

“Call the world a ‘vale of soul-making.’  
Then you will find out the use of the world.”  
—*John Keats, Letter to his brother, April 21, 1819*

May 30, 2015

# **Soul-Making Dynamics:**

## **The Synthesis, Evolution, and Destiny of the Human Soul**

### **A Missing Dimension in Integral Theory**

**Byron Belitsos**

[byron@originpress.com](mailto:byron@originpress.com) / 415/446-0166 / [Evolving-Souls.org](http://Evolving-Souls.org)

This paper describes *soul-making dynamics*, a newly coined phrase. I depict the human soul as a species of the subtle realms that is quintessentially *experiential* and *evolutionary*. According to this hypothesis, the soul exists as *a domain of value-appropriation through human decisions and actions that have the dual effect of increasingly “spiritizing” the individual self while also driving the unfolding of evolution toward perfection.*

Understanding the meaning and significance of this definition requires first that we revisit traditional and contemporary notions of the soul. It also entails a discussion of the *atman*, usually termed in this paper as the “spirit-self” (or alternately as “spirit” or “indwelling spirit”). The duo of soul and spirit will be our essential players in this drama, but a critically supporting role is played by what we will call the “existential self,” “Unique Self,” or “personhood.” My novel description of an evolving, experiential, and “immortalizing” human soul is made possible by newly emerging concepts of human personhood, including Unique Self theory.<sup>1</sup>

Both the spirit-self and a Unique Self are conceived of as ontological and existential realities, yet each has radically different support functions in soul-making; in turn, they are sharply distinguished from the evolving human soul in this theory. While I depict both the indwelling spirit and Unique Self as unchanging in essence, the two provide the functional and structural setting for soul-making dynamics. As a backdrop, I trace the unfolding of earlier notions of soul, spirit, and selfhood—both East and West and in Wilber’s mature thought—contrasting these older ideas with my own. I conclude with a critical look at Wilber’s own depiction of the subtle realms plus related concepts in integral theory. In essence, I argue that Wilber’s overemphasis on progress through levels and states of consciousness toward a formless, non-dual realization disguises the hidden dialectical relationship between soul and spirit-self, and inevitably leads to an under-appreciation of the soul-making import of life experience, especially the import of moral decision-making.

My redefinition of the soul largely relies on a purported modern revelation known as *The*

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<sup>1</sup> My use of terms such as “Unique Self,” “existential selfhood,” or “personhood,” draws inspiration from Marc Gafni’s theories of Unique Self.

*Urantia Book*.<sup>2</sup> Plus, my account of the importance of the Urantia Revelation draws empirical support from paranormal evidence gathered by scientific research into NDEs (near-death experiences), specifically the life-review phenomenon. Both are interpreted through the prism of integral theory and certain insights provided by depth psychology. This paper also points at research directions for solving certain philosophic problems in integral post-metaphysics.

In essence, I believe we need a new understanding of the subtle realm as a domain of purposive and progressive soul-making, wherein moral choices for true values catalyze a spiritualizing effect in the psyche. Any given value-laden decision, no matter how ordinary, has the effect of kindling an immortalizing “down-grasp” by the spirit-self. In this living moment of dynamic experience, a potentially eternal “soul memory” is deposited. This “transcript” represents an evolutionary synthesis of subtle and causal substance; and such immortal, dual-origin memories are *constitutive* of the growing soul and not to be confused with transient material memories in the mortal brain.

In an expanded definition, we can say that soul-making is the dynamic process of the evolution of unique souls of ontological status driven toward eventual perfection by the exigencies of highly personal and situational moral choices for increasingly higher values such as truth, beauty, goodness, and love. Each evolving soul is unique because it is associated with a Unique Self that has, in truth, no “Kosmic address.” Ultimately, what I call “the immortalizing soul” is a window on human experience in the space-time universe, whereby each soul offers an entirely unique perspective on cosmic evolution, unique alongside one another, unique in all eternity, and thereby uniquely contributing to the completion of what we shall call “experiential Deity.”

The notion of universal evolution toward perfection implies a final “telos” or destiny of evolution—a far-distant goal of ultimate fulfillment in the domains of self, culture, and society—some sort of grand denouement that expresses a culminating purpose of our age-long strivings for progress. This paper envisions that *such a goal of evolutionary completion is least implicit in our soul-making, moral decisions*. We arrive at such soul-evolving decisions in those moments when we feel and think through a given moral predicament or opportunity, and then freely *choose* to activate ever-more adaptive meanings and values in our relational experiences of the world.

All of this is the same as saying that evolution is *purposive* and that the individual soul’s growth to perfection is the determining factor in cosmic evolution. When we speak here of perfection, we mean that soul-making dynamics leads inexorably to soul’s own completion and fulfillment—not in the blissful passivity of non-dual realization—but as a *fusion* of soul with spirit. This fusion initiates an eternal partnership in post-enlightenment realms of ascending afterlife experience on higher worlds—perhaps the ultimate meaning of “getting off the wheel.”

Such a fusion can occur during bodily existence, as evidenced by the rainbow-body phenomenon of Tibetan masters, and as alluded to in Biblical records of the resurrection of Jesus and the “ascent” of Elijah (2 Kings: 2.11). *The Urantia Book* depicts such fusion events as routine on more advanced worlds, but extremely rare on our planet.

Always bear in mind that this new model of the soul relies especially on the crucial

distinction between the soul as an evolutionary, experiential reality and the spirit-self as a self-acting, existential reality impinging on and guiding human consciousness; equally crucial is that all of this transformative activity occurs in an environment of existential and unchanging personhood endowed with the prerogatives of relative free will. In fact, I posit herein the existence of a “sacred trinity” of human endowments with substantive reality and existing in separate but intimately related domains that all contribute their own part to an ultimate fusion event.

This paper is offered in part as a correction to and enhancement of integral theory. Drawing from the Urantia material and from the data of NDEs (near-death experience), we depict the soul as an evolving yet ontological substance that literally immortalizes each and every poignant life experience that involves aspiration for higher values. This results in what depth psychologist James Hillman calls “the third, the middle position”—a evolving subtle-realm entity long known to wisdom traditions as the human soul. This presentation also offers a teleological theory of a “God of evolution” who becomes the synthesis of the collective soul evolution of all humans.

### **Traditional Theories of Soul and Spirit, East and West**

Most esoteric teachings and wisdom traditions hold to some doctrine of the soul, and most depict the soul as an enduring entity or ontological substance of ultimate value. (The singular exception in the world’s major religions may be Buddhism.) The soul is usually held to be both immaterial and potentially immortal, but it is rarely described as an *evolutionary* acquirement or a repository of one’s life experience as such, nor is it clearly distinguished from other possible attributes of selfhood, such as the reasoning intellect, the indwelling spirit, or the Unique Self. Perhaps the epitome of this conflation of attributes is reached in Descartes, who collapses the possible metaphysical components of the self into a thinking intellect with divine qualities that stands far apart from the body as its physical vehicle.

In traditional Western religious thought, the material body supports the activities of human will and consciousness, whereas the soul is described as an immortal essence that survives the death of the body, later to be reunited with it in heaven (or through reincarnation as in many Gnostic or Platonic systems). In this essentially “dualist” conception, classically rooted in Platonism, the soul is also understood to be the seat of personhood—for, if the “soul” that was originally linked to one’s body survives its dissolution, this means that the real person has survived death and entered into an afterlife. This surviving entity is the personal identity, or the *imago dei* (image of God) that is embedded in the soul—this being the vague Biblical notion that God bestows a stamp of intrinsic divine status on each individual at birth.

It is true that in esoteric Christianity and some Gnostic and Neo-Platonic teachings as well as some Eastern teachings, a clear distinction can arise between “soul” (or *psyche* or *subtle body*) and “spirit” (*pneuma* or *atman*), but these terms have more often been used

interchangeably and confusingly—or are entirely conflated.<sup>3</sup>

In those unusual cases in which “spirit” is sharply defined in Western scriptures or teachings and distinguished from the soul, it refers to an otherworldly entity or pre-existent “divine spark” that abides within us as a gift from a higher being. In ancient times many Gnostic sects posited an indwelling *pneuma* that was trapped in the physical world, but perhaps the purest version of this notion emerges much later in liberal Quakerism, with its teaching of the “inward light,” re-baptized in the late nineteenth century as the “inner light” by the popular Quaker writer Rufus Jones. By some interpretations, it may also be said that traditional Chinese religion distinguished soul from the spirit, as *yang* and *yin*. The Egyptians at times distinguished the *ka* and the *ba*; the soul (*ba*) was not usually believed to be pre-existent, only the *ka*. *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* describes the judgment and then ascent of the *ba* into the next world without requiring a return to earth—a primitive version of our concept of an ascending personal soul.

Plato is of course the original source in the West of “substance dualism.” His dialogues depict the human body as a lesser reality that is distinct from the immortal soul. In Plato’s *Phaedo*, Socrates teaches his students that after his death, his soul will for a time exist on its own “in another world.” It will be able to think and feel and know itself *as* himself, as Socrates, and will eventually be reborn in subsequent bodies.

Plato conflates intellect, soul, spirit, and personhood, but still manages to provide a rich concept of the ontological soul. In general, Plato believed that the soul is eternal—certainly not experiential or evolutionary—and that it repeatedly incarnates; that true knowledge (“innate ideas”) actually abides in the soul from eternity, but that these ideas are forgotten in the trauma of birth. The purpose of education is the *recovery* of what one has forgotten. (Please see the Appendix on Plato’s theory of soul.)

Whereas Plato is a dualist, Aristotle is a monist in regard to the human person. Aristotle represents a significant minority position in Western tradition which holds that no transcendent spirit of any sort exists and further, that the soul may indeed be the seat of reason, insight, and identity—and it may even be incorporeal—but it is *not* immortal; in other words, there can be no instance of a soul without the presence of the material body, nor a human body without a soul. Soul and body are seen as one in this monist conception, but the word “soul” is used to refer to a native capacity of a person to feel, think, perceive, or make decisions, rather than a separate substance that acts on its own.

In *De Anima* and elsewhere, Aristotle laid aside the idea that the soul is a distinct and

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<sup>3</sup> The influence of the great mystics as well as the discoveries of modern psychology have led some modern Christians beyond classical Neo-Platonic dualism and Thomistic conceptions. They espouse a three-fold (“trichotomic”) view of human nature, which characterizes humans as consisting of a body (*soma*), soul (*psyche*), and spirit (*pneuma*). However, Bible scholars point out that the terms spirit and soul are used interchangeably in many biblical passages, and so it is well noted that the New Testament writers, following Paul, hold to a general dichotomy or fundamental duality: the view that each of us is comprised of flesh and “soul-spirit,” and that the two poles are opposed to each other in a war of sorts, which by faith in the grace of Jesus Christ can be resolved in favor of salvation and survival after death.

But the later clear distinction between soul and spirit was latent even in Hebrew scripture, and was evident at times in New Testament terminology. The Hebrew word *nefesh* (originally referring to tiny replica of the human body) was translated as *psyche* (“psyche”). The Hebrew word *ruah*, “vital breath,” came to be translated as *pneuma* (spirit), which later becomes *pneumatic hagio* (the Holy Spirit), taking on a special meaning after the Pentecost. The conflation of the two terms that often occurred in the New Testament was rooted in the fact that both terms refer, in Semitic thought, to aspects of life or the vital principle.

eternal substance, roundly criticizing Plato's logical arguments for its existence. For Aristotle, the soul is instead the active principle or "form" of the body. A sculptor, for example, gives form to his materials and creates a statue of a person, thus making his raw materials seem almost animate. In the same way, the soul is the form that allows the body to activate itself—or, as Aristotle would say, "strive for its full actualization."<sup>4</sup>

Western thought inherited an antinomy of sorts between its Platonic and Aristotelian lineages—an eternal, ontological entity divinely endowed with reason and innate ideas according to the Platonic traditions, versus the Aristotelian view of a mortal "soul" that is intrinsically embedded in physical form and function.

Although classical Christian thought, especially in the Hellenistic East, tends toward Plato's substance dualism, the medieval scholastics built a viable alternative: Thomas Aquinas attempted to overhaul Aristotle's anti-dualism, constructing an Aristotelian edifice around the Christian dogma of the immortality and resurrection of the soul. Yes, the body and soul were a unity as Aristotle had insisted, but it was a complex unity. Given that the soul is the abstract "form" of the body, it was truly a spiritual substance that could lead a separate existence after death.

But in all cases, salvation for Christians meant the reconstitution of the *whole man* in the afterlife, both body *and* soul. This afterlife unity of body and soul *must* be so, because Jesus had experienced bodily resurrection while on earth. It was now concluded by the Biblical writers and the Church Fathers that the example of the Incarnate Savior establishes for all time the path to conquer death.<sup>5</sup>

With the notable exception of esoteric Eastern Christian teachings, the soul was not typically depicted as evolving toward perfection during terrestrial experience and in an afterlife of ascension. Rather, it is presented as a static entity that indwells us in this life and may be contaminated by immoral acts or thoughts, and is either blessed or condemned by God after death in the light of one's personal behavior in this life. We had fallen with Adam, and the human will was broken and sinful. We could be regenerated only by grace that resulted from our faith in Christ, and not by our decisions or even our behaviors—such at least was the Augustinian view that came to dominate Catholic doctrine. The Atonement provided a "one-shot" salvation, echoed later in the Protestant emphasis on being "born again"—a single commitment that guarantees eternal life, rather than the virtuous efforts of an experiencing self that generates a surviving soul through exercising the dignity of free-will choice.

As on earth, the Christian soul's heavenly existence is also static and unchanging rather than living on in higher worlds in a state a dynamic unfolding. There were no stages of growth

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<sup>4</sup> Consider the human eye for example: the actual form of the eye is what imparts to it the capacity to see. Its morphology "actualizes" the eye by allowing it to fulfill its practical function. In that sense, vision can't be understood as a separate substance that is somehow a thing apart from the physical eye. By the same token, our ability to engage in abstract thought, said Aristotle, may be a grand thing—possibly something divine—but it is merely another (albeit higher) form or capacity intrinsic to the body, which is mortal.

<sup>5</sup> The Jews had no previous established belief in an afterlife for the soul, for in the times of Jesus, the Pharisees believed in a resurrection after death, but the Sadducees and others repudiated the idea. Jesus' followers determined that Jesus' resurrection makes us capable of having our own personal resurrection, first of our soul immediately upon death, and then of our literal terrestrial body as it rejoins the soul after the general resurrection to come at the "End of Days." The general sequence was as follows: After death, the individual soul is judged. It is either sent to Purgatory for purification and rehabilitation, to heaven for an existence of eternal bliss, or is relegated to hell. But regardless of the soul's afterlife status, it will unite again with the body on the "Last Day." At the dispensational resurrection of the dead, the bodies of all of the dead would reunite with the detached soul that had gone before it to the heavenly or hell realms.

after the reuniting of the body and soul after the Last Day—only the eternal bliss of heaven. This doctrine echoes the classical Eastern conception according to which the soul or *atman* exits the wheel of reincarnation and returns to bliss in the sea of consciousness or Brahman, as a drop dissolves into an ocean. This ancient notion shares some features with Wilber’s emphasis on formless nondual consciousness as the highest realization, which he derives in part from the Advaita teaching that Brahman is impersonal, unchanging, and utterly beyond any I-Thou relationship.

Eastern Christianity’s “deification” teaching conceives of an evolving soul and provides an important bridge between such visions of heavenly stasis and modern developmental psychology. The ultimate aim and purpose of human life was defined as *theosis*, deification, or “divinization.” The Eastern Fathers focused on Jesus’ teaching that “ye are gods” and urged believers to engage in a “growth in grace” so as to “become perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt 5:48) This doctrine culminated a profound line of Patristic thought that began with St. Athanasius in the fourth century. Athanasius’ central argument to the Council of Nicaea, which directly led to the formulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation, was also the conceptual basis of the later teaching of *theosis*; he declared that if Jesus is not both fully God and fully man, then we cannot logically share in the divine nature. His famous line about the Incarnation epitomizes the Orthodox concept of *theosis*: “He became man so that man might become God.”<sup>6</sup>

Let us turn now for a moment to Asia to trace its contrasting ideas of soul, spirit, and personhood.

The ancient Vedanta adepts penetrated to depths unprecedented in humanity’s religious history. Doing so meant casting aside the exoteric ceremonialism of the Brahman priests, then plunging into a devoted effort to experience the truth that lies beneath the world of flux. Deep within the person, concluded these sages, exists an eternal, incorporeal, intelligent “self.” The esoteric branches of Hinduism have since taught that this spirit-self or soul constituted the existential presence of a supreme deity (*Shiva* or *Vishnu*). This distinction resolved itself into the concept of the indwelling *atman*—the microcosm of the “Self”—the perfect mirror of *Brahman*, who was the macrocosmic essence of the transcendent godhead. “A liberated person sees no difference between his own *atman* and *Brahman*, and between *Brahman* and the universe.” (*Adhyatma Upanisad*). As we will see, this conception is ratified by the Urantian notion of the spirit-self, a literal fragment of God.

Cosmically speaking, the *atman* was an impersonal entity; so also was the subtle body that was attached to it (according to a later Vedanta and Upanishadic doctrine). “Karmas” and life impressions (*samskaras*) were deposited in what might be called a subtle-body reservoir (*karmashaya*), but this repository was not a uniquely personal and experiential soul as we have

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<sup>6</sup> “Hesychastic” heart-spirituality, which was inherited from the Desert Fathers who founded Christian monasticism, was systematized in the sixth century by St. John Climacus of Sinai. Climacus essentially used Neo-Platonic categories to evoke a holistic approach to unceasing prayer. Striking a theme that became crucial in later theological developments, Climacus and his contemporaries did not pose a contrast between the body and mind or spirit as developed later in the West. They did not privilege any aspect of the human organism as being closer to the divine vision than any other. Instead, they depicted all elements of the human person as equally “fallen” in the face of God’s utter transcendence, and thereby all parts—body, mind, imagination, and soul (compositely represented as “the heart”)—as equally benefiting from the gifts of grace conferred upon the believer practicing *hesychia*—noetic stillness and prayer of the heart.

conceived it here. One's deposit of karmic debt merely contributed to the operation of a mysterious, impersonal mechanism—the inexorable law of karma—that generated the characteristics of one's next incarnation.<sup>7</sup>

In this classic Vedanta teaching, the virtuous efforts of an aspirant does not yield any new value in an evolving universe. It did not generate an immortalizing soul that contributes to cosmic evolution while conserving and expressing the moral choices of a unique personality, and which later fuses with the spirit-self (according to our theory). The entire process was impersonal and inexorable; no Unique Self here, only the illusions of the personal ego that would entirely dissolve upon the achievement of liberation from the suffering of a bodily existence.

It is worth pointing out that these teachings also differed from classic Platonism that asserted the pre-existence of an eternal soul in a celestial world and its fall into a human body, which needed to be recollected and purified through reincarnation.

The Buddha added a profound corrective to Vedanta concepts of the *atman*: he did not deny the existence of moral, intellectual, or volitional aspects of this divine self, but he stumbled at the notion of an eternal, unchanging *atman*; there was a *functional* self, yes, but not an ontological soul or spirit. The attributes of this self may be immaterial, but immateriality in no sense meant permanence. All possible attributes of this *atman* were to be considered ephemeral. His predecessors had harbored a psychological delusion, a subtle attachment to a reified “it” that obscured the prospects of a deeper penetration.

But it is important to note that the later Buddhist doctrines of an indwelling *Buddha-nature* may have marked the return of the classical *atman* in a new form. And we should mention that the Urantia Revelation (see Paper 93:11) praises this very concept as one that closely approximates its own teaching about the spirit-self, an indwelling gift of God that is not exactly impersonal, but is rather *pre-personal*, gaining personalness through its dramatic fusion with the soul and the abiding Unique Self.

Allowance was made within classic Buddhism for the transmigration of moral characteristics; actions lead to consequences, but there is no ultimate “actor.” *Atman* is not identical with *Brahman*—Buddha found no evidence for either one. To believe in an eternal self is to hold to an artificial and ignorant construction. Reality itself is *anatman*—devoid of selfhood. What we experience as a person is not a thing but a process; there exists only collections of impersonal and impermanent elements arranged into evanescent configurations by the moral force of past deeds.

Not unlike the West, the great traditions of original in India resolved themselves into a

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<sup>7</sup> “Atman can be defined only through negating any personal attributes. Although it constitutes the existential substrata of human existence, *atman* cannot be the carrier of one's ‘spiritual progress,’ because it cannot record any data produced in the illusory domain of psycho-mental existence. . . . As a necessary aid in explaining the reincarnation mechanism, Vedanta adopted the concept of a subtle body (*sukshma-sharira*) which is attached to *atman* as long as its bondage lasts. This is the actual carrier of karmic debts. However, this “subtle body” cannot be a form of preserving one's personal attributes, i.e., of any element of one's present conscious psycho-mental life. The facts recorded by the subtle body are a sum of hidden tendencies or impressions (*samskara*) imprinted by karma as seeds that will generate future behavior and personal character. . . . The reservoir of karmas is called *karmashaya* . . . This deposit of karma merely serves as a mechanism for adjusting the effects of karma in one's life. It dictates in an impersonal and mechanical manner the new birth (*jati*), the length of life (*ayu*) and the experiences that must accompany it (*bhoga*).” See <http://www.comparativereligion.com/reincarnation.html>

substance dualism (*atman* versus the illusory embodied ego-self) and various renditions of a Buddhist monism or the emptiness of *shunyata*.

### **Integral Theory and “Perspectives” on Soul and Spirit**

With this as background, let’s move on to briefly inquire into the conception and significance of our trinity of soul, spirit, and unique personhood as these may be depicted in Ken Wilber’s work.

It was the historic task of modern and post-modern criticism to disparage the metaphysical verities of the past, essentially rejecting (and later ignoring) the descriptions of soul and spirit in the world’s wisdom traditions. As we have noted, these traditions were already problematic given the inherited philosophic split between monism (in its Aristotelian, Advaita, or Buddhist versions) and dualism of Platonism and classic Hinduism. The “disaster of modernity,” as Wilber calls it, would go much further, dissociating body (and brain) from mind, soul, and spirit—think: Descartes. With the later rise of scientific materialism, modernity now denied any ontological reality to these attributes of selfhood. It has fallen to Wilber to shepherd us through the dualism versus monism problem in the pre-modern traditions, and then navigate from there to go beyond the modern and postmodern critiques of metaphysics. We are fortunate indeed that Ken offers us integral philosophic discourse in the face of today’s egregious fragmentation of knowledge—although crucial questions remain in regard to our notion of an experiential soul.

The early work of Wilber builds upon the highest “divinization” teachings of the East and West. Initially, he did us the favor of exalting the perennialist notion of the Great Chain of Being. After showing how the Great Chain can be “temporalized” and then “quadrated,” he later grew far beyond these distinctions in his later thought which, as far as this study is concerned, reaches its culmination in *Integral Spirituality*.<sup>8</sup>

But first, let’s consider a possible problem with following Wilber into this territory. Some have pointed to an apparently inescapable bias in Wilber’s thought. I refer here especially to his frequent practice of borrowing from nondual Vedanta and Buddhist terminology and categories in his search for key distinctions and useful tools for the philosophic analysis of consciousness. So one must ask: Does Ken conflate his personal religion with his integral philosophy? Does he privilege nondual teachings over the theism of other traditions?

A closer reading reveals that Wilber, in his *later* writings, has a fair-minded grasp of the claims about an ontological soul, a Unique Self, and even a personal God found in the traditions. Even as early as *Integral Psychology* (2001), he writes: “Looking deep within the mind, in the very most interior part of the self, when the mind becomes very, very quiet, and one listens very carefully, in that infinite Silence, the soul begins to whisper, and its feather-soft voice take one far beyond what the mind could every imagine . . . In its gentle whisperings, there are the faintest hints of infinite love.”<sup>9</sup>

Even earlier, in a seminal essay, he writes of the soul with even more lyricism. “There is a timeless nature about the soul that becomes perfectly obvious and unmistakable: one actually

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<sup>8</sup> *Integral Spirituality: A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World* by Ken Wilber (October 2006: Integral Books/Shambhala).

<sup>9</sup> *Collected Works of Ken Wilber, Volume 4: 421.*



begins to ‘taste’ the immortality of the soul, to intuit that the soul is to some extent above time, above history, above life and death. In this way one becomes convinced that the soul has existed before and will exist again.”<sup>10</sup>

Then again, it should be pointed out that Wilber sharply distinguishes the soul as understood by the wisdom traditions from the popular belief in reincarnation. The soul, classically understood, cannot be not a container of memories experienced in past lives. In the world’s great traditions, he states, the soul had two defining characteristics: first, as “the repository of one’s ‘virtue’ (or lack of it)—that is, of one’s karma, good and bad,” and second, “of one’s ‘strength’ of awareness, one’s capacity to witness the phenomenal world without attachment or aversion.”<sup>11</sup> Memories of one’s life are a phenomenon of mind, not soul, and it is not mind that transmigrates; only the soul does. Paraphrasing Wilber: according to any major religion or perennial philosophy, any past life memory refers to some other phenomenon, not memories in the personal soul.<sup>12</sup> But this may be a misreading that betrays his Buddhist bias; bear this in mind what we later consider the possible reality of *soul memory*. It is interesting to note in this connection that neither the Dalai Lama and Ken Wilber himself have reported any memory of a past life.

That said, let’s consider our “sacred trinity” of soul, spirit, and personhood in the light of Wilber’s integral post-metaphysical turn.

As noted, his point of departure is to systematize and reframe what most of us agree to be the common core of the world’s traditions—the so-called “Great Chain of Being” conception of the perennial philosophers. Wilber rightly calls this the supreme cross-cultural achievement —“the priceless gift of the ages.” It refers to the familiar notion that reality is composed of various nested levels or stages of existence, ranging upward from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. This conception is usually accompanied by a “Great Chain” cosmology, ranging from inanimate matter to planet and animal life, to humans, then an angelic hierarchy reaching up to a paradisiacal God at its apex. But the better metaphor is one of a Great Nest. Each level is qualitatively different from the previous one, yet each senior dimension transcends but always includes (or nests) its juniors, for example, atoms are part of molecules, which in turn comprise cells, then tissues, organs, and so on.

We noted earlier that, with regard to human nature, many traditions present only two nested levels (“body and soul” of substance dualism), or three levels (the triad of body, soul, and spirit). Wilber’s own system follows Aurobindo and other much more sophisticated maps with up to a dozen levels or more in the spectrum of the self. Whatever the number of levels, in *Integral Psychology* he calls this expanse a great morphogenetic field or a “developmental space”—stretching from mind to matter to spirit—in which various potentials unfold into actuality. In his post-metaphysical phase, he introduces the concept that the levels are not pre-existent but are only the result of “Kosmic habits,” persistent practices with field effects that leave behind self-existing patterns that can be discerned by adepts and utilized as guideposts on their own path.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid: 538.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>12</sup> <http://fourthturningbuddhism.com/death-rebirth-reincarnation/>.

The integral vision began as Wilber saw fit to differentiate at least three irreducible reality domains, leading to early renditions of the AQAL conception. In his later work, as epitomized by *Integral Spirituality*, he turns more than ever to methodological concerns as he teases out the distinctions needed to better understand spirituality in relation to consciousness, culture, and science. The result is a fresh way of framing the problem of the soul and spirit in terms of perception and perspective.

Another departure in his later work: Wilber evokes the supreme importance of the *Great Thou*, the notion of a personally contactable Absolute Personality who is worthy of devotion and worship—“Spirit in 2nd-person.” Personally I was moved by Ken’s inclusive reach into a realm of religious observance that has not heretofore been prominent in the integral movement.

In order to achieve such far-reaching integrations, Wilber’s updated iterations of his integral operating system has had to take on more granularity. Previously, his four quadrants reigned. (This approach was defined as the co-arising of the interior and exterior domains of the individual and collective dimensions of any “occasion,” these being the four fundamentally different possible perspectives on any given experience.) Going beyond this widely embraced model first introduced by Wilber in 1995, he now expands from four quadrants to *eight zones*. Each zone comes with a unique method of inquiry able to yield perspectives that produce essential distinctions for any study. The novel idea here is that one must include the additional viewpoints of the inside and outside of each quadrant, thereby bringing excluded schools of thought into play, including structuralism, behaviorism, and ethnomethodology.

With his adoption of this post-metaphysical stance, Wilber steers around the question of ontology, our own questions about the existence and nature of the soul and spirit, with his critique of the *myth of the given*. Now, different “world-spaces” generate or contain different phenomena which are believed to exist, but such perceptions are only possible or plausible from that perspective or “perspectival zone.” Writes Ken: “[There is] no pre-given world, but simply a series of worlds that come into being (or co-emerge, or are tetra-enacted) with different orders of consciousness.”<sup>13</sup> Crucial here is the notion that only when certain injunctions (experiments or enactments) are performed, and then scrutinized by peer review, can one achieve such a level of perception.

Wilber concludes his intricate argument by calling for the “integralizing” of the world’s religions, whereby they become educational and inspirational conveyor belts of evolutionary progress that can carry the world’s people through all identifiable stages, or “stations,” of consciousness development, leading again to the highest stage: non-dual realization.

### **The Urantia Book and the Immortalizing Soul**

*The Urantia Book* purports to be a revelation to humankind that encompasses science, philosophy, cosmology, religion, and history. Many of us consider it to be an “integrally informed” text, as Ken Wilber himself acknowledged at my first personal meeting with him in 1999. Its core philosophy of religion, for example, points

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<sup>13</sup> *Integral Spirituality*, p. 260.

especially to Ken’s favorite “Big Three” of truth, beauty, and goodness.<sup>14</sup>

I think of the Urantia Revelation as a universal encyclopedia authored by high celestial beings tasked with the mandate of providing an epochal revelation suitable to the needs of an advancing scientific civilization in the coming centuries. For several decades, it has served for me as a single-volume cosmic reference text.<sup>15</sup>

With respect to the domain of spirituality, it teaches a *cosmic religion of evolutionary experience*—or what might be called “cosmic experimentalism.” I derive this conclusion in part from decades of study of the life and teachings of Jesus (provided in Part IV of the text, running over 700 pages, and based on the purported “angelic record”) and from my reflections on papers 100 through 107, which especially inform the following discussion.

In my reading, the *evolutionary import of human experience* is the crucial factor in Urantia cosmology. We are told that the aim of the divine creators is to grow high-quality souls—not through esoteric initiations, but through the vicissitudes of the moral challenges faced in ordinary lived experience. Indeed, soul evolution through human decisions is revealed to be the secret of the creation of the space-time domains, the very purpose of the evolution of life from the moment of its implantation by celestial beings on a habitable world. In a real sense, the entire expanse of the evolution of planetary life—which under favorable circumstances culminates in progressive human civilization—is a substantive process that contributes to God’s own evolution; for, as each human soul evolves, God evolves right along with it.

But how can God evolve if, by definition, God is perfect, omniscient, universal, eternal, and infinite? As in some phases of integral theory, *The Urantia Book* poses a powerful dialectic between God as existential and infinite, and God as evolutionary and finite. Put simply: In one phase of God’s divine manifestation, a self-limiting and self-distributing aspect of God incarnates into evolving space-time reality by a variety of “involutional” divine agencies, including the creation of an angelic host (a topic that is outside of the scope of this paper). Of concern for us here is that this “kenotic” God makes the evolving part of himself *subject* to human evolution. In a literal sense, God shares Godself with his creatures—even to the extent of gifting them with a spirit-fragment of himself whose will is *subordinate* to human will. I noted

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<sup>14</sup> Here are a few typical statements:

*To finite man truth, beauty, and goodness embrace the full revelation of divinity reality. (56:10)*

*In so far as man’s evolving soul becomes permeated by truth, beauty, and goodness as the value-realization of God-consciousness, such a resultant being becomes indestructible. (111:3.7)*

*Religion is genuine and worthwhile if it fosters in the individual an experience in which the sovereignty of truth, beauty, and goodness prevails, for such is the true spiritual concept of supreme reality. (99:4.4)*

See “Truth, Beauty & Goodness: 84 Occurances in The Urantia Book” at: <http://www.integralworld.net/warrenI.html>

<sup>15</sup> Over its 2,000+ pages, which are broken into four parts and 196 “papers” (chapters), offers sections on physics and cosmology; a lengthy account of geological, biological, and human evolution; a revelation of life after death, on other planets, in the angelic realms; a profound new philosophical theology; special instructions on global politics and social reform; and much more.

earlier that this spirit-self, a literal fragment of God, is pre-personal but aiming to achieve “personalness” by way of fusion with the person it is indwelling—a fusion of energies, attributes, and wills. The technical term for this indwelling spirit-self is the *Thought Adjuster*.

But recall that God provides other high gifts according to Urantia cosmology. We’ve noted that he also confers upon each person a Unique Self, as described earlier. Intrinsic to Unique Self personhood are the prerogatives of free will choice and the ability to enact decisions through the vehicle of the human intellect and animal-origin bodily capacities.

When any given decision participates in divine value, the spirit-self “immortalizes” these experiences in and *as* the individuating human soul. This soul-making transaction of our sacred trinity begins with (1) a specific free choice (Unique Self) for value, moves next to (2) the spiritizing seizure of this impulse (by the spirit-self), and (3) concludes with the deposit of the “divine transcript” of this immortalized “enaction of human will” within the subtle body (i.e., the potentially immortal soul).

These gifts are like two-way mirrors. They ennoble the human recipient with divine attributes, but they also provide God with an intimate relationship to unfolding human experience.

And this is where cosmic evolution enters the scene.

The celestial authors of the Urantia text would surely applaud Wilber’s “1-2-3 of God.” The third-person evolutionary “face” of God is termed “God the Supreme” or the “Supreme Being.” This phase of the godhead is also known as “experiential Deity” and is covered in extensive detail in Papers 115 – 117 in the Urantia text.

Think of God the Supreme as the up-to-the-moment “summa” of cosmic evolution in all domains of human experience at any one point in time. He slowly grows to perfection in and through the efforts of his evolving creatures; his evolution encompasses and “totalizes” the soul growth of all beings on all space-time worlds, as well as on worlds in higher dimensions. And his growth in divinity attainment is “AQAL”: it is inclusive of all dimensions of the personal, scientific, social, and cultural evolution of his creatures residing across the universe in diverse and far-flung planetary and higher-dimensional cultures. In essence, the Supreme Being completes himself only to the extent that you and I evolve toward perfection as individuals and as the collective brotherhood/sisterhood of humankind on all worlds. Again, it is soul growth through the appropriation of higher values—spurred on through the agency of the indwelling divine spirit and unified by the endowment of Unique Self—that is the hidden purpose of this process.

God is evolutionary as a *theologic* necessity. God’s original infinity is, paradoxically, a limitation; and, in terms of integral post-metaphysics, God’s infinity-status is a limitation on *divine perspective*. Infinitude can be a limit on infinity! In Urantia Book terms, God must achieve “freewill liberation from the bonds of infinity and the fetters of eternity.” So, to enlarge his perspective, the God as “Father” designs an escape from the fetters of his infinitude: he creates a finite and evolving universe that offers him a window on finitude as experienced through the “eyes” of his myriad

human creatures. As these creatures generate an immortal soul and hopefully survive death through their own choice to do so, and as they ascend through higher-dimensional worlds toward the ultimate embrace of the Divine Person, they continue to provide God with a unique and increasingly sophisticated portal on their unique evolutionary experience. The evolutionary experience of “descending” angelic beings—whose mandate is to support this grand project of cosmic evolution—also provide other perspectives for God to indwell.

And so we can say that in doing all of this, God offers himself a finite perspective, a view on things from the standpoint of “other-than-perfect-God.” But we can even say much more. For the Divine Person multiplies this otherness to its mathematical limit, thereby expanding the possibilities of finite perspectives asymptotically toward infinity. He does this by enabling the evolution of untold trillions of perspectives—that is, he makes possible a material universe of evolving personal beings through whom God receives unlimited perspectives on evolutionary experience. To paraphrase the Great Chain thesis, all of cosmic plenitude is filled with infinitely unique experiential creatures—and for a good and sufficient divine reason. God distributes his possible perspectives beyond measure because each occasion of personhood “is unique, absolutely unique: It is unique in time and space; it is unique in eternity [and] it is unique when bestowed — there are no duplicates; it is unique during every moment of existence . . .” (See Paper 112.)

This, then, is God’s “clever” plan: He institutes various techniques of experiencing our evolutionary experiences in an incomplete but perfecting universe. This is why creature experience is the most precious commodity in the universe. It is God’s chief purpose for creating space-time and populating it with billions of inhabited planets and untold trillions of humanoid beings. His divine plan, according to Urantian theology, was to set in motion the adventure of being human on the grandest possible scale, both in quantity and quality. In doing so, God had what we might call an ulterior motive: to allow each human adventure to be unique in all universes—and further, to have an exclusive window on each of our unique experiences of the space-time universe. Again, this technique affords the Divine Person a nearly infinite set of perspectives on evolution.

With this background and context in mind, let us return our consideration of Urantia Book anthropology. Human experience has a myriad of features, but it is conceived primarily as a function of will, that is, of decisions to act—our willingness to choose to love, to share, to receive, to feel, to think, to create. The Urantia text calls it “decision-action.” When such decisions are positive, creative, dynamic, and constructive, they can be summed up with the religious phrase of “doing the will of God.” (Technically, the divine will as represented by the spirit-self—which always points like a compass to values like love, truth, goodness, and beauty—is made apparent to awareness, and the unique self freely chooses to enact this option.)

The soul is evolving through these decisions; the evolving soul is the summation of the epitome of all that we choose to experience, including the predicaments that we attract into our lives. It’s the repository of the spiritual essence

of our life experiences, especially our personal relationships. The soul is the full story of our lives, the good, the bad, and the ugly. The indwelling spirit is that part of us that cognizes these essentials—literally duplicates them as our evolving soul.

These faithful custodians of the future career unflinchingly duplicate every mental creation with a spiritual counterpart; they are thus slowly and surely re-creating you as you really are (only spiritually) for resurrection on the survival worlds. And all of these exquisite spirit recreations are being preserved in the emerging reality of your evolving and immortal soul. . . . And as you are the human parent, so is the [spirit self] the divine parent of the real you, your higher and advancing self. . . . And it is this evolving soul that the judges and censors discern when they decree your survival and pass you upward to new worlds and never-ending existence in eternal liaison with your faithful partner — God, the Thought Adjuster. (108:6:5)

God relates to our experience like a curator, or a divine archivist. The spirit-self appropriates our most meaningful experiences, and creates God’s archive of our best moments of experience. These “saved” events are our precious *soul memories*. They are the moments of decision-action that cross the line into spiritual value—our genuine choices of the true, the good, and the beautiful; and, just as valuable, these are our unfortunate or misguided or self-centered or tragic experiences that, on reflection, lead us to discern the deeper meanings of such values and to intend to “choose better the next time.” This archive is the soul itself, co-created by God (the indwelling spirit-self) and by the human intellect, which executes daily decisions in the light of perceived values.

In other words, the soul reflects—in fact *is*—God’s perspective on our struggles and achievements. To use second-person language, the soul is what our life is and has been, *as God sees it*. Through the agency of our spirit-self, the soul makes note of our choices for higher values, as we reach for truth, beauty, or goodness. The result is an *immortal soul that survives death*. Such is the role of the soul and spirit in human experience according to the Urantia Revelation.<sup>16</sup>

After death, the spirit-self takes custody of the immortal transcript of our life experience (i.e., the “high notes” of our lived experiences). In the resurrection after death, the indwelling spirit reassembles our identity, and ascends with us into the afterlife. It guides us further inward and upward into to higher spheres of attainment, until the spirit fuses with the soul.

That which gives unity and coherence to the entire operation is the unique existential personality. *The Urantia Book* may have been the first modern scripture to convey a Unique Self teaching, for just as Marc Gafni defines Unique Self, it too defines personality (its technical term for Unique Self) as an adamantine entity that is unique in all the universes, and utterly beyond time and space.

The love of the Father absolutely individualizes each personality as a unique child of the Universal Father, a child without duplicate in infinity, a will creature irreplaceable in all eternity. (12:0.1)

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<sup>16</sup> If you consider what blues is to jazz—as seen from the standpoint of jazz fans—you will understand what the distinction between soul and spirit is for fans of the Urantia Revelation. We can say that classic blues expresses the gritty, street-level feelings of our lived experience. It depicts the poignance of the murky experiences of daily life, especially our challenging personal relationships; but jazz is much freer. Though rooted in the blues, jazz operates from a higher zone of sheer beauty, lucidity, and abstraction. We might even say that jazz transcends and includes the soulfulness of the blues. The music of John Coltrane, and a few other greats, achieved a fusion of the two idioms, creating something entirely new: the ultimate musical marriage of feeling and abstraction. And this is not unlike the way in which our spirit-self literally takes on the highest notes of our life experience, absorbs them, and immortalizes them.

What we don't learn from Gafni is that personality, according to this definition, is absolutely unchanging. Further, as we have seen, personality is the seat of human will, our priceless gift of choice. We have faculties of feeling and thinking, but the will is central. It's alignment with the "divine will" is decisive. These are just a few of the other attributes of personhood according to the Urantia Revelation, in its incredible Paper 112:

- Personality unifies creature identity, and can survive death as the unifier of the surviving soul
- Personality is "changeless in the presence of change"
- It is characterized by morality — awareness of relativity of relationship with other persons.

### **Contribution of NDE Study to a Theory of the Soul**

It is now widely known that contemporary research on thousands of cases of NDEs (near-death experiences) has yielded a rich set of new data that have been subject to multidisciplinary scientific scrutiny. Among many characteristics isolated by researchers, almost all experiencers (NDErs) report the experience of a vivid and joyful awareness of a discrete soul or selfhood that has the potential to survive the death of the body. According to premier researcher Kenneth Ring, "Religious orientation was not a factor affecting either the likelihood or the depth of the near-death experience. An atheist was as likely to have one as was a devoutly religious person."<sup>17</sup>

The "life-review" phenomenon often reported in NDEs has the greatest import for our purposes. A widely used scale to classify and distinguish NDEs from other mental states was developed in 1983 by Professor Bruce Greyson, a psychiatrist who teaches at the University of Virginia. According to the Greyson NDE scale, the life review phenomenon is unique to NDEs and is reported by 22 percent of NDErs. Very oddly, more atheists (100%) reported having a life review than any other category of experiencer.<sup>18</sup>

Scores of life-review experiences have been documented in the research literature. In the life review, subjects invariably report having a "holographic" experience overseen by benign beings, in which they engage in a vivid *reliving* of life episodes in chronological sequence (or sometimes in reverse sequence). In these life review experiences, NDErs report a clear perception of what others experienced in each situation that is reviewed, accompanied by efforts to draw life lessons that are led by a celestial being.<sup>19</sup> According to Dr. Raymond Moody, "The Being of Light presents the dying with a panoramic review of everything they have ever done. That is, they relive every act they have ever done to other people and come away feeling that love is the most important thing in life."<sup>20</sup>

This is a typical episode in a documented life review: "Reinee Pasarow described how the most positive thing she did was to give special attention to a not so lovable boy at a summer

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/experts04.html>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/atheists01.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/research24.html>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/experts03.html>

camp so that he would know he was loved. During the review, she said this act of kindness was more important from her viewpoint of expanded awareness than if she had been president of the United States or the queen of England.”<sup>21</sup>

The commonality of such reports points to the possibility that the soul *is a repository of the most spiritually significant and poignant experiences of a person’s lifetime*, and that it is associated with an enduring identity that has the power to survive in the afterlife as a living and embodied being sojourning in a “higher world.” Let’s end with a life-review account by the famed NDEr Dannion Brinkley:

The powerful Being enveloped me and I began to relive my entire life, one incident at a time. In what I call the panoramic life review I watched my life from a second person point of view. As I experienced this I was myself as well as every other person with whom I had ever interacted . . . When the panoramic life review ended, despite the many obvious mistakes I had made in my life, I experienced no retribution – no judgment and no punishment. I was the only judge presiding over my day in court! Given time to assimilate my life in retrospect, I was given the opportunity to know, first hand, both the happiness and the sorrow I had created through my actions.<sup>22</sup>

### **A Theology of the Soul as the Determining Factor in Cosmic Evolution**

Though beyond the scope of this study, it should rightly be pointed out that Hegel’s concept of spirit (*geist*), and specifically his theory of recollection (*erinnerung*), comes close to our notion that life experiences (and their conscious recollection) are constitutive of soul evolution as it attains spiritization—and further, that the “recollection” of immortalized experiences of an unlimited pool of Unique Selves are, in turn, constitutive of the evolution and completion of a universal consciousness that we have called the Supreme Being.

In other words, this “God of evolution” becomes the “summa” of the composite soul evolution of all humans as they strive for perfection. Such a robust theology of soul, by clearly distinguishing time (subtle-realm dynamics) from eternity (the immortalizing action of the indwelling spirit of God)—while yet pointing to the synthesis of time and eternity in and as the soul—allows that an existential Deity may personalize in space-time as the Omega of cosmic evolution.

Contrary to Wilber’s notion that the “theistic” transactions of the subtle realm are enveloped and surpassed by causal or nondual spirit, we have maintained that an abiding relationship between soul and spirit is maintained in a dialectical duality, even after “mystical union” has occurred (my term is fusion). Such a persisting “I-Thou” duality was claimed, for example, by medieval mystic Meister Eckhart: “Even in the ultimate union in heaven, Eckhart

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/research24.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.dannion.com/dannion-brinkley-near-death-experience/>



insists, this distinction will remain.”<sup>23</sup> We’ve noted that *The Urantia Book* reveals that, even after the fusion of soul and spirit-self at some point in the afterlife, the exalted individual continues on, able to pursue an eternal life of unlimited experience in higher worlds that perpetually contribute to the self-realization of the Supreme.

We have noted that Wilber has let go of “involutionary givens” in his mature system. Yet Wilber persists in his contention that evolution has laid down Kosmic habits that follow a linear sequence through successive stages ending in formless, nondual realization. The state-stages are universal and paradigmatic, and in fact, according to *Integral Spirituality*, are *mandatory* for individuals in all cultures. By this measure, any system that aims at a life of loving service through “decision-action”—i.e., soul-making dynamics—would rank lower than those pursuing a meditative path aiming at nondual states and stages. The Wilber-Combs lattice may allow such practitioners of “lesser road” paths access to higher states, but “only if they sacrifice the integrity of their own tradition’s self-understanding by accepting Wilber’s itinerary and non-dual endpoint.”<sup>24</sup>

One might accept Wilber’s view that millennia of fervent practice has created a discernible morphic field that conforms to his unilinear sequence of spiritual development. But our study has suggested a more pluralistic understanding of how such kosmic habits populate the etheric realms—or what Jose Ferrer calls a “a plural cornucopia creatively advancing in multiple ontological directions.” Ferrer continues: “Wilber wants to confine such ontological multiplicity to his unilinear evolutionary sequence, but I believe it is both more accurate and more generous to envision cosmic and spiritual evolution as branching out in many different but potentially intermingled directions . . . If we accept this view, we can affirm the ontological nature of a plurality of Kosmic habits free from Wilberian dogmatic constraints.”<sup>25</sup>

Incorporating the findings of paranormal studies, and mounting evidence of inter-dimensional and extraterrestrial life, we can say that a nearly infinite variety of practices are unfolding on untold numbers of worlds in terrestrial and higher realms.

Finally, our concept of the Supreme Being not only accommodates, but requires Ferrer’s “multiple ontological directions.” If soul evolution truly is directional, and if Unique Self is truly unique in eternity—then it will require a Deity of Experience to encompass the field effects of those trails that each of us blazes on our way toward fusion with spirit. And that’s because each sacred trinity of soul, spirit, and existential self are designed to provide a unique window on cosmic evolution for the Divine Person. Existential infinitude gives way to experiential plenitude. And, the personalization of the Supreme Being requires nothing less.

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<sup>23</sup> Jose Ferrer, *Transpersonal Psychology Review*, 14(2), 3-24, 2011 “Participation, Metaphysics, and Enlightenment: Reflections on KenWilber’s Recent Work.” I follow Ferrer’s sources and argument here.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p 11.

## APPENDIX ON PLATO'S CONCEPT OF SOUL

Plato thought that only one part of the soul was immortal—the faculty of reason or *logos*. This is the primal Greek notion that rationality itself must be somehow essential supernatural. Technically, the Platonic soul consists of three parts: reason or *nous*; emotions; and desire or the appetitive function.

Plato's dialogues endeavor to show that our ability to think and reflect, including the evidence of "innate ideas," clearly point to the substantial reality of the soul. Also known as the *theory of recollection*, this is the observation that we seem to possess knowledge or ideas that we could not have acquired through experience or education, but which must have come to us from some previous existence or dimension. Plato illustrates this famously in *Meno*, where Socrates leads an ignorant slave to solve a complex geometrical puzzle. Another aspect of the theory of recollection is the apparent existence in our minds of ideals or ideal concepts. For example, we can and do have the *idea* of perfect equality, but we don't observe that perfect equality exists in society—we can never have a true experience of it. And the same can be said for the ideas of justice, beauty, goodness, and many other abstract concepts. Whence do such ideals originate if they are not observable in this world?

Related to this notion is Plato's famed Theory of Ideas, laid out especially in *The Republic*. Every significant word that we use in everyday speech, such as justice or beauty, is a particular instance of a corresponding abstract Idea, or ideal Form, which he posits as being eternal and incorruptible. Just as physical things are sensible to our bodily senses, these eternal Ideas are intelligible to our intellect. Ergo, the reasoning soul is itself eternal.

Another proof on differing grounds is presented in *Phaedrus*, which depicts the soul as something that is uniquely able to "move itself." Plato's later speculations along these lines led to Aristotle's formulation that God must be the "Unmoved Mover," which was later adopted into Catholic theology.

My body (hand, feet, eyes) is obviously something I use in daily life, but I am not my body *per se*. For instance, I may decide to prepare and cook food. Because the body is merely the instrument being used for this activity, it would be illogical to think of my body as being who I am, existentially, as a person; for, as Plato would say, "the thing used must be different than that which is using it." A flying pan does not use itself—a human cook uses it; the flute player is separate from her flute—she uses her flute to play a recital. In that sense, my soul (which is directing the body in its functions through the reasoning mind) is different from the body that carries out such activities.