

Barend Voorham lecture

CHANGES TO BODY AND MIND THE MAKEUP OF HUMANS

We are regularly asked how medication works. How is it that anti-depressants and tranquilizers *appear* to affect the human consciousness? In other words, how is it possible that a substance that is introduced into the body can influence the human consciousness? Practicing Hatha Yoga and changing one's diet also seem to influence the human consciousness. Does this contradict the basic theosophical assumption that the consciousness is the basis of the body?

By means of ten hypotheses we'll try to answer this question. Of course those hypotheses are based on conclusions drawn from the *three Fundamental Propositions of The Secret Doctrine*, and the *seven Jewels of Wisdom* that proceed from them.

Well, people are often full of contradictions. There are many different qualities and characteristics in the composition of a person. Sometimes a particular characteristic will come to the fore, at other times another. It is almost as though we have several different 'I's or egos inside us. Sometimes we feel at one with one kind of 'I', at other times, we're more at home with another kind. It is the combination of these various 'I's or egos and how they interact, that makes us who we are. Changing the combination of these egos can bring about growth, development or even regression in our characters.

That leads to the first Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Every being has unlimited potential

Indeed. A human being is an unlimited reservoir of potential. We have, in essence, everything within us that is infinitely and eternally possible. To express this idea we use the term **Monad**. A monad is essentially a boundless centre of consciousness.

Hypothesis 2: A being is capable of attaining the level of the highest being of which it is a part

All the properties and potential of boundlessness are contained within the monad. Not only human beings but *all* beings are essentially infinite in their capacities. Every being is a monad.

However, we have not yet fully developed all these aspects within ourselves. Some aspects are still slumbering. But we can reach the level of the higher being that we are part of. Just as babies have not developed their potential as adults have, but learn to do so gradually as they grow older, so does every being develop its latent qualities. It grows to the level of the higher being from which it emanates.

Hypothesis 3: Every being is subject to cyclic processes

These developments take place in a cyclic process. Periods of activity alternate with periods of rest. For humans, the cycle is seen in the processes of sleep and wakefulness, life and death, i.e. reincarnation. In each new life a person becomes what he made of himself in his previous life. He is thus ready to continue his life's journey and to carry on developing new inner potential.

Hypothesis 4: Every being is a consciousness

Inner potential is infinite, as we have stated. Every being is part of the totality of life. This is a difficult concept to grasp but it may be easier if you imagine that every being is consciousness. We therefore do not use 'Consciousness' in the sense in which it is normally used, but as *a conscious being*: a being that lives. Every being is therefore a consciousness or an aware being.

This consciousness is like a mathematical point. That is to say: it takes up no space and its perimeter is ubiquitous. As we have said: every consciousness is a monad.

The consequence of this concept is that every being – every consciousness – is the same as the Boundless Self. Boundlessness is the Universe. All beings are therefore in essence the Universe. Everyone has unlimited potential within them, even though they have not even though they will not have yet activated all this potential..

Hypothesis 5: Every being has free will

There is one property that every being has expressed, although some more so than others: every being has free will. Free will is not absolute; it corresponds with the being's degree of development.

If a being is highly developed and has great qualities and inner resources, then its free will will be greater than if it did not have these attributes.

We can demonstrate this with an example. If a human being has acquired certain knowledge, or has developed certain insights, then their free will will have grown accordingly. This is because the activated inner potential will have also grown. A person who has no insight into the interconnectedness of all beings has a more restricted free will than someone who does have this insight. A person without this insight will instinctively put themselves at the centre of everything, and in their thoughts and deeds will never envisage the bigger picture. They do not have the insight for this.

Nevertheless, they can always apply that little bit of free will that they *have* developed. It is never a case of doom, a case of forces beyond the consciousness compelling humans.

Hypothesis 6: Every being is hierarchical in composition

The consciousness of every being is hierarchical. By this we mean that it is composed of several levels that relate to each other in a hierarchical structure. The higher aspects of the consciousness, the spiritual, generate the lower aspects, the physical.

Humans therefore have spiritual and more physical aspects to their consciousness. It is for this reason that the various religions recognize these different components of man: such as the spirit, the soul and the body.

Hypothesis 7: Every being is part of a greater hierarchy of life

Not only is every being made up of various elements, it is also part of a greater life, or a hierarchy of life. This is a difficult notion to grasp, because we are often inclined to imagine that every being exists in its own right and is independent of other beings. But if you study nature closely, you will see that in fact all beings exist for and because of one another. There is not a single being that is separate from others. Take your body, for instance: you must concede that it is made up of billions of living cells. These cells exist because of each other, but also because of you, the human being, that holds them all together. Each cell in itself is made up of countless atoms. In turn, humans only exist *physically* thanks to the innumerable living cells and atoms. And thus each being is part of a greater being that in turn is made up of smaller beings. And all these beings work together. The one cannot exist without the other.

In this process more developed (spiritual) beings make use of less developed (physically oriented) beings. A less developed conscious entity serves as a tool for the more developed consciousness, through which and in which the more developed consciousness can work. It is like a vehicle, with which and through which experience can be gained.

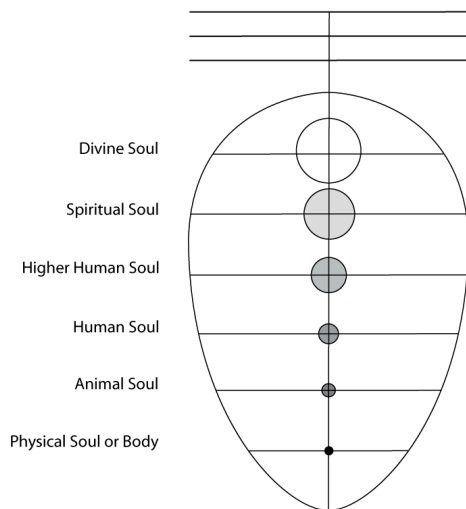
A less developed consciousness can therefore never exist without the energy of the higher consciousness that works within it. It is a receiver at a lower level, passing on to the higher consciousness what it perceives and senses. Ideally, there is a harmonious cooperation between the beings within one hierarchy of life. Every consciousness functions on the basis of its own capacity, on its own terrain. Communications are good between the various beings in the hierarchy of life. Everyone plays their part. It is like a musical chord. Every being is a tone, in harmony with the other tones. Together they sound in perfect harmony.

Now, based on the capacities it has developed – based, therefore, on the character it has formed – a being is drawn to a specific place in the hierarchy of the life of which it is a part. If it changes its character, it will be pushed out of that place and drawn towards another place that suits its character.

The Egg Diagram

We can use a diagram to illustrate the cooperation between the various beings. In the diagram above the vertical line represents the stream of consciousness that is in essence infinite.

The six circles are beings, called monads in theosophical literature. In essence they contain infinite possibilities. And so, essentially, they are not different. The higher a monad is within the stream of consciousness, the greater its field of consciousness. Spiritually, it is far more developed. Note that the words ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ are not to be taken literally. In fact, ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ would be better in this context.



All these monads are cloaked in a vehicle, called 'soul' in the diagram. Every soul has its own characteristic, specified by the adjective preceding it. The Human Soul, for instance, has activated the human characteristic. You could compare it to the various stages of a person: there are babies, toddlers, small children, teenagers etc. These are all humans, but in various stages of their development.

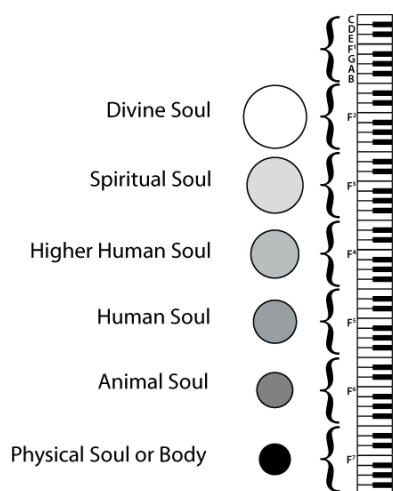
These monads bring each other into being. The lower monads are produced by the higher. The Animal Soul, for example, flows from the Human Soul. Most people in nowadays' phase of their development have localized their consciousness in the Human Soul. They call it 'I'. That Human Soul, in its turn, ensues from the monads above it.

Harmonious cooperation occurs when each monad directs itself towards the monad above it. It is then open to the spiritual impulses that come to it *from within*. For us as human beings – living in the Human Soul – this means that we must look to the Higher Human Soul, which has far more noble characteristics than the Human Soul.

Through the communication between the monads in the stream of consciousness, there is a continuous exchange of power, of influence. This takes place through resonance. That is, the characteristic from the Higher Human Soul will arouse a corresponding characteristic in the Human Soul.

In music, it is well known that when a given string is plucked, another string tuned to the same pitch will vibrate sympathetically. Now, you can imagine that every monad, in the stream of consciousness that we are, can vibrate to the tone of a more spiritual monad, provided it is tuned to the same pitch.

In every monad one should be able to depict seven tones; these correspond with the seven tones of the more spiritual monad whence it comes, although they are tuned an octave higher. For instance, if in the Divine Soul an A is struck, then the A's in the other monads will vibrate sympathetically, even though they are an octave higher (see diagram below).



In this way, the Human Soul continuously influences the Animal Soul and the Physical Soul, or the body. The thoughts and feelings of us personal beings arouse similar characteristics in less advanced monads. Eventually, the body also begins to vibrate in that characteristic.

Hypothesis 8: Every being communicates through corresponding characteristics

You can compare the hierarchy of life with a radio transmitter and receiver. We are all familiar with the concept that a transmitter broadcasts at a certain frequency and that every receiver can pick up that signal provided it is tuned to the appropriate wavelength. Within the stream of consciousness, every monad is a transmitter and receiver at the same time. It sends and receives signals constantly. This is how each and every one of the monads in the stream of consciousness stay in touch with the others. Communication takes place all the time. The only precondition for this is that every monad must be on 'the same wavelength', or, in other words, must have developed the same characteristic. And this is possible because, by definition, the characteristics are present at both the higher and lower levels. The less advanced monads came from the more advanced ones and therefore have the same characteristics, even though they may not yet be fully developed.

Communication takes place both between the monads operating on the same level – for example the cells in our bodies – and between the monads that differ hierarchically in range of consciousness. They influence each other continuously.

Monads can also use certain characteristics for selfish or unselfish reasons. This is because every being has its own free will. You can compare the stream of consciousness to a fourteen-string harp. It has seven silver and seven gut strings. Every silver string has a corresponding gut string. Therefore, there are seven pairs of strings. In other words, you can play the notes on this harp in two ways: selfishly and unselfishly.

By its very nature, every monad turns to the monad directly above it. Everyone recognizes this in themselves. It is this urge we draw on to get the best out of

ourselves. It is through working together with all the life in the hierarchy, of which we are part, that we learn the most and develop most rapidly.

It must be borne in mind that human beings are more than just their thoughts and bodies. In fact, a human is the entire stream of consciousness. The more aware we are of this, the more rapidly we develop. We open ourselves up in this way to influences from the higher levels in the stream of consciousness. In us – the Human Soul – monads have a vehicle through which they are better able to accumulate experiences.

Thus the higher monads never become the lower ones, although they are in contact with each other. The lower monads, too, emanating from and being part of a greater consciousness as they are, can, through a process of evolution, also reach the level of the hierarchy, the pinnacle of the hierarchy.

The building blocks of the body

The Human Soul therefore exerts its influence on the lower monads, one of which is the body. The body is made up of countless building blocks, such as the cells and the atoms, that they in turn are made up of. All of these building blocks are living entities.

All these living entities that make up the body are cyclic. That is to say, they manifest themselves and then return to the higher layers of the stream of consciousness in cycles. There they are influenced. Subsequently, they take this 'influence', this 'experience' back with them when they manifest themselves again.

Hypothesis 9: Every being reacts to spiritual and physical stimuli

Because these living building blocks of the body periodically return to and are influenced by the higher monads, it is possible for the Human Soul – i.e. every human being – to influence the state of their body. If we start to think differently, and sense things differently, we bring a different kind of influence to bear on our bodies. Sooner or later this is bound to have an effect on our physical 'vehicle'.

We can also try to influence the building blocks from the outside. We do this by introducing various materials into our bodies, e.g. alcohol, drugs and medication, or by altering our eating habits. Certain kinds of meditation and Hatha Yoga can also influence the building blocks of our bodies.

What happens in Yoga or meditation, or when we use drugs and medication?

We make the atoms and the cells in our body more sensitive, or less sensitive as the case may be, to the influence of the higher monads. In the process their function changes. They are then able – or no longer able, as the case may be – to pass on certain powers from the Human Soul, the Animal Soul or the Physical Soul. It is as though the matter that has been introduced from the outside has changed our emotional or mental state. But this is not the case. The characteristics themselves have not changed. Their quality has not improved or declined in any way. Nor have they disappeared or appeared from nowhere. The only thing that has changed is the quality of transmission: it has improved or it has deteriorated.

Hypothesis 10: Every being is in a state of continuous development

Through their interconnectedness and the ongoing transmission of stimuli both 'upwards' and 'downwards', every monad is in a continuous state of flux. By reacting to the actions that we carry out, we are always sensing new experiences and learning new lessons. If these lessons are interpreted by the higher, the more spiritual characteristics within us, they result in increasing development.

We can draw far-reaching conclusions from this hypothesis or proposition. These conclusions concern our entire existence. Advancement or regression, growth and development, they can all be explained by this 10th hypothesis.

We are beings that consist of a specific combination of a number of monads that work closely together. Every monad has its own sphere of influence: these spheres function as filters or stimulants for the other monads.

We have discussed communication between the monads. Through this communication, there is an ongoing exchange of powers between the various monads.

If the attributes of certain monads are influenced by any technique whatsoever, the entire combination will feel the effects of this and change accordingly.

An analogy with a piano may clarify this concept. Because each individual monad has characteristics corresponding to the other monads – similar to the corresponding tones in higher and lower octaves – certain characteristics in one monad can activate or immobilize the corresponding characteristics in the others. In this way, certain characteristics in the body can come to the fore, or alternatively retreat temporarily. It is as though the body raises the damper from a string, or dampens it: it amplifies or mutes the sound, thereby releasing or restricting the influence from the high monads. On the one hand an opening is forced and on the other characteristics are prevented from becoming active.

We may clarify this with an example.

Suppose somebody is allergic to chocolate. He eats a piece of it and the next day his skin develops a rash. The cause of this is to be found in the consciousness and more specific in the animal / vital and human part of it. Apparently that person has built up a disharmonic characteristic.

Note: we don't speak of a good or bad characteristic. It may come from a previous life. Anyway, it is caused by the human himself. By eating chocolate he gives this characteristic the opportunity to manifest itself. The chocolate doesn't cause the disharmony, but creates a condition in which the body can transmit the influence from the Animal Soul and Human Soul better. The effect is the allergic reaction.

In fact the same process occurs by taking medications. The characteristic of the substance you put into your body may cause a disconnection of some processes in the body. The consequence may be, for instance, that you don't feel pain anymore. A tone of the octave of the body is suppressed.

The opposite effect may also occur. The medication creates in your body an opening – or an opening is widened – for some characteristics of the Animal and Human Soul. It seems that the body develops a new attribute, for instance agitation, but that new attribute comes from another layer in the consciousness.

Both effects may occur at the same time. There are for instance painkillers that don't oppress fever. So the working out 'downwards' of the disharmony through the fever is not eliminated or deteriorated, but the signals 'upwards' are switched off, so that you don't feel any pain.

In other words, there is either a loss in the ability to express a characteristic – an inhibiting or numbing effect – or the exact opposite: building blocks are pushed in a certain direction, they are trained as it were, so that they can express more effectively a characteristic that is already present in the consciousness.

In all of this one should not overlook the fact that humans always decide for themselves whether or not they will make use of the available means. Here too free will plays the all-decisive role.

CORE IDEAS

1. Every being has unbounded potential.
2. A being is capable of attaining the level of the highest being of which it is a part.
3. Every being is subject to cyclic processes.
4. Every being is a consciousness.
5. Every being has free will.
6. Every being is hierarchical in composition.
7. Every being is part of a greater hierarchical structure.
8. Every being communicates through corresponding characteristics.
9. Every being reacts to spiritual and physical stimuli.
10. Every being is in a state of continuous development.