

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE OCTAHEDRON?

In the last issue of *The Pythagorean Courier* the question was asked and answered, “What is the Meaning of the Dodecahedron?” In that connection it was also said that the octahedron indicates the fourth in sequence in all manifestation, just as the dodecahedron indicates the fifth. Where our solar system is concerned, the octahedron is world 46, the essential world, the world of love and wisdom.

The octahedron is a regular polyhedron with eight faces which all are equilateral triangles. The octahedron can also be described as a solid composed of two pyramids united in their common base. Each pyramid has four visible sides and fifth invisible side, the base. In each septenary of worlds, the fourth world is the middle one, in each seven-globe the fourth globe is the middle one, and the four remains four irrespective of whether it is counted from above or from below, from the beginning or from the end. This fact, that the four keeps its place both when viewed from above and from below, is indicated by the number 8, which equals $4 + 4$. The octahedron as a symbol of world 46 indicates in this way that being (that mode of existence) which specially characterizes that world and its ruling department (ray), the fourth. This being can be described in words thus: through conflict final harmony is achieved, through manifested duality final unity is achieved which rules the all.

To lower consciousness love appears as opposite to wisdom. However, only love and wisdom of qualitatively lower kinds can at all be opposites of each other or come into mutual conflict. Essential love is wise, and essential wisdom is loving. Essentiality holds no conflict, but explains that the harmony it displays has been attained through struggle within the lower and with it. But also such terms as “conflict”, “struggle”, “opposition” must be understood differently in different worlds and in different, lower and higher molecular kinds within the worlds: in causal consciousness (47:2 and 47:3) struggle is still perceptible as long as the ideal has not been attained, but this struggle is “milder” (non-aggressive) and “more rational” than struggle in the higher mentality (47:4 and 47:5), let alone the lower mentality (47:6 and 47:7), and emotionality, higher (48:2 and 48:3) and lower (48:4-7). Man has to use at least perspective consciousness (47:5) to clearly understand how “struggle”, “conflict”, etc. has different expressions and meanings in different worlds with their different kinds of consciousness and different kinds of control of energy (“will”).

The eight faces of the octahedron symbolize, among many other things, eight cosmic ideas on which aspirants should meditate with self-consciousness: 1) the unity of all; 2) the three aspects of everything; 3) down-scaling (or dimensional reduction): 3 become 7, 7 become 49, the seven cosmic septenaries, the seven rays or departments; 4) the laws of life; 5) consciousness development as the meaning of life; 6) the twelve essential qualities; 7) Augoeides; 8) hierarchy, school, the elder brothers – the “higher” in the widest sense. These eight ideas sum up, for those who understand them, the whole esoteric knowledge.

The separative instinct, this distinguishing self-centredness, has been the nursery for the development of man’s discrimination. The faculty of discrimination balances the striving for unity when this is pushed too far and is not expedient. Only the voluntary merging of individuals and groups motivated by common interest and aim is of value, and that is seen only in the final part of the human evolution. It is incident upon an earlier stage of intense self-assertion and intense self-realization. (*Cosmic Intelligence*, 6.2.3)

Unity is not only love, but also wisdom. Both must exist, and be united in harmony and balance. Love without wisdom often causes harm. Wisdom without love easily turns into hardness without compassion.

Nothing exists in isolation; everything influences everything else. Nay, even more: everything mirrors everything else, perceives everything else. With what degree of clarity this is done is another matter and shows the degree of consciousness developed. And “everything” is

a being at some stage of development.

Duality exists only in the lowest three worlds, 47–49. In world 46 and higher worlds there is unity.

We are all one another in some sense. We all make up one common cosmic consciousness. Like all water-drops are united in the ocean, so the individual consciousness of all monads is united in one common consciousness. This is the cosmic total consciousness in which every monad has an unlosable share.

The most important thing to know about the nature of consciousness is its unity. There is only one consciousness in the entire cosmos. But we human beings are still too primitive to be able to perceive unity. It is only when the sense of responsibility – not just for ourselves or our family or even nation, but for all life – awakens in us that we begin to participate in the consciousness of unity. In fact, we are all – minerals, plants, animals, and human beings – included in ever greater hierarchies of life.

Emotional imagination at the stage of the mystic tends to misconceive of unity as equality.

Unity has a structure. It is not a homogenous condition of equality of all the participating monads. Unity is expressed in a hierarchy of collective beings: groups of groups, and groups of groups of groups, etc., all of them having specialized functions. All cooperate without friction.

What makes up a collective being is determined by a certainly distinguishable though not separating limit against other departments and other functions (expressed paradoxically: a unit for itself in unity). All monads of a collective being are self-identities having their individual characters. Their particular abilities are shared in common and can be utilized by others if the work at the specialized function so requires. The collective being guarantees a common, all-round capacity of everybody and a freedom from the limitations of individual characters. (*The Way of Man*, 9.9.1)

Of course there is a symbolism in the “hidden four” as well, that is, the hidden square that is the base of either pyramid. Here the number four symbolizes the “lower quaternary”, the so-called personality, the four envelopes of incarnation: the etheric envelope, the emotional envelope, the mental envelope, and the triad envelope (the lower or lesser causal envelope), see *The Knowledge of Reality*, 6.12.46. It is by having experiences during the long series of incarnations and working these experiences into understanding, insight, and ability that the human monad builds its greater causal envelope and, at the end of the human kingdom, also the beginning of an essential envelope, a 46-envelope. The work in and through the envelopes of incarnation thus forms the necessary basis of the two higher envelopes slowly growing. Once the monad has accomplished this work and, as an essential self (a 46-self), passes to the fifth natural kingdom, the necessity of incarnation in the lower worlds ceases for the monad and the monad forthwith dispenses with the envelopes of incarnation, so that the causal envelope (the newly formed one, not the old collector envelope) becomes its presently lowest envelope. As a symbol of the 46-self, the octahedron concealing its square base thus means this: the four envelopes of incarnation do not manifest themselves any more – the organism is not included, for it is said not to be a “principle” (not an independent envelope because it is wholly dependent on the etheric envelope for its supply of energy and its consciousness), and moreover man in a planetary sense in the physical world is an etheric being: the majority of the manifesting major human races are etheric, have the etheric envelope as their lowest envelope. The square is not manifested but still exists hidden within the octahedron, since it was the necessary basis of the formation of the octahedron, the 46-self.

Finally, some words about the number three, appearing so manifestly in the eight equilateral triangles. No Pythagorean should need to ask what it indicates: the three aspects of reality, motion (will), consciousness, and matter. This must be understood on several different, larger and smaller scales. One intellectual tool for this understanding is given us in

the sacred syllable AUM. This has a particular connection with world 46 and Augoeides, which Patanjali says expressly in Yoga Sutras, Book 1, Sutra 27: “His designation is the sacred syllable AUM”, and “he” means the Lord, Augoeides. In the following Sutra 28, he says that the yogi shall both sound the AUM and meditate on its meaning; implicitly: only sounding a sacred mantra while not understanding what it means is not using the mantra correctly.

The sacred syllable AUM is a symbol with many meanings. In the following, some of them will be explained. The most fundamental is: A = the will aspect, U = the consciousness aspect, and M = the matter aspect.

Since the motion or will aspect dominates in the third triad, the consciousness aspect principally makes itself felt in the second triad, and the matter aspect is the most important in the first triad, A = the third triad and Protogonos, U = the second triad and Augoeides, M = the first triad and the human monad in it.

Other meanings, all of which are related to the fundamental meaning:

A = the planetary government, U = the planetary hierarchy, M = mankind.

A = the crown centre, U = the heart centre, M = the throat centre.

A = being, U = understanding, M = knowledge.

(With the gnosticians, A = the father, U = the son, M = the mother, which the pseudo-gnosticians, the Christian Fathers of the Church later remade into the holy spirit as they removed the female pole from the mysteries.)

The sacred syllable AUM also indicates the time sequence of the process of manifestation. In a cosmic scale: A = will, dynamis, creates the monads; U = the monads develop consciousness; M = consciousness shapes material forms. In a solar systemic scale: A = the will of the solar ruler creates the solar system; U = the monads in the solar system develop consciousness; M = conscious monads shape material forms.

With particular reference to the causal envelope and Augoeides: A = the will centre (also called the centre of the will to sacrifice), U = the unity centre (the centre of love), and M = the knowledge centre.

The sacred syllable AUM also explains the sequence and order in which the factors of consciousness activation appear, that is to say: motion, energy, comes first; then consciousness, and last the perception of forms.

This means that in every consciousness expansion – major or minor and irrespective of the natural kingdom concerned – the monad does not apprehend at once all three aspects of the new domain of reality in which it expands its consciousness, but always first the motion aspect, then the consciousness aspect, and last the matter aspect. Or to explain it somewhat differently: when the monad contacts a higher kind of reality previously unknown to it, to begin with the monad does not perceive that higher reality as consciousness at all, but only as radiant energy, vitality, stimulation. Later, often much later, the perception of these higher energy impulses is accompanied by a subjective consciousness content, that is to say: ideas. Later still, this consciousness will become objective, so that the monad then, but only then, perceives this new, higher domain of reality as a world of its own, with its own material forms, etc.

What has just been described here is the procedure in the acquisition of causal consciousness. To begin with, the self (or monad) perceives causal energies, as they pour down into the envelopes of incarnation, as stimulation, vitality only; later the self perceives those energies as causal ideas affording causal knowledge, causal understanding; and later still it perceives them as objective material forms. Note that the word Platon used to denote the causal ideas was *eidos* (εἶδος), meaning “form”.

What is said above is also an example of the fact that traditional symbols never have just one meaning, or, to say it in another way, the interpretation can always be made on several

different scales, and even should, for somewhat fuller understanding. Anyone who does not possess sufficient knowledge either interprets a symbol on a wrong scale or does not understand that he must think on different scales for the different contexts in which the symbol is used, the different domains of reality to which the symbol is applicable.

The so-called different meanings of a symbol such as AUM are not different in reality, that is to say, they are not different to higher consciousness. They are different only after the consciousness content of the symbol has been scaled down from causal to mental consciousness with its sequential and separating perception of reality (in contrast to the instantaneous and unifying perception of causal consciousness). The ability to apprehend all these meanings at once, instantaneously and not sequentially (discursively, taking them one at a time) is an aspect of the consciousness of unity. The student should formulate a long thought, which in sequential form summarizes all these meanings of AUM, and use this long thought in his meditation. Also the eight cosmic ideas enumerated above are contained in the sacred syllable AUM and should therefore be included in that meditation.

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