essence. Note that the efforts and work must be deliberate and conscious: a normal mature Soul does not develop accidentally, unconsciously and mechanically. No man is born with a ready-made Soul, but must work at it and deserve it. But every man is, though, born with the seed of a soul, and the capability to grow it. The responsibility to make his essence grow into a Soul or to let it die is his and his alone.

The finished Soul has powers which enable it, if it so wills, to maintain the planetary body in which it is housed alive and fully functioning as long as it likes. But of course, this also makes it in a sense "Earth-bound" and does not allow it to go on and live where and as a Soul really should, in its proper place. What this is, is known only to those Souls who have gone there.

Once a fully grown, mature Soul allows its original planetary body to die, it no longer is subject to reincarnation anywhere, nor can it be compelled to remain on Earth as a ghost. But it is said that the Soul may elect to return to Earth in a planetary body for the purpose of helping other men to develop their own Souls.

Such wholly unselfish Souls then begin to develop further in a new direction (not available to Souls who do not make this voluntary sacrifice spontaneously and of their own free will and accord), and are said to be capable of three successive degrees or grades of "Greatness". These stages in some schools are given the names of Arhat, Boddhisattva and finally Buddha, this

latter being the Ultimate State possible to any Being, whether of human or divine origin. This state of a Soul is equivalent to and indistiwshable from that of the "Suprene Godhead". Perhaps such really Great Souls as those of a Boddhisattva or the Buddha can even come to Earth whenever necessary without actually incarnating, but still able to offer and give assistance, when they wish to do so, to anyone in need of their help.

BIBLIOGRAPHY r -

BAILEY, Alice A. A Treatise on White Magic
COLLIN, Rodney The Theory of Eternal Wfe
CUSPEI\ 'SKY, Peter I!. In Search of the
Miraculous
WALKER, Kenneth The Making of Man
WU CH' ENG-EN Monkey