

A Spiritual Psychological Imagination of the Metamorphosis of the Soul

Preface

Originally I wrote this article for “Novalis Zeitschrift für Spirituelles Denken”, Switzerland.

During the first cycle of my *Professional Training in Applied Work with Biographical Development* (DE 2006 - 2008) I shared the article with participants. Recently one colleague, who is now facilitating this training programme in Switzerland, offered to review the German translation and recommended that I post this article on my website christophori.com.

After 30 years I felt obliged to read carefully what I wrote way back then, when I had just embarked on a new phase of my own professional development as a spiritual psychologist, artistic therapist and biographical consultant.

Unsurprisingly, the style, coherence and precision of my writing has in the meantime evolved further, particularly during my authoring of the first four volumes of [Edition Biographæa](#) (2024). Therefore, I decided that at least a partial revision was needed.

What I experience now, is that the text I wrote then encompasses a dynamic model of spiritual psychological processes, which in many respects I have elucidated far more comprehensively in the recently published series of books. There is still the possibility that I will be able to also commit to writing about my considerable further research and development of instruments and applications concerning how to work transformatively with the influences of the adversary beings (especially the Double and Shadow) in biographical development.

So I have not attempted to completely rewrite the article; but rather improve the focus of my use of language and terminologies in alignment with the standards I have now set myself for the purpose of writing Edition Biographæa.

30 years ago I used many concepts, terms and names, which are familiar to those who have immersed themselves in anthroposophical spiritual science; but which I did not document with sufficient rigour then. For the most part, however, I have carefully defined and provided references in Edition Biographæa, which the serious reader will be able to follow up for their own further study.

Thank You for Your interest and understanding.

A Spiritual Psychological Imagination of the Metamorphosis of the Soul

Psychology is the academic research and applied scientific discipline which encompasses the observation, understanding, modification, diagnosis and healing of soul (psychic) experiences and human behaviour. The formalised articulation of an esoteric 'Spiritual Psychology' inevitably involves dealing with paradoxical and overlapping meanings. The life of the soul is a very complex process. How can the development of Spiritual Psychology enhance our understanding of the Metamorphosis of the Soul in biographical research?

The advent of modern exoteric psychology is generally connected with research by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). The history of the development of psychology though runs far deeper in our past. As human consciousness has evolved, so also the expression and orientation of psychological research.

Roots of Spiritual Psychology

It is possible to trace the origins of a modern spiritual psychology to the astrological psychology of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499); e.g., as elucidated in his writings "De Vita Coelitus Comparanda" (1489).¹ Whilst naturally presenting his research in a language appropriate to the renaissance soul, his message was clear: fulfilment of human destiny is fundamentally determined by the health of the soul as the theatre where spirit-light and material-darkness interpenetrate and weave the colourful fabric of psychic experience.

Development of Exoteric Psychology

During the 20th century exoteric psychology developed many branches, i.e., analytical, behaviouristic, humanistic, therapeutic, existential, gestalt, transactional, bioenergetic, cognitive, transpersonal, psychosynthesis and biographical. As the century progressed the search to go beyond models of human psychic experience determined solely by childhood trauma and mechanism intensified; rekindling development of ways to reach out to and pass back through the portal of birth; propagating therapies such as primal-scream and re-birthing. Following 2nd World War interest revived for research and therapy involving previous incarnations and traumatic (near) death as well as afterlife experiences. Interest grew in the writings of, i.e., Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), George G. Ritchie (1923-2007), Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1926-2004), Ian Pretyman Stevenson (1918-2007), Raymond A. Moody (1944-).

During the 'psychedelic 60s' the quest for alternative states of consciousness gathered momentum with research into, i.e., alternative spiritual practises, yoga, meditation, drugs, dolphins and sensory deprivation. Parallel to this the personalisation of computer sciences began inculcating cybernetic (algorithmic programming) models of consciousness in our soul experience. Alongside the development of robotics, virtual-reality technology of, e.g., flight simulators and computer games has become a versatile instrument of studios, offices and factories. Scientific futurism has already begun compensating fear of planetary disaster by directing therapeutic research into prolongation of the natural life span, as well as future incarnations.

Following earlier development of behaviouristic / mechanistic models for psychology, around the middle of the 20th century, humanistic psychologies began re-asserting the right to encounter each other as 'human beings'. During the 70s a 'New-Age Movement' advanced formation of community networks throughout around the World. Transpersonal psychologies applied techniques of oriental meditation and yoga to the exploration and development of consciousness. Alternative therapies became a growth industry during the 80s. Bagwhan Rajneesh (1931-1990), for example, facilitated the training of thousands of young western adults in the application of a vast panoply of therapies inspired by the infusion of eastern spiritual wisdom into western material consciousness. Psychosynthesis developed by Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974), explores imaginative faculties for self-healing. Transpersonal psychology not only strives to understand psychic states but also to transform consciousness, as a necessary function of the task of becoming a human being.

Psychosophy and Spiritual Psychology

Transpersonal psychologies bring the hope and expectation of actually being able to change experience of self and the world. Alongside promotion of psychology as an academic scientific discipline, the boundaries of the exploration of spiritual realities have been opening. Over the decades the introduction of quantum-physical, tantra-energetic and digital-virtual analogies into the languages of transpersonal psychology, regarding the interplay between body, soul and spirit has not always been easy to follow. What is clear though is that 'Soul' has been coming back into vogue.²

The terms for communion with supersensible beings, variously referred to as, i.e., elementals, demons, angels, extra-terrestrials and stellar entities continue being sought, e.g., through the expansion of 'channelling'. Alongside the evocation of the "Gaia Hypothesis" for Earth by James Lovelock (1919-2022),³ there has been an awakening to the desertification of our own soul-life and the need for nurture. Archetypal Psychologist Robert Sardello (1942-) characterises this in his writings, e.g., "Facing the World with Soul : The Re-Imagination of Modern Life".⁴ One of many who have been bearing witness during the last decades to a new awakening of the clarity of Spirit-Light in the existential "Dark Night of the Soul"⁵ of Humanity during the Crossing of Thresholds in Time.

At the beginning of the 20th century Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) presented his anthroposophical spiritual scientific research into the Metamorphosis of the Soul in various lectures.⁶ Thereby offering a way to understand how the gradual evolutionary awakening of the activity of the 'I' during biographical development constitutes the birth of Consciousness (in the) Soul.

The following imagination is purposefully presented in a highly concentrated, condensed, schematic way. In order to apply this imagination the reader is invited to recreate it as a process in their own soul, by enlivening it with a description of their own personal or clinical experience. It is each individual's re-creation of their personal experience which brings such imaginations alive in their souls.

The Captain of Your Soul ...

What particularly distinguishes human beings from other sub natural, natural or supernatural beings, is their state of consciousness when they are incarnated. You are connected to the material world through Your physical body, striving upward as it were. The spiritual world descending, comes closest to You through the angelic realm. Yet in these movements alone You are not conscious. What bestows self-consciousness is the sense of Your 'I' activity, which arises when these two streams, earthly and heavenly, meet in the soul.

The Soul can be imagined as a vessel, like a boat, in which You develop Your individual consciousness, as You sail upon the sea of life. You are carried forward by the currents of individual and communal etheric (life) forces streaming from the past into the future. Your subconscious and unconscious memories, personal and archetypal, habits and traditions, become the ocean upon which You steer Your course through time.

You become conscious of the past when You behold memory as a personal vision reflected in the moon-like mirror of Your own individual etheric body. So also communal past becomes woven into the fabric of Your personal etheric. The activity of the 'I' is not just a function of our becoming conscious of the stream of life coming from the past. Your individual consciousness also extends into the future, like sails billowing to catch the astral winds streaming towards You from the future. In Your soul You experience Yourself moving into the future: Your desire, longing, despair, impatience, hope, doubt, fear, anxiety, apprehension, wishes, anticipation, expectation. The consciousness in Your soul encompasses a process which mediates between Your observation of future and awareness of the past.

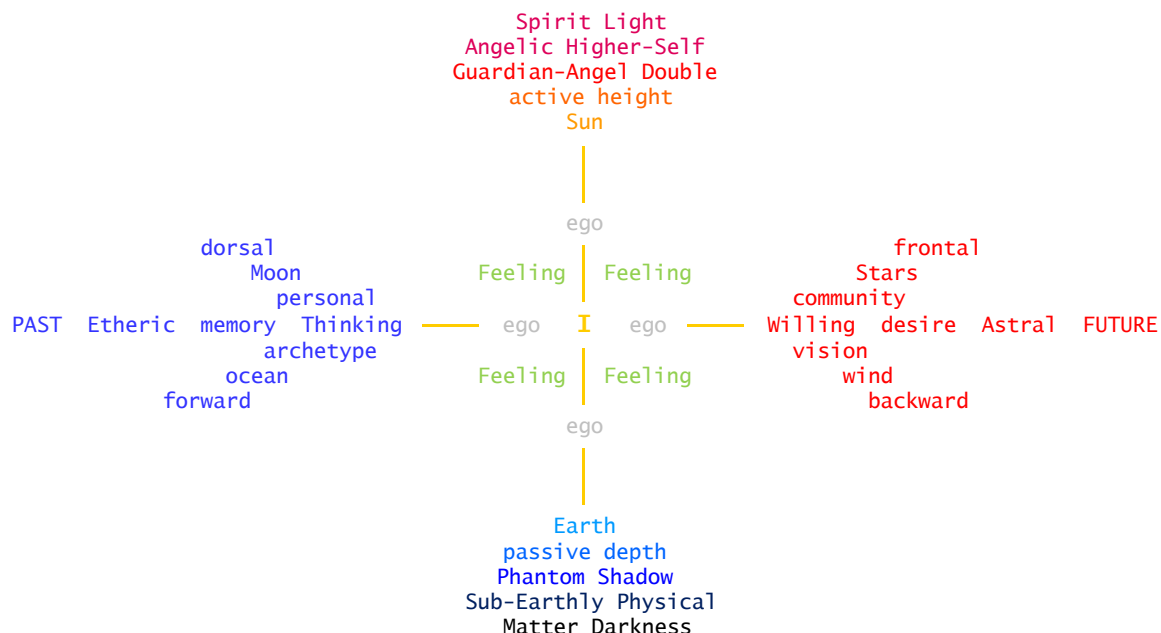


Diagram 1. Past-Future Axis and Height-Depth Axis

Now You really begin to awaken to Your Self in the rhythmic exchange of feeling-perception of the past and emotional-anticipation concerning the future. Where air meets water, wind meets ocean, astral meets etheric, the boundaries of Your personal soul arise.

'I' am continually rediscovering my consciousness as 'I' move forward along the stream of time, in the experience of the Metamorphosis of my Soul. Not forgetting that deep down, below my Soul-Boat, the ground of my body is intimately related to the earthly floor of the ocean on which 'I' sail; and high above, through day and night, heavenly stars shine their fiery light. 'I' am en-compassed by the four elements: Earth, Water, Air and Fire.

My empirical-ego forms itself out of the soul-substance, which is my consciousness of the past. By studying the past in my memories it attempts to plan for the future by meeting desire, etc. in terms of antipathy and sympathy.

My empirical-ego is, however, only the first officer: "I must decrease, He must increase".⁷ 'I' am the captain and navigator on my boat. When sky clouds over and fog surrounds, then 'I' steer my course by the magnetic field of the earth, and I plumb the depths to negotiate the hidden landscape of the ocean floor. When the sky clears and the wind is up, then I steer my course by the Sun, Moon and Stars; but still I must temper my enthusiasm to race forward, lest I meet unseen reefs which could damage, even shipwreck, my boat.

When the empirical-ego struggles alone to selfishly satisfy all desires, etc. for the future in the context of past experience only, then the vessel of the soul becomes psychically, pathologically, psychosomatically disabled. Such a captain-less boat is at the mercy of elemental forces (delusions and illusions). This is the one-dimensional realm of horizontal line, with no breadth, depth or height. Along this linear way the feeling-perception of the Sentient Soul really only experiences awareness of life in the moment.

In striving to serve the 'I' (the 'eye' which sees, observes itself through the process of the Metamorphosis of the Soul) through development of the spiritual faculty of inner-sight: Imagination, the empirical-ego is raised into the vertical dimension. Spirit-Light illuminates the dreamy perceptual life of the soul.

Within this two-dimensional plane, the outward looking impersonal review of the rationalising Intellectual Soul, and inward looking personal vision of the contemplative Mind Soul gather around the guiding beacon which is the 'I'. Like fluttering moths, thoughts and feelings interweave, dancing rhythmically to the inner music of the Angels. Complementing the formative power of the spiritual faculty of Imagination, there grows the spiritual faculty of inner-hearing: Inspiration.

As my field of consciousness reaches above and below, so also forwards and backwards, it spreads further and my degrees of freedom and responsibility grow. 'I' become conscious of my empirical-ego. Yet there is still a further dimension which my soul embraces. A boat without breadth cannot float or carry. A soul without breadth cannot breathe. What, then, are these streams to left and right, which enter into consciousness; and what have they to do with the streams of Past and Future time?

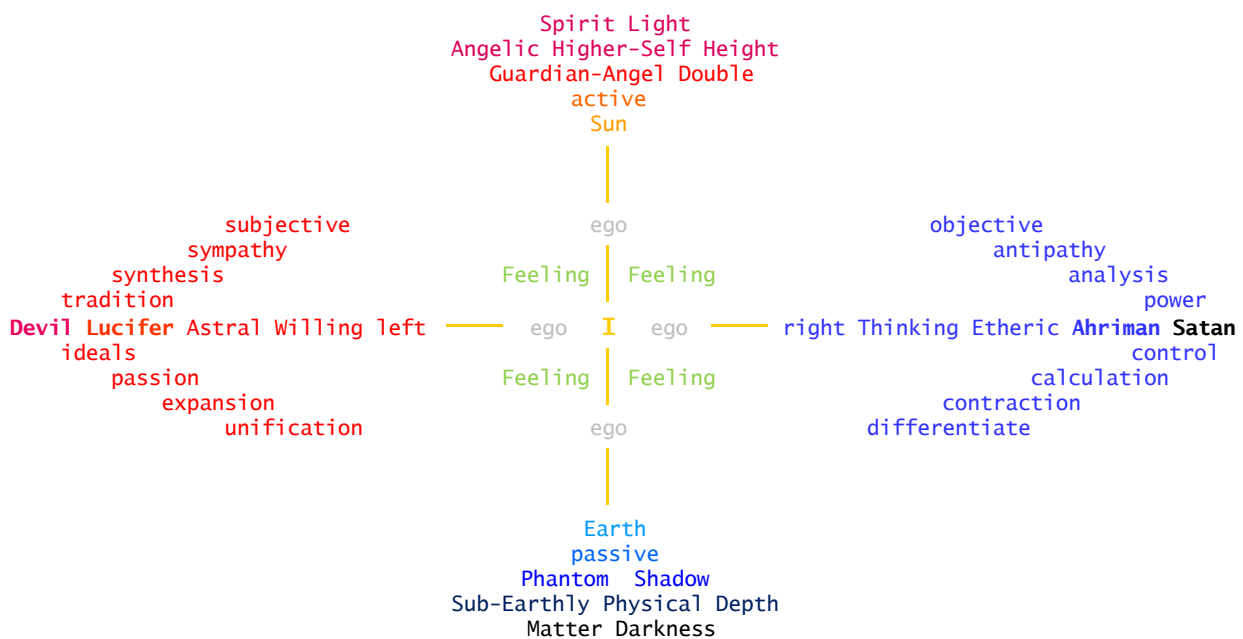


Diagram 2. Left-Right Axis and Height-Depth Axis

Mutiny and Pirates on the High Seas of Human Evolution

Representing two primary faces of evil, the Devil (Lucifer) and Satan (Ahriman) may be envisaged accompanying us on our left and right sides respectively. Immediately the whole quality of maintaining balance is introduced.

When my boat gets rocked from side to side 'I' need to be able to restore my balance. These two beings represent forces which are constantly attempting to throw my soul out of balance. If they succeed it is possible that the course 'I' am plotting through life may be changed; either without my conscious knowledge or despite my aspirations.

The impulses of Luciferic Beings work directly through the Astral Body. They may become a mutinous crew, possibly tempted by a disloyal first officer to take over the boat and sail off on some fanciful notion. The impulses of Ahrimanic Beings take over the Etheric (Life) Body. They may become pirates who invade the intimate sphere by external force of arms. The responsibility of the Captain, with the help of their loyal first officer, i.e. the empirical-ego, is to keep the balance.

'I' am responsible for nurturing the community of my crew and friendly exchange with strangers. You cannot hope to complete Your journey through life without the help of these two potential allies. Without crew You cannot keep Your boat in good repair and cope with stormy weather. Without friendly meeting with strangers You cannot find harbours to rest, replenish stores and seek practical advice and directions. The qualities of love come to expression in our spirit-meeting with other beings. 'I' am able to inwardly recognise the existence of other beings, both human and spiritual, and 'I' become conscious of being inwardly recognised as an individual being by these other beings. Complementing the creative power of the spiritual faculty of Inspiration, there grows the spiritual faculty of inner-knowing: Intuition.

Establishing these three axes of the Soul in Space facilitates observation of how these two qualities of being (Luciferic and Ahrimanic) also conspire with, and work into, each other along the other two axes, namely dorsal-frontal and height-depth. The influences of the Devil expand Your egotistical desires, so that You lift out of incarnation into a dreamy state of spiritual bliss in the heights. The influences of Satan chains You to matter, so that Your egotistical awareness contracts to become part of the programmed order of the material realm in the depths. Lucifer weaves illusion with memories of past greatness and desire of future glory, with tradition and ideals, with denial of shame which conceals the past. Ahriman feeds delusion with historical determinism and futuristic technology, with the need for power and control, with the fear which veils the future.

If 'I' am not penetrating my consciousness then my empirical-ego becomes the portal through which these adversary powers infuse the qualities of their beings into my consciousness. They cause possible extremes of soul experience which, however, can support and guide You through uncharted waters. By developing my faculty for inner-perception of the qualities of other beings (Intuition), 'I' am better able to observe with detached objectivity the activity of my own Ego, Double and Shadow, as also the accumulated karmic (earth) memory of unresolved deeds of past lives, collected and carried up towards me from the depths through sub-earthly (luciferic-ahrimanic) beings, to challenge my destiny journey through this life. The more 'I' am conscious of the Angel guarding my individual destiny striving, approaching from the spirit-future, then so do 'I' become able to honour the direct guidance of my Higher-Self.

I acknowledge my shame with awakened conscience and embrace my fear with loving devotion.

The ongoing development of my individuality in time is simultaneously a consequence and well-spring of the continual creation of the activity of my 'I' at the centre of a sphere, whose surface boundary can be conceptualised around the alignment of the six-armed cross. At every moment the qualities attributed to each arm are interweaving; they constitute the rich tapestry which is the Life of Soul. On the boat, my empirical-ego is the mast bearing sails, the compass, the plumb-line and sextant, the rudder and boom. 'I' am the captain who comes from within onto the bridge to command the navigation and nourish the spirits of the community, uphold discipline, exercise justice and administer due reward.

Spiritual Psychology and Biographical Development

Guided by the master builders of the Angelic Hierarchies 'I' plan and build my boat before 'I' cross the threshold of birth into life. During the journey of my life, I am responsible for the damage, maintenance and modifications to my boat. After crossing the threshold of death, I give my boat back up to the ocean of life; having gathered the essential experiences and treasures of my metamorphosed soul to bring back up into the Realm of Spirit.

Such articulation of spiritual psychology can help us to master the paradoxes and overlapping meanings needed to represent the complexity of the Life of Soul. The effort of creating such conceptual structures to support and focus consciousness is itself a process belonging to the Metamorphosis of the Soul. Through which process 'I' am becoming incarnate.

Attention ... in the very moment such a formulation of the soul's complex functions and processes into a neat and orderly conceptual system is articulated, the Spirit-Light of the Consciousness (in the) Soul dims, the continuous creation of the activity of the 'I' am is interrupted ... and may become imprisoned.

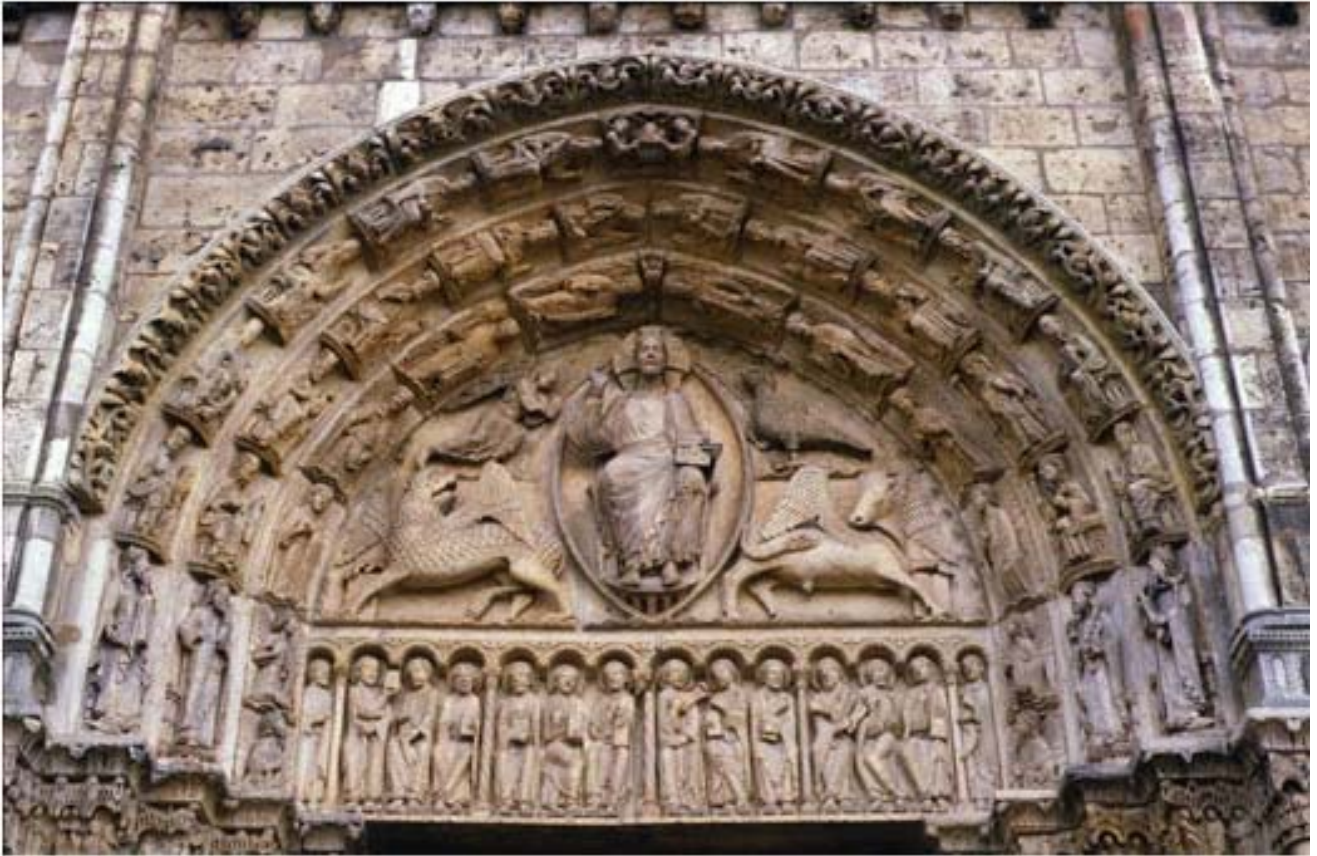
Paradoxically ... the activity of the 'I' in Consciousness Soul must be forever designing and creating new systemic models, which articulate the evolving experiences of the Consciousness of the Metamorphosis of the Soul.

When spirit descends into the stream of life, consciousness arises and at the same time something dies. With each death there is a crossing of the threshold into darkness, nothingness ...

And in the darkness of 'no-thing' the 'I' is born again and again and again.

From the moment of birth we are constantly dying. Our every movement into the future is a movement into darkness. Our entire biographical experience is that of the rhythmical ebb and flow Consciousness during the Metamorphosis of the Soul. Which can be envisioned as the 'I' spread out through the whole of the Time from Birth to Death.

'I' am created in Time, but 'I' am not of Time ... 'I' am Eternity and Eternally Becoming ...



Christ over the Central Portal of Chartres Cathedral

“I am the resurrection and the life”⁸

This is the vision of Christ enthroned in the Mandorla, the symbol of the Vesica Pisces, which is formed by two interpenetrating circles whose circumferences pass through each other's centres. Imagine now the interpenetrating volume shared by two spheres so aligned. This is a geometrical picture of the Holy (Eternal) Soul, as the vessel in which the streams of time flow and mingle. For the 'I' it is the Womb of Becoming and the Channel of Birth.

Is this a vision of the World Soul as the Apocalyptic Isis-Sophia giving birth to a Sun-Child, the “I Am”?
Is this a vision of the Holy (Black) Madonna bearing the Golden Child, the “I Am”, upon her lap?

'I' am both mother and father, conceiving, bearing and birthing the child illuminating Consciousness (in my) Soul.

No wonder 'I' can become confused about the relationship between body, soul and spirit. When my soul is shrouded by the outer darkness of matter, my ego identifies my soul with the body. When my soul is illuminated inwardly by my spirit, 'I' feel as though my soul is spirit and my 'I' is awakened in soul.

In reality the Soul is both a work of art which we create during our lives, and the architecture within which spirit and matter hold communion. The Soul is the Cauldron of Creation.

In the course of time a creative artistic processes can reveal what happens simultaneously in the conscious experience of the Metamorphosis of Soul: the spontaneous expressions of emotional experience; the collective impressions of what is observed; the integration, balancing and refinement of all together. Within all of this it is possible to follow the interactive processes of the three soul capacities: Thinking, Feeling and Willing.

Colour is created when Spirit-Light and Material-Darkness interweave in the Soul. Dense material substance (pigment) is taken up and metamorphosed artistically in the soul experience of colour as it becomes illuminated by spiritual activity. The future streams in through the Willing activity out of the darkness of the unconscious. This is experienced in the soul first as emotion: Feeling works into Willing.

Creating distance, Thinking observes the impression of the colourful emotional expression on the canvas, now a product of the past. Feeling-memories recalled in the soul are illuminated by the consciousness of spirit-light.

Thinking reaches back into the past to observe and learn. The soul experiences clarity: Feeling works into Thinking. Out of clarity Thinking works into Willing, establishing and directing purpose.

Out of the need or desire to refine, Willing works into Thinking. In the moment of integration and balancing the artist brings Thinking and Willing into Feeling, now weaving colour between spirit-light and material-darkness more consciously. When the artist has achieved the experience of equanimity of Feeling in the soul the work of art is finished. Finally the artist reviews their creative work when it is exhibited.

It is possible to connect this with the six subsidiary exercises which Rudolf Steiner recommended to those who would strive to develop more consciously their soul faculties. They can be usefully aligned with the six arms of the cross in three dimensional space. We experience OPENNESS towards the spirit-heights and POSITIVITY towards the material-depths. We practice ATTENTION to our right and SELF-CONTROL to our left. We move towards the future with EQUANIMITY and REVIEW our past with balance and harmony. These exercises salutogenetically support the development of the supersensible organ of the Soul known as the Heart Chakra.⁹

Consciousness (in the) Soul is complex. The qualities and categories attributed to each of the six arms of the cross inform and influence the processes working along each of the six axes respectively. Processes primarily active along one axis also become active in some way along the other five axes. All of this is happening simultaneously.

The Soul is not a Vessel fixed in Physical Space. The Soul is a Vessel Metamorphosing through Time. The Metamorphosis of the Soul is the process of Individualisation. What then is holding this all together?

A healthy empirical-ego manages basic co-ordination by which the soul is able to orientate in time and space. The ego, however, is only an instrument of the soul; it is not the well-spring of consciousness. The well-spring is the activity of the 'I'; i.e., the essential, eternal, timeless quality of being which is the creative source and focus of our conscious experience of the Metamorphosis of Soul. 'I' am the continuity and certainty which links each separate moment in time with those before and those after: Individuality transcends time.

Modern human beings are artists of the soul : applying these principles in the responsible creation of their own biographies. They are capable of artistically documenting their experiences of crossing thresholds in time. At each threshold crossing the forces of space and time threaten to tear the soul apart. Pathological states of consciousness, psychical and physical disabilities, manifest when the soul capacities Thinking, Feeling and Willing become separated. The soul literally gets torn apart and exposed to alien spiritual influences, when it is not fully permeated by the individuality incarnating in time and space through the soul. The intricate relationships between physical, etheric, and astral bodies, which constitute the soul, also become disturbed. By itself the ego is very limited in its ability for maintaining short to medium term survival by coordinating the capacities and organs of the soul.

The empirical-ego is formed by default when spirit enters space; it becomes the keeper of time and spatial coordination in the soul; a stage-manager as it were. When spirit enters the streams of time the empirical-ego becomes ensouled. As a product of space and time, the empirical-ego cannot be the source of individuality, which is the eternal activity of the 'I'. It is the activity of the 'I' which directs the theatre of our lives. If it cannot do this, for whatever reason, then we encounter dramatic difficulties. The activity of the 'I' is the restoring, healing source of balance which unites the human being with their Self.

The Soul encompasses the boundaries of eternity and infinity. The Soul mediates the conscious experience of the relationship between temporal and spatial being. Spiritual Psychology, particularly in the context of Work with Applied Biographical Development, has been characterised as “Grail Psychology”,¹⁰ because it is concerned with the exploration, healing and Metamorphosis of the Soul (psyche) from within.

‘I’ incarnate with the longing to find and serve the Holy Grail in Community ...

Chalice of the Soul : Lunar Well-Spring : Source of Eternal Life : “Springing from Powers of the Sun”.¹¹

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