

Hermetic Initiation II

By
Parush

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Part Three

“Above and Below”

The next important concept to consider is that which is described in the opening passage of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes ...

“That which is above is like unto that which is below, and that which is below is like unto that which is above ...”

In relation to the goal we are presently working towards, *above and below* can be defined in two ways. Firstly, as representing the binary - microcosm and macrocosm. Secondly, as representing the binary - physical (outer world) and spiritual (the inner world.)

These concepts are not complex ones to grasp. The relationship between the macrocosm and microcosm is a holographic one. This idea is mentioned in Genesis where it is said that “man was made in the image of God”, for example. This idea states that all individual systems, such as a plant or animal, are simulacrums of a blueprint mechanism. Each species, though, is a variation on the blue print’s theme, adapted to a particular department of nature. While superficially one species of animal might look quite different from another, and an animal very different from a plant, essentially all are variations and adaptations of the same universal mechanism.

Not only this but if we take any particular part of a system, and look at it as a unit on its own, we will find that it also displays, essentially, the same makeup as the universal mechanism.

This is the basis of the concept of a hologram, of the idea of microcosms within the overall macrocosm.

Similar to the concept of macro/microcosms is the concept of internal and external worlds. Every ‘thing’ in creation has both an internal and invisible structure and dynamic as well as an external, visible, structure and dynamic. The one is a reflection of the other. While the inner may not, superficially, look like the outer, they essentially are the same mechanism, but seen from two different points of view.

Part Four

“The Machinery of Mind”

The Kybalion rightly points out that the entire universe exists as a thought-form in the mind of the Supreme Being. To make the concept ‘thought-form’ easier to grasp we might say that the universe is similar to what we experience as a dream. On the basis of this premise the Great Work is itself a work of psychology. By psychology I mean ... a work dealing with the mental sphere, its laws, structure and functions. Our primary problem, as unenlightened beings seeking to comprehend the totality of ourselves, is a problem of perception. While there may be some physical issues tied up in the problem of perception, essentially, again, we are faced with an issue of human psychology and of divine psychology.

Taking this for granted we should now look at the basics of esoteric psychology. The best model for esoteric psychology can be found, in my opinion, in the Hermetic Qabala.

The first concept about esoteric psychology you should try to grasp is that the mental field of man and the astral plane are roughly speaking the same thing. My preference, when speaking of the astral or spiritual side of a human, is to clump all levels of the invisible side of our nature under the term ‘mind’ or ‘psychology’. A person’s mind being the part of him that includes all mental activity from his base passions right up to the most lofty transcendent awareness. A person’s *individual* psychology being his particular qwerks of mental function. It is everything non-physical about him.

For the purposes of simplicity we can divide the human mind into three basic fields of activity and four basic functions¹. The three fields of activity are the Ruach or objective awareness, the Nephesh, or subjective awareness, and the triad Yechidah-Chiah-Neschamah that behave (relatively speaking) as a unit and are the transcendent (spiritual) awareness.

The Ruach and Nephesh comprise the incarnate, temporary, human part of the mind. The Yechidah-Chiah-Neschamah comprises the super-human immortal part of the mind ... roughly speaking.

The Ruach, as the objective field, is our focus on the outer world. The Nephesh, as the subjective field of awareness, is our focus on the internal world. The Ruach, in common terminology would be the conscious or waking awareness. The Nephesh would be the unconscious or sleep awareness.

The four basic functions of the mind are

1. The decomposition function or shadow,
2. The rational or intellectual function,
3. The emotional function, and
4. The unifying function.

The shadow I have called the decomposition function because one of its main duties is to decompose thought-substance.

In a male human the Ruach, or conscious mind, is governed by the rational function (the thinker) and the Nephesh by the emotional function. In a human female the situation is

¹ See diagram I (The Tree of the Psyche)

reversed. She looks out on the world from an emotional point of view, and her inner world is where her rational function operates².

The Unifying function is not part of the average human psychological makeup. It only exists in potential in almost the entire human race. It is both the result of the harmonizing of the Ruach and Nephesch, and also the cause of that harmonizing effect. While saying that it exists in potential for most humans this not because it is not there, but rather because its function is out of reach of lower humanity.

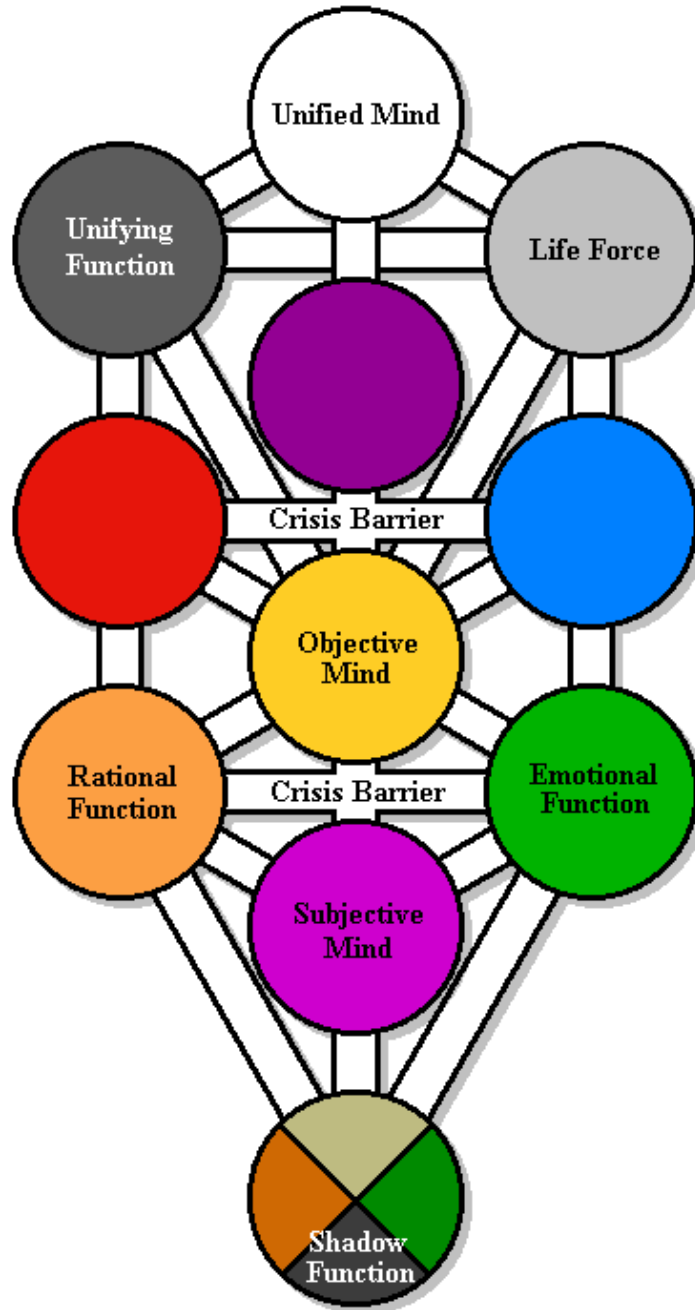


Diagram I – The Tree of the Psyche

² See diagrams II and III (The female and male psyches)

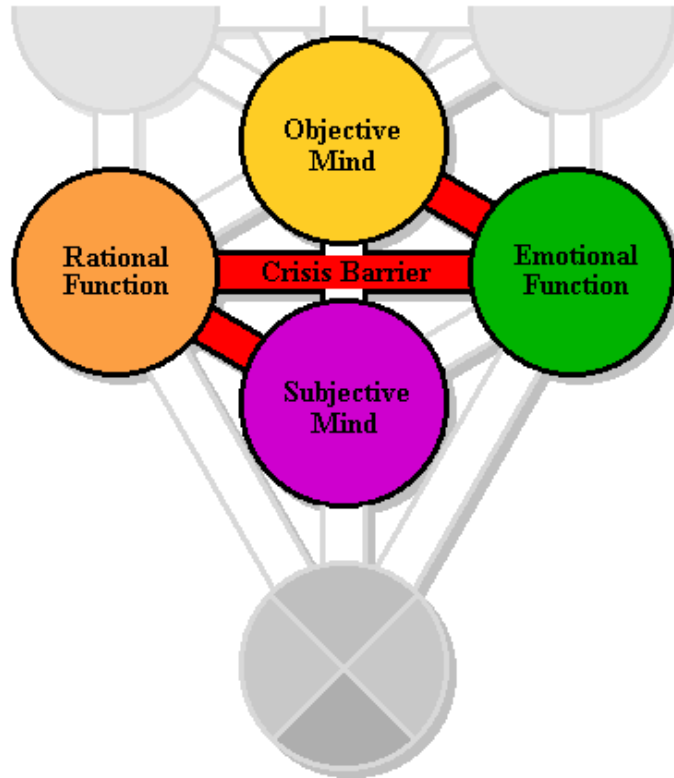


Diagram II (above) – The Human Female Psyche

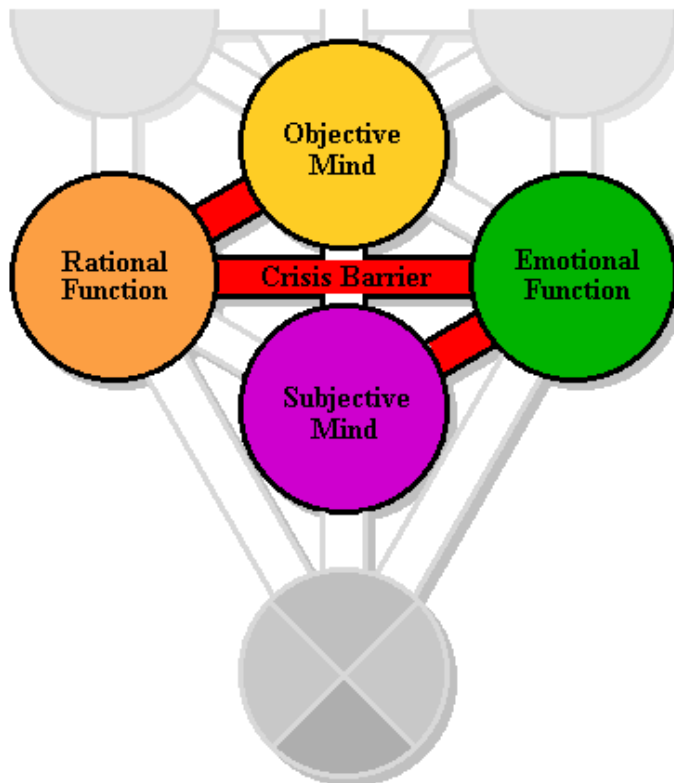


Diagram III (above) – The Human Male Psyche

While the Neschamah is the function that brings about or aids unification of Nephesch and Ruach, once that unification or harmonization is complete and permanent the Nephesch and Ruach essentially cease to exist and become a Yechidah.

It shouldn't be difficult to figure out that if the Neschamah's task is to unify Nephesch and Ruach that they are a binary in opposition.

All of the above definitions of the Qabalistic view of the psyche are generalisations, greatly simplified, but quite accurate. I could say that the view of the mind as it is presented above is the ideal situation that most humans exist in. Circumstances necessarily dictate that at different times we all experience variations on this basic theme, sometimes more powerfully and for longer periods of time, sometimes as barely perceptible shifts that may be quite fleeting.