

## **Symbols of the Soul: 8 - The Soul as a mirror**

### **Chapter 17 of Mysteries and Symbols of the Soul**

Are you looking for someone who can give you long-lasting happiness? Look into the mirror! Our culture suggests that happiness can only be found in things and people outside ourselves. If you believe this, you will certainly end up disappointed, as sustainable happiness can only be found within you, in the soul that is connected with the spirit. The active spirit-soul is the prince on the white horse who can offer you the only possible sustainable happiness.

Naturally we, with a physical body and a personality-soul, need the outside world, with the four nature kingdoms as we know them – mineral, plant, animal and human – not only for the maintenance of our physical body, but in particular for the benefit of our personality-soul. Contact with our fellow men is essential for our growth and for our well-being as a human individual. Through interaction with the congeneric persons around us and while gaining all sorts of experience in the world, we acquire knowledge, we develop skills and get to know ourselves. Our fellow men and the creation too, are like a mirror to us. Our soul can also be seen as a mirror.

In the adventure novel *'Tarzan of the Apes'*, from 1912, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, and in its many film adaptations, the famous jungle hero Tarzan gradually develops from a human animal into a gentleman. In reality this would not be feasible, because a human child that is nursed by a mammal like an ape or a wolf and able to keep itself alive afterwards, cannot grow up as a normal personality. Such a person will start behaving like an animal and fall behind in the psycho-social, linguistic and cognitive development, and in this he can never catch up again. This is clear from the hundred or so cases of so-called wolf children or wild children that have been reported in the past hundred years.

Man, by nature, tends to imitate his fellow human beings. Learning often begins with imitation, with copycat behaviour or mirror behaviour. The brain even appears to be especially made for this.

Halfway the nineties researchers of the university of Parma found through their trial tests with monkeys that certain areas of our brain are not only activated by our own actions, but also by observing actions of others. If a researcher, for instance, stuck out her tongue to a baby monkey, certain neurons in her brain which are similar to the neurons in the researchers' brain lit up, causing the monkey baby to stick out its tongue as well. As these specific neurons ensure that the behaviour of a human being or an animal is reflected by another human being or animal, they are therefore called mirror neurons.

#### **Mirror neurons**

The activity of mirror neurons also shows why people can be so fascinated watching sports competitions and movies, for example. The spectators empathise with the players, because they are experiencing more or less the same thoughts and feelings, as the players do. We owe our power to connect with others, our empathy, to these mirror neurons. They also enable us to practice certain actions internally. You can, for instance, become a better archer if you often visualise the various movements for archery. Mirror neurons not only light up because of physical vision, but also by visualisation. When we see violent and saddening images, this will evoke

painful emotions for us, through our mirror neurons. Yet many people watch violent films and an incessant flow of images of sadness, fear and misery enters millions of living rooms through news media. An important reason for this, is that there are major astral and ethereal force activities, which extract life energies from mankind – partly through the media – to keep themselves alive. In the gospel of the Pistis Sophia these are called archons and eons.

People who aspire to a spirit-soul development, had better not open themselves for all this astral activity, as they will be less receptive to divine forces that can renew their whole being in a gnostic sense. After all, everything on which we focus our attention, our energy, will grow. It is therefore no wonder that you will feel depressive, powerless and forlorn when you are constantly focused on pain, sadness and suffering and cannot do anything about.

How is it possible that so many people are so fascinated by images, feelings and thoughts that are associated with pain, sadness and suffering? According to Eckhart Tolle one of the most important reasons is that almost everyone carries an accumulation of old pain with him in his energy field. Tolle speaks, in this respect, of the pain body that has come into existence because negative emotions from the past have not been fully faced, accepted and let go of. In his book 'A New Earth', he writes on this subject:

*'The pain body is a semiautonomous energy form that lives within the energy field of most human beings – an entity made up of emotional energy. It has its own primitive intelligence, not unlike a cunning animal, and its intelligence is directed primarily at survival. Like all lifeforms, it periodically needs to feed – to take in new energy – and the food it requires to replenish itself consists of energy that is compatible with its own, which is to say the energy that vibrates at a similar frequency. Any emotionally painful experience can be used as food by the pain body. That is why it thrives on negative thinking as well as drama in relationships. The pain body is in fact an addiction to unhappiness.'*

The beginning of our liberation from the pain body lies first and foremost in the realisation that you have a pain body. Subsequently and more important: it is fully in your power to remain alert enough to spot the pain body in yourself as a heavy flow of negative emotions when it becomes active. If this is recognised, it cannot impersonate you anymore, cannot live through you and so renew itself.

You can become free of your identification with your pain body by awareness, as described in chapter 1. If you do not identify with it, the pain body cannot exercise any power anymore over your thinking and will not be able to feed on your thoughts. The pain body, in most cases, will not dissolve immediately, but when you break its connection with your thinking, the pain body will gradually lose its energy. That will also lead to changes in the brain: certain neural connections will become weaker or disappear, while new connections come to life and are strengthened.

### **Are we our brain?**

Seen from a neurological standpoint, learning is making and strengthening new connections between brain cells, allowing certain thoughts, feelings and actions to emerge. Every human being is unique and has a personal past. The brain of a person is therefore very individual by nature and reflects the person concerned. Some even go so far as to identify entirely with their

brain. The Dutch brain researcher Dick Swaab, for instance, wrote the popular scientific book *'We are Our Brain'*. This title expresses a materialistic world view, which Swaab fully endorses.

For the time being, most scientists support the view that says that the human consciousness is the result of brain activity. From the spiritual point of view, it is exactly the opposite: consciousness is the basis of all manifestation and all brain activity is therefore triggered by consciousness.

This point of view is fully in compliance with research into near-death experiences by the Dutch cardiologist Pim van Lommel. Studies on near-death experiences show that a clear consciousness is definitely possible while the heart has stopped and no brain activity can be measured any more. Hence, it is a misunderstanding to think that consciousness is localised in the brain. Rather, brains facilitate our consciousness.

If we are alert, we may sometimes experience in our daily life, that our consciousness is not limited to within our skull but stretches far out in time and space. Many people recognise, for instance, the phenomenon that is known as telephone telepathy. Just when you were thinking about someone, the telephone rings and you are directly in contact with the person you were thinking about. Sometimes, in a flash, you can get an impression of a situation that shortly or longer afterwards becomes real. The British biologist Rupert Sheldrake researched this kind of phenomena and concluded that these are common occurrences. He also found, using cameras, that pets like dogs and cats often know beforehand when their boss will come home, without being able to know this through their senses.

The above-mentioned extraordinary phenomena were already known by initiates in ancient India, who used the term akasha in this respect. This means the cosmic ether, the bearer of all life and sound, permeating the entire space. The past, the present and according to some the future too, are being stored in akasha, in one mighty and all-embracing synchronisation.

Lynne McTaggart wrote in her book *'The Field – The Quest for the Secret Force in the Universe'*, that the so-called zero-point field of physicists – which is associated with minuscule vibrations at quantum level, may be this akasha field. She presents a plausible scientific theory that clarifies all these phenomena, from the functioning of our dna to communication between cells and from homeopathy to extrasensory experiences.

### **The palace of the mirrors**

Man is called a microcosm, that is: a small world, because the universe reflects itself within him. Reflection phenomena take place in all dimensions and at all levels of the universe. The moon reflects the light of the sun. The eyes of man reflect his mental and physical condition. With telephone telepathy a thought about a friend reflects itself in the consciousness of the person concerned. Sufi poets named the world of thought Aina Khana, which means the palace of the mirrors.

The way in which we experience the world reflects our inner state. We do not see the world as it is, but as we are. If we are happy, we experience the outside world in quite a different way than when we are sad.

The great Persian poet Nezami tells a story in his manuscript *'The Treasury of Mysteries'* in which Jesus and his disciples are walking in an alley and find a dead dog in a state of dissolution. The disciples are disgusted, they only see an ugly cadaver and emphasize the stench. Jesus, however, only looks at the beauty in the carcass: he sees the white teeth and praises them. The moral of the story is that we must not judge too early and that underneath all apparent ugliness often something beautiful is hidden. The challenge is to always discover this beauty again and again in everything and to experience it, because this is how the soul can reveal itself in the world.

If we experience beauty, peace and joy, we reflect these. Inayat Khan (1882-1927), the most important advocate of Sufism in the West, wrote:<sup>63</sup> *'A man whose heart is reflecting joy, wherever he goes will make other people happy. The sorrowful, the troubled ones, the disappointed, those heartbroken, they will all begin to feel life; food will be given to their souls, because this person reflects joy.'*

### **Water crystals**

Our state of mind reflects itself in our body and in our direct environment. The Japanese researcher Masaru Emoto made the phenomenon of energetic reflection visible to us in a surprising way, by research into water crystals. He froze water samples that had first been exposed to negative or positive words, thoughts, emotions or different kinds of music. Afterwards he took photographs of little water crystals in the melt water through a microscope. Image 20 shows six of such photographs.

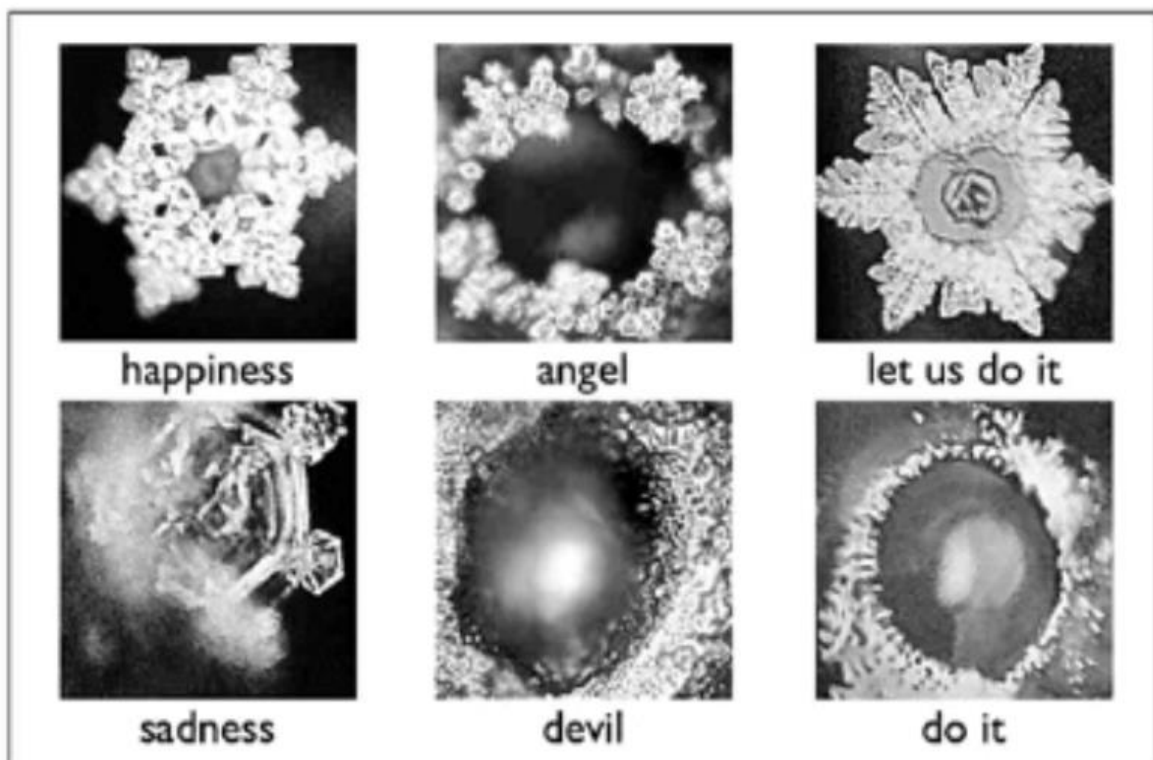


image 20: water crystals that originated in cooled down water that is exposed to certain words and intentions

Masaru Emoto established that the positively influenced water samples give beautiful and perfectly formed crystals, whereas negative words, thoughts and emotions result in ugly,

malformed clots. Water that had been exposed to music by Bach provided magnificent, clear and symmetrical water crystals, whereas in water that had been exposed to heavy metal music a dull amorphous clotting took place.

If we let the results of Masaru Emoto's experiments get through to us, we hold the key to achieve great changes, on a personal as well as a collective and a global level. The studies of Masaru Emoto can be seen as a strong indication that the quality of our thoughts and feelings determines the quality of life.

In his book *'Metaphysics'*, Inayat Khan compares the soul of man with a clear, transparent glass plate. When one of the two sides of the glass is covered, it becomes a mirror. The external experiences reflect themselves in the soul, when the inside is covered. He who wants to gain inner knowledge, will have to cover the outside of his soul, in order to see the spirit instead of the external world. That is possible, if he withdraws within himself, into his inner castle.

People are in different stages of development. This means, among other things, that not everyone is suited yet to reflect the spiritual light. The following zen story illustrates this.

*'One day Huai-jang watched his pupil Ma-tsu, deeply sunk in meditation.*

*He asked him what he aimed to gain with his meditation exercises.*

*Ma-tsu answered immediately: "I want to become a buddha."*

*Huai-jang said nothing but quietly picks up a roof tile and starts to scrape it against a rock.*

*Ma-tsu could no longer control his curiosity and asks: "Why are you scraping that roof tile against the rock?"*

*Huai-jang answers: "I polish it into a mirror."*

*Ma-tsu asks: "But how can you make a mirror by scraping a roof tile against a rock?"*

*Huai-jang answers: "How can you become enlightened by sitting in mediation?"*

## **Taking responsibility**

The circumstances that you experience around you are constantly a reflection of your inner life. If therefore, you wish to change your outer circumstances you must adapt your inner life. If you realise this, you can no longer take a victim role and will always take responsibility for what you experience. You always have a choice, and by making more and more conscious choices and following them up, you grow as a human being.

The way in which a person develops, is strongly determined by his innate qualities (nature) and by the environment in which he is nourished (nurture). Since the rise of the study of genetics, most scientists have been assuming that the genes that we possess determine our state of being and our behaviour. Studies by the cell biologist Bruce Lipton prove, however, that dna-blueprints that are transferred at birth are not set in stone. Our genes are not decisive for our behaviour for, as studies show, genes are turned on and off by external factors. Genes do not determine our fate, but are triggered by our observations, feelings, thoughts and convictions. Lipton proved that our convictions, whether true or not, positive or negative, influence the activity at a genetic level and can even change our genetic code. This means that we can create healthy opinions and convictions for ourselves and hence live a meaningful and valuable life.

On the gnostic path the aim is to become a person who is inspired by the soul, to vertically receive the spirit – in a symbolic sense – and radiate it horizontally. By nature, man is mainly

focused on his body and his personality-soul. That is certainly necessary because an individualised personality-soul must develop in relationship with others. That is why the I-focused human being always asks: 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?' We need affirmation in order to grow and if all is well, we get this from our conscience and our environment, from our mirrors therefore.

If, however, the soul is awakened, the relationships will shift. To the question who is the fairest of them all, the mirror answers that the questioner is beautiful, but that Snow White, symbol for the soul, is a thousand times more beautiful than the one asking the question. It is then time to redirect the focus from the personality-soul to the true soul. If that does not happen, it will eventually mean the end of the personality-soul.



image 21: 'Echo and Narcissus', painting by John William Waterhouse

In 1903 the English painter John William Waterhouse (1840- 1917) made a lovely painting depicting the ancient Greek myth of Echo and Narcissus, which expresses a comparable idea (see image 21). In a beautiful nature landscape, a handsome young man lies flat on his belly in order to get a clear look into the crystal-clear water of a pond. He is totally fascinated by the reflection of his own face in the water and pays no attention at all to Echo, the beautiful nymph who sits beside him and is madly in love with him. According to the myth of Ovid, Narcissus could not make the effort anymore to look away from the water. He did not think to eat and drink anymore, or to rest, and became totally immersed in his reflected appearance in the water. He tried to speak with it but did not get an answer. He began to cry, but his tears disturbed the image. Narcissus began to decay: he lost his colour, his life energy and his beauty that had once been so enchanting for the nymph Echo. In the end Narcissus languished and the only thing that was left from him was a flower, yellow on the inside and surrounded with white leaves.

The term narcissism is derived from his name, Narcissus. With this psychological concept a form of behaviour is meant in which someone is entirely self-absorbed, with hardly any consideration for others. Narcissists usually have an unconscious low sense of self-esteem and compensate this by falsely considering themselves as better and more important than others.

In a symbolic sense we can regard Narcissus as the original spirit-soul, which has to learn to know itself by its reflection, the personality-soul. The spirit-soul forgets itself completely, because it identifies with the reflection, resulting in a lack of attention for the soul, for Echo. The only thing that remains of Narcissus is the narcissus flower as a bud. If this flower bud, or rose of the heart unfolds in the light of the spiritual sun, a new creation will sprout from it. The infringed microcosm will then be healed, thus enabling the spiritual sun to purely reflect again.