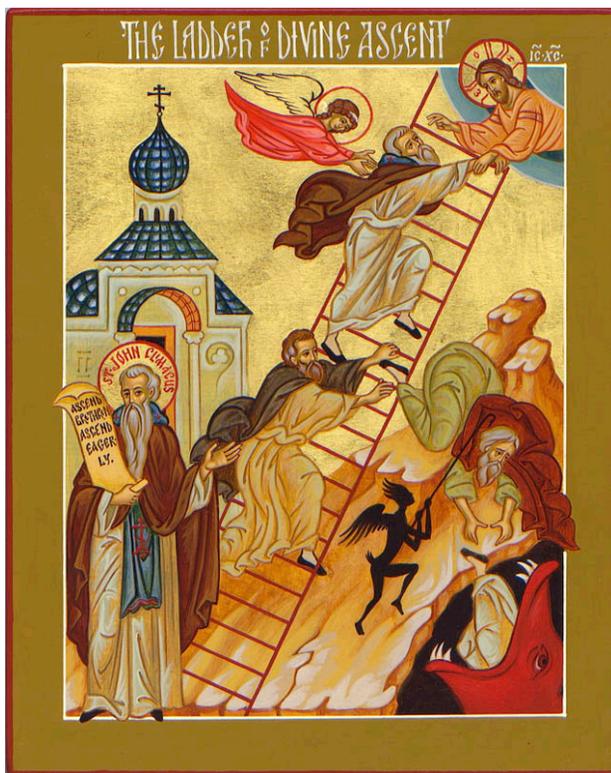




Growth Stages and the Ladder of Divine Ascent

The idea that God can speak through people is not without substance. Some say if that is claimed, its arrogance, however the real arrogance lies at the feet of those who deny it happens and don't understand history or the growth stages. So where do we begin? From the very outset in Exodus we read of God communicating with Moses and being present in support of the Exodus sometimes in miraculous ways. Rabbinical tradition came to call that 'Memra' and the Christian world Logos. I think the narrative of that time is well known so lets go to Jacob's Ladder. Here is an indication of Monism. That is to say, as all things are created in a downward procession from the one God, then humankind can return back to God on the same path, in an upward ascent of consciousness to the creator. Put simply it indicates a conversation or dialogue, a two way street, which can be established between man and God.

All this is Judaic and Rabbinical thinking concerning this idea of a conversation lying between man and God which runs through the prophets for example, to



Christ Jesus. He becomes an exemplary figure who through Logos not only converses with God but exemplifies God's enduring and loving nature; His heart. It is so not only as a conversation but embedded in an exemplary life, in behaviors, roughly at a time when global consciousness made an upward shift through other great men such as, Socrates, Buddha and Confucius.

What follows in the Christian world shortly are works by John Climacus,

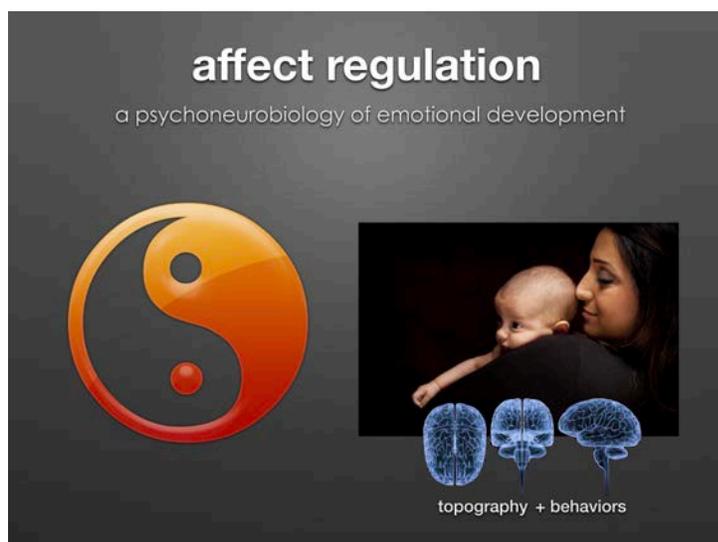
circa 600 AD, who put together the “*Ladder of Divine Ascent.*” He describes practical steps on how to raise one’s soul and body to God through ascent, running from worldly concerns to metaphysical virtues. Consciousness and soul are raised towards heaven by disciplines and steps well defined, which move one from earthly pursuits to the final rung of the ladder, beyond prayer, to the final goal of loving oneness with God.

Plotinus offers a similar journey in his, *Enneads*. He talks of the ‘One,’ God as a sole creator from which all things emanate. This includes the pure mind or divine mind called Nous or Logos, which lies within the self, so by raising consciousness towards this divine mind we can also connect to and converse with the One (God). This metaphysical journey is the source of human happiness and in the One, we find the good, the beautiful, and the true; and the ground of our being. To some extent Plotinus is describing the divine mind of God in tandem to the divine mind within the psyche (self) so this points to an indwelling of the One within the self and it is further related to soul. This is a version of Monism, where all emanates from the One and all can return by the same path.

there are other versions which say the same thing such as Justin Martyr’s, ‘*The Spermatikos Logos and the Natural Law*’ but here we are faced with an obvious patriarchal version. Still, a history of Christian mysticism which reveals saints and sages, male and female, who experience this same conversation with God. To balance Justin Martyr we could add Teresa of Avila who gave us the “prayer of union” where she felt the soul absorbed into God’s power or Hildegard of Bingen who received “divine visions,” but what of DP? We have the growth stages and we have advice on how to tend our spiritual life becoming aware that, ‘tending the garden of the mind carefully’ helps us interact with and promotes growth of the spirit, which also flows into this metaphysical conversation of life. This is similar to the ladder of ascent. Self and mind grow

closer to God. Moreover growth stages, through time, also bring us to a spiritual maturity as 'original nature' intended, if the environment is also supportive of positive attributes. Environment here would include the family triad, proper education, and an ethical and aesthetic culture.

At the end of the growth stages where maturity arises around mid or late teens (DP p 41) we can make a more definitive move towards this dialogue with God.



This follows what is called three ordered stages of growth, but currently in the psychological record these stages are no longer vague but quite specific (Attachment Theories) and supported by clinical psychological work, neuroscientific evidence, and biological factors, which supply even more evidence. There is

even the integration of the development of spirit and examinations of the soul supported by Jungian thinkers. C G Jung says the patterns and dynamics life are archetypes and they come from the light of God so self isn't just biology. Likewise Archetypes and Logos are quite compatible with each other. So self is in a real sense given by God and secures the idea that all life is sacred from the start. From there growth or 'individuation' takes place, which synthesizes activities, experiences, behaviors, developmental stages, spirit and soul.

But what's the point beyond that? At the stage of major and early maturation it is considered this dialogue with God can be deepened, developed and confirmed strongly through an act of free will, through choice and through the experiential

world confirming this divine dialogue. Such a choice might well be predicated to previous experiences of love and beauty felt through childhood, already confirming the nature of God (the One), his presence in our lives. Making choice here is then a relatively simple one. As A. N. Whitehead said of this kind God, “We are lured, never coerced.” Who, for example, does not want to experience



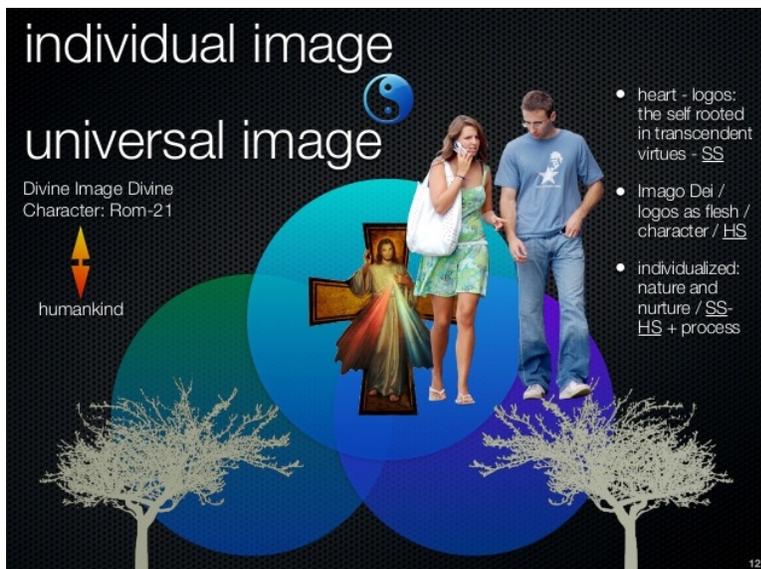
such love and beauty in their lives? And what draws us forward ? It is not law.

In a world not yet perfect though, growth stages can still become enmeshed, sometimes even in arduous tasks. In a period of early church experiences, in so many cases, I am reminded

of difficulties even in fundraising which caused personal collapse, then took one beyond the earthly self, beyond ego, beyond pessimism, and then beyond to the ladder of ascent. How many times do we hear of, ‘I was on my last legs when suddenly I had a breakthrough and experienced the love of God’; or ‘suddenly a frustrating day began to yield astonishing results’; or ‘in the last moment when I thought all else had failed, I suddenly made my goal.’ It was not a natural way of doing business but it did work for many showing up like this, and in the midst of struggles revealed something of a divine heart present and never distant from us whether we knew it or not. Sometimes it took the breaking down of the ego, the rational defenses, to allow the more emotional and subconscious presence of God to be felt. At the top of the growth stages at the end of the realm of indirect dominion there was another radical shift if we chose it.

A move from the indirect realm to the realm of Direct Dominion (DP p 44) was signified by the Blessing. Experiences in dialogue with a loving God quickly became magnified and intensified as so many attest and if I may incorporate the older term, 'the ladder of divine ascent,' its last rung was climbed here to place one in direct communication with God and with a partner at hand to mirror the creative function of God's creativity where Absolute Monism (UT - Theory of the Original Image) divides itself from the One to form the creative postulate of masculine and feminine creative potentials (subject and object) emerging from the One. In DP we find this postulate described as a Yin- Yang proposal (DP p 17) or as the Four Position Foundation, the creative nature of God and the union of couple in God where a divine purpose and heart can be multiplied into the

world through our children;



Love, truth, beauty, virtues can be brought from heaven to earth. Can God speak through us?

This is perhaps a simplistic description but as we also have 'the individual truth body' in Principle and in reality, we have a self and a couple in participation with

God where universal truths are expressed Individually when the choice is made to commit to the conversation with God, to the I-Thou dialogue (Martin Buber) and where all else flows from it, including blessing, children, community and creativity.

The Blessing is the first complete confirmation of a divine ascent, a marriage of

heaven to earth and like life itself it is in process; its all dynamic and its still early days. Where this dynamic adventure begins and follows on, it deepens, becomes more meaningful, and is expressed more clearly as time goes on. It seeks its own goal - it is teleology, meaning cosmos, world, and life, can move towards the function of its purpose or goal. Teleology, the word, is composed of 'telos' which means purpose and 'logos,' which can mean original mind or self; a christ-like being. Absolute Monism has a goal to journey towards meaning fulfillment and the loving relationship with one God who emerges as both creator and parent to mankind. The heart behind this statement is something which seeks its own direction and fulfillment. And on the way resolves the chaotic nature of other philosophies which fail to offer clear and sustainable virtues, ethics, and principles, which the heart cries out for.

This seems to be the nature of the modern world, unclear uncertain and even within a good system we see its principles clouded by what we call fallen nature. This world is always unpredictable and evident today, as no time before, but unchanging virtues running from the principles and heart of God are certain, can become effervescent within the self given a little time and work, and flow into marriage where it can be multiplied through our children, and again through theirs, becoming virtues always found to be sustainable in that way, as they become confirmed behaviors rooted into life. If we are asked if God speaks through us, and if we understand that we participate rather than surrendering to become some megaphone for a distant metaphysical being, then we can say clearly - YES HE DOES - And as this, 'Original Self' begins to manifest, His heart and intentions, in all that we do, perhaps not perfectly at first, but step by step along the path of life, gives voice to the God who has come to dwell within.

Derek Dey - 2017