

Lesson 2

THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

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Theosophy, in common with practically all the major religious traditions, considers human beings to be composed of layers of consciousness and bodies. In theosophy, the different layers of consciousness are also referred to as “principles,” as distinguished from the “bodies” through which the principles express themselves. The enumeration of these principles have slight variations among different theosophical writers, but are in agreement in the most essential elements.

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H.P. Blavatsky, the principal source of modern theosophical teachings, stated that human beings consist of seven principles:

1. Ātma: the Spirit, or spark of the Divine
2. Buddhi: the Spiritual Soul, or vehicle of Ātma; Spiritual Soul
3. Manas: the mind, or Human Soul, which consists of two levels, the higher and the lower
4. Kama: desire, the Animal Soul, which is usually linked with the lower mind, forming *kama-manas*

5. Liṅga Śarīra: the astral double which is the model of the physical body

6. Prāṇa: the life energy

7. Sthūla Śarīra: Physical body

These seven principles can be divided into two major parts: the immortal higher triad (or Ātma-Buddhi-Manas) and the lower quaternary composed of the rest, which is discarded upon the death of the person. Knowledge of these principles enable us to better understand the processes involved in such things as the death and after-death states, reincarnation, meditation, healing, mesmerism, and many other non-physical phenomena. Such knowledge constitutes one of the most important foundations of theosophy and esotericism.

Of the seven principles, Ātma has a basic quality different from the others. It is not an individual entity. It is a universal principle that manifests itself through the six vehicles or principles, from Buddhi down to the physical body. It only becomes an individual entity or Monad when it links with Buddhi. For this reason, Blavatsky defines the Monad as Ātma-Buddhi.



The etheric double of a healthy person (From Man Visible and Invisible)

In her Esoteric Instructions to her students, Blavatsky included the Ātmic Aura or Auric Egg (also called Auric Envelope) as one of the principles, in place of Ātma. Similarly, she removed prāṇa as a principle, it being a universal rather than an individual principle.

Body, Astral, Kāma, Lower Manas, Higher Manas, Buddhi, and Ātmic Aura or Auric Egg, are given as the principles. Life is a Universal Kosmic Principle, and no more than Ātman does it belong to individuals. Prāṇa and the Auric Envelope are essentially the same, and again as Jīva it is the same as the Universal Deity. (CW 12:672)

The Auric Envelope was not given out in Blavatsky's public writings because she said it was very sacred. This film or aura is the one that differentiates the human being from pure Aka and boundless Jīva. It is also the preserver of the individual's karmic record, and the source of one's astral form. (CW 12:607-8)

These nuances led to the eventual adoption of a widely popular classification given by Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater which is as follows:

Sanskrit	English	Comment
Ātma	Spirit	
Buddhi	Intuitional	<i>Spiritual Soul</i>
Arūpa Manas	Causal	<i>Abstract mind</i>
Rūpa Manas	Lower Mental	<i>Concrete mental</i>
Kāma	Emotional; (Astral)	<i>The term "astral" was now used as equivalent to kama rather than Liṅga Śarīra</i>
Liṅga Śarīra	Etheric	<i>The Liṅga Śarīra was called "etheric body" rather than "astral body" and was considered as part of the physical body</i>
Sthūla Śarīra	Physical	

In a later classification, Besant and Leadbeater identified the Monad no longer as Ātma-Buddhi but on a higher level above the Ātmic called the Anupadaka (or Anupapādaka) Plane.

Equivalents in Religious Traditions. The principles of the human being have equivalent concepts in the different traditions.

In the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, they are generally divided into three components:

	<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Qur'an</i>
Spirit	Ruah (Ruach)	Pneuma	Ruh
Soul	Nephesh	Psyche	Nafs
Body	Gewiyah	Soma	Jism

In the theological and mystical literature of these three religions, however, we find that there are further subdivisions that have equivalences in the seven principles of human beings in theosophy.

In the Jewish Kabbalah, for example, higher than the Ruah is *Neshamah* or divine spirit. As such it may be more proper to equate *Neshamah* with Ātma, whereas Ruah would be either the Buddhi or Higher Manas. Furthermore, the Kabbalah constructs the "Tree of Life" which assumes ten principles or *sephiroth* within a human being. The three highest, the triad *Kether*, *Binah* and *Chocmah*, are equiva-

lent to Ātma-Buddhi-Manas, and the others are psychic or physical.

In Christianity, Thomas Aquinas distinguished between the rational soul, sensitive soul, vegetative soul (*Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 78, 1). The vegetative soul is that which is awake in plants, the sensitive soul is active in animals, while the rational soul is present in human beings. These would be equivalent to the Higher Manas, Lower Manas and Kama in theosophy.

In Islamic Sufism, between ruh and the body, there are further subdivisions that corresponds to the theosophical principles. *Qalb* or heart represents the intuitive consciousness or buddhi, while the soul or *nafs* is further divided into many kinds, just as in Thomistic philosophy. They are *nafs al-natiqah*, the rational soul; *nafs al-haywaniyah*, the animal soul; and the *nafs*

al-nabatiyah, the vegetative soul. The Qur'an also classifies the *nafs* into three, although these are more descriptive of the developmental stages of the soul rather than principles. They are the *nafs al-ammarah*, the soul that is prone to evil; *nafs al-lawwamah*, or self-accusing soul or conscience; and *nafs al-mutma'innah*, or soul at peace. (*Qur'an* 12:53; 75:2; 89:27)

The theosophical classification of principles are essentially identical with those of Hindu system, such as those of Vedanta and Yoga, as well as Buddhism. In Vedanta, these principles are identified under the different *kosas* or sheaths, while in Taraka Yoga, they are divided according to the *upadhis* or bases.

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Questions for Review:

1. What are the seven principles in a human being?
2. How are the seven divided or grouped?
3. What is Atma?
4. Name the equivalent terms of the Spirit in the Old Testament, New Testament, Qur'an, in Kabbalah.