

Mysteries of the Soul

Reflection 6 - Renewal through the six emanations

Spiritual text: *The Bible – Genesis 1:1-31*

If you follow the gnostic path, you are not expected to become like Ashtavakra or Hermes, like Abraham or Patanjali. It is expected that you will be your own radiant self, understood to mean with the radiance of the soul. On the spiritual path it is no use to imitate others or to copy their behaviour. In the book 'The Voice of the Silence' it is noted:

'The teacher can but point the way. The path is one for all, the means to reach the goal must vary with the pilgrims'. (III:2)

You are unique and you were born to give form to your uniqueness, first of all in your personality-soul and then, when you are ripe for it, in the soul and the spirit-soul. In the 'Hymn of the Pearl' that process of individual renewal through transformation is referred to as collecting the shining pearl from Egypt. Your uniqueness is the result first of all of the unique spirit-spark of the microcosm in which you live. Secondly, you are determined by the experiences that former residents of the microcosm have gained, which are designated as karma. Thirdly, there is the influence of the genes that you inherited from your parents, designated by the word nature. A fourth aspect is the influence of your personal history, all the things that have fed you, in the broadest sense of the word: nurture.

The karma of man is quite often seen as Pandora's box from which all kinds of catastrophes are poured out over this person. That view is distorted as your karma is, in reality, an immense treasure of pleasant and less pleasant experiences which together may lead to real insights. Like a shining pearl evolves in a mollusc as the result of pain and irritation by grains of sand, setbacks and disappointments in this life and past lives can contribute to the process of manifestation of the radiance of the soul. You can make the rubble of your past transform into your unique pearl of tomorrow! So in this process of renewal the ignobility is converted into nobility. It is spiritual alchemy, requiring concentrated attention and energy. It is therefore important that the pupil of the soul learns to no longer identify with forms, including his past and his current state of being. Instead he will control his mind through awareness. He recognises the jackal and the giraffe within, without identifying with them, so that sufficient energy and orientation become available to go the spiritual path.

Inner renewal

The label 'the spiritual path' is a metaphor, of course, and thus has its limits. It is not as if others have constructed a path and you have only to walk on it. The ones who preceded us on the gnostic spiritual journey created the circumstances, in their own personal life situations, through which they could be renewed internally. The experience that they gained during this process was shared within the spiritual tradition to which they belonged. You yourself will have to clear your own path in the same way in order to reconnect with the lost kingdom. And that path will disappear behind you, while you go forward. You will not be able to go back and others will not be able to follow your path, because your path fits only

your unique circumstances. There is no general recipe or step-by-step-plan that you must follow consecutively in order to return to the divine origin. The author of 'The Voice of the Silence' said this as follows:

'You cannot travel on the path before you have become that path itself.'

So do not follow the footprints of the sages from the past, but search for what they sought. Nevertheless the process of spiritual transformation which you can undertake does have a universal structure. This structure can be found in, for example, the creation myth in the Bible. Is that not outdated? Have not natural scientists more than clearly demonstrated that the biblical story of the creation of heaven, earth, plants, animals and man cannot possibly be true? Evolution, in which increasingly more complex life forms evolve, is surely not nonsense? Is the creation myth only an invention in times past to make clear to primitive people that everything comes from God?

The creation myth from Genesis 1 is a holy text that cannot be easily understood with ordinary reason. Here it is a question of veiled language and a mystery language. The bible book of Genesis, which literally means 'coming into being', is the beginning of the Torah. These are the first five books in the Jewish Bible and are attributed to Moses. According to the Kabbalah the stories from the Torah are not merely historical but especially symbolic. A famous statement from the Zohar therefore reads:

'Thus the tales in the Torah are simply her outer garments, and woe to the man who regards that outer garb as the Torah itself.'

According to the Kabbalah, a deeper reality lies hidden behind the stories of the Torah, one that you cannot derive from the literal interpretation. If we look at the creation myth with some Kabbalistic knowledge and inner understanding, it becomes clear that this story is not about the sensory world but that it sits outside of time.

As above, so below

In fact, the creation myth is comparable to the 'Hymn of the Pearl'. We can detect the same sevenfold structure in it (compare images 4 and 6). The creation myth can be applied to the macrocosm and also to man – the microcosm – in compliance with the hermetic law: as above, so below; as in the great, so in the small. The creation myth in Genesis 1 is about the birth of the microcosm, the spirit-spark, the soul and the personality-soul. The 'Hymn of the Pearl' relates only to the development of the personality-soul, which takes place on the fourth day of the creation myth.

The six creation days that are mentioned are not periods of 24 hours, nor are they indications for other stretches of time. They are not even successive phases. The creation days are emanations. An emanation is a radiation, a diffusion or an outpouring by which the essence of the source itself immerses in the result of its diffusion. All emanations are present simultaneously. In the Kabbalah and also in other esoteric traditions it has often been stated that the One, the Unmentionable, manifests itself as continually more powerful, grand and glorious by setting up more and more differentiated or distinctive emanations. The Source of all splits into emanations, which in turn split into emanations, which in turn split into emanations, to infinity!

The four worlds of experience from the Kabbalah have already been mentioned in the fourth narrative. We bring them in again because they may lead to a deeper understanding of the creation myth, and hence of the transformation of man. From top to bottom it goes consecutively through the following four manifested worlds of experiences and analogies:

1. *Atziluth, the spiritual world of emanation,
creation of the microcosm*
2. *Briah, the mental world of the abstract archetypes,
creation of the spirit-soul*
3. *Yetzirah, the astral world of the concrete archetypes,
creation of the soul*
4. *Assiah: the world of action,
creation of the personality-soul*

No beginning and no end

By means of this overview we can come to a deeper understanding of the creation story concerning evolution. Evolution did not occur only in the past but is still taking place and will do so indefinitely because it concerns a universal structure of emanations that does not relate to time and space. If creation were not unfolding from moment to moment, everything would suddenly disappear. As far as creation is concerned, there is no beginning and no end. It is hard for our minds to understand this, which is why the first sentence of Genesis has often been incorrectly translated and understood. For example one of the recent bible translations states:

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.'

But it is not a question of a beginning but of emanations that do not manifest themselves (heaven) and emanations that certainly do manifest themselves (earth). The word 'God' appears in this text but in the Hebrew text the plural form Elohim is used, indicating seven creative spirits or angels. The earth –so all of the manifested emanations – was still void and dark, because there was as yet no differentiation. That situation is comparable to a rough piece of marble from which a skillful sculptor can, in principle, make any form by distinguishing and eliminating material, in accordance with the statement of the famous artist Michelangelo Buonarrotti (1475-1564):

'Beauty is the purgation of superfluities.'

Creation is therefore limitation. God's spirit moves on the primordial waters, the cosmic primordial substance or materia magica which does not belong to the world of time and space.

'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.'

Here the manifested spiritual world (Atziluth) comes into being as a result of the creative word. If evolution is the issue, the human microcosm emanates on the 'first day', with the radiating, shining spirit-spark in the centre.

'And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.'

Next a separation is made in the cosmic primordial substance, therefore the primordial waters, so that two water masses are separated by a firmament. The sky that is created here is different from the heaven that is mentioned in the first sentence of Genesis where it concerns an unmanifested heaven. Here it concerns a firmament that makes itself known: the world of the abstract archetypes (Briah), the domain of the spirit-soul.

'And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land earth; and the gathering together of the waters he called seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after their kind: and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.'

On this third day the creative word realises further differentiation: the water under the skies is being divided into sea and earth. Thus the world of the concrete archetypes (Yetzirah, the united waters, sea, the domain of the soul) and the world of action (Assiah, drought, earth, the domain of the personality-soul) emerges. All this remains outside time and space.

Unique to you

The structures of the soul and the personality begin to come about in the light of evolution. Everything that is unique to you will become manifest in the form of the personality-soul that can reproduce itself like a seed-bearing plant or a fruiting tree. That is possible because the personality is renewed to a certain extent by the breath of the soul. At some stage that development will stagnate. Then descent or involution has taken place. Then it is time for the ascent, the spiritual evolution of man, which is a gift that came about through the emanation on the fourth day.

'And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.'

The great light here is the spirit-spark that was slumbering but now flames up and awakens the personality-soul, making it receptive for the world of the soul. The lesser light and the

stars are the gates between the world of the concrete archetypes and the world of action, in which everything moves between the polarities. Sometimes you may experience this connection with the higher spheres, meaning in a symbolic sense that it is daytime. If you do not experience this connection then it is symbolically nighttime: the light is there, but you cannot perceive it. As a consequence of the influences from the world of the concrete archetypes on the world of action, the process of transformation can begin in man – a process of renewal that is symbolically presented in the change of seasons from autumn through winter and spring to summer. During the fifth day, the soul grows as a result of living exchanges between the world of the concrete archetypes and the world of action.

'And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, that hath life, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.'

Now real soul development is taking place by virtue of the fifth emanation. At first this is not visible: the developments unfold in the water and are invisible under the water's surface. There is a swarm of living creatures and large sea monsters in the soul, but on earth there is not yet any sign of it. Thus can you flounder for years and years on a spiritual path without seeing any results. Only a little renewal may be experienced in the dimension of the personality-soul, but much has already been prepared in the dimension of the soul. You might not see the great light, but it is definitely there.

Living exchange

Soul development will soon be noticed in the aspect of the personality-soul when there is a living exchange between the world of the archetypes and the world of action within the human being. In the creation story this living exchange during the fifth day is represented by birds – representing deeper thought, feelings and activities of the will – that fly to and fro between heaven and earth.

The sixth emanation of the sixth day concerns the development of the spirit-soul, which relates to the world of experience of the abstract archetypes that will influence the soul and the personality-soul. Then the livestock, the crawling animals and the wild animals come into being.

'And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'

The results of the spiritual path are made clearly visible on earth, the world of action, because the personality-soul is now not only connected with the soul but, through the soul, also with the spirit-soul. The livestock symbolise virtues such as faithfulness, servitude, helpfulness and

self-sacrifice. In that sense the giraffe in yourself, mentioned earlier, can also be counted among the livestock. The symbolic jackal in yourself clearly belongs to the wild animals.

image 6: the six days of creation by the Elohim

1. Atziluth the spiritual world of emanation	light 1 microcosm		Elohim resting 7 man completes creation
2. Briah the mental world of abstract archetypes	firmament heaven 2 base spirit-soul		cattle, wild animals and man 6 spirit-soul
3. Yetzirah the astrale world of concrete archetypes	sea, earth, plants 3 base soul		fowl, water animals 5 soul
4. Assiah the sensory world of action		great and lesser lights 4 personality-soul	

Image and resemblance

The wild animals in you do not simply disappear as you follow the spiritual path. The issue is that you succeed in controlling them, that you – just like Daniel in the lion’s den – prevent them from causing damage by being oriented on the divine; that you tame them, so that your individualised personality-soul, soul and spirit-soul will form a dynamic unity. When that has been realised, the six emanations will have transformed you into a unique person in the image and the resemblance of the Elohim so that you can cooperate in the joyful execution of the divine plan of creation (see image 6).

‘And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food: and to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.’

