

Levels of Self

(From the first edition of the "Center of Stillness Meditation")

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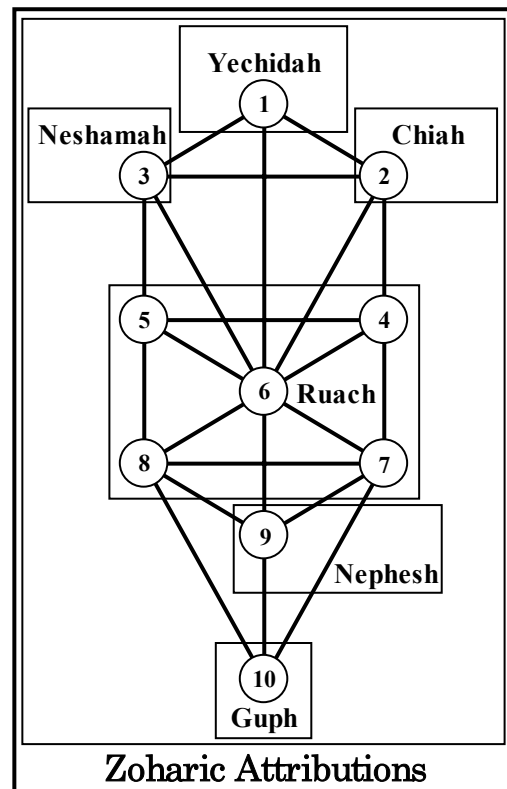
The Center of Stillness Meditation is based upon Qabbalistic and Hermetic physiology and psychology. Though the specific terminology of each is irrelevant to an experience of their subjects, I have decided to include the following outline of the system. For this discussion, I will mention only two such sets: Traditional Zoharic (via the Golden Dawn) and the variation used by the Ordo Lux Kethri.

Zoharic Psychology:

The highest aspect of Self is the Yechidah (יחידה). Attributed to Kether-1, it roughly represents that spark of The One Self of which we are each a center of expression. The word itself, is a feminine form of the root verb יחד ("to unite, join") but implies a "dearness, an aloneness, solitude".

Next comes the Chiah (חיה) attributed to Chokmah-2. This is the Vital Life Force, the Primal Will as it manifests through our particular center of expression. The root verb is חיי ("to live") and Chiah is its feminine form, meaning "a living thing".

The final aspect in the Supernal Triad is the Neshamah (נשמה), attributed to Binah-3. It, once again, is the feminine form of the root verb נשם ("to breathe") and means "mind or spirit". The Neshamah is the agency through which the Yechidah and the Chia take on form. It is the womb from which the lower aspects of the Self emerge.



The first aspect of the Self below the Abyss is the Ruach (רוח), the level of individual uniqueness. The word Ruach is Chaldean and means "wind; spirit, mind; or, spirit of God". While very similar to Neshamah in translation, the differences between "to breathe" (נשם) and "wind" are very significant. The "wind", "air", Ruach is what the Neshamah *exhales*. It is the Neshamah's *expression*. So the Ruach can be seen as the Individual Self. Its placement upon the Tree of Life, encompassing Gedulah-5 through Hod-8, bares this out.

The Ruach is further defined in the Golden Dawn Tradition by the attribution of specific aspects to each of the five Sephirah.

The Individual Self is connected to the physical body via the Nephesh (נפש) or Instinctual self. Nephesh comes from the root verb meaning "to respire, take breath, refresh oneself" and is translated as "an animal; a person; life; self; feelings; and, desire". Attributed to Yesod-9, it signifies the lower emotional - instinctive self, the level at which thought and experience are translated into bodily manifestations such as a tension headache, or a closed posture. At the level of Nephesh, the Personality takes form.

Finally, assigned to Malkuth-10, is the Guph (גוף), the physical body. Guph means "to shut" and is usually translated as "a dead body", one that's been closed to the influx of the spirit. Here the sense is that the body is seen as lifeless without the presence of the Ruach; seen as merely the composite of Four Elements, animated only by the addition of the Quintessence.

The O. L. K.'s "Levels of Self":

The Levels of Self diagram illustrates the variation used by the Ordo Lux Kethri.

The physical body is assigned to Malkuth-10, the realm of the Four Elements. It is seen as the *physical* vehicle of the *astral* Personality, the heart of which is Yesod-9. The Personality Self therefore encompasses Yesod-9 (the lower astral energy matrix), Hod-8 (the lower rational and judgmental intellect), Netzach-7 (the lower emotions), and Malkuth-10 (the physical body).

The Personality Self, in turn, is the vehicle of the Individual Self. Tiphareth-6 is the core of the Individuality, the point at which a particular center of Deity's expression realizes itself as an autonomous, unique individual. Geburah-5 is the higher will of the Individual and Gedulah-4 is the higher emotions.

The Individual Self is the direct expression, or incarnation, of the Greater Self and includes the Personality and the Body as its material vehicles. The self-realized Individual wields these vehicles in the service of the Greater Self's goals (which are ultimately those of The One Self).

The Greater Self may manifest several incarnations of itself, numerous Individualities (and hence personalities and bodies) throughout the fabric of time and space, in its task of self-realization. It is the womb from which we spring, our Eternal Mother.

Binah-3 is the Creative aspect of Understanding, and Chokmah-2 the Inspiration of Wisdom. Both can be considered aspects of the Super-conscious, or higher mental body.

Inclusive of All, is Kether-1 and The One Self, the root we are seeking to self-realize. This is identical to the Zoharic Yechidah -- that spark of the Primal Will-to-Good of which we are centers of expression (to paraphrase Paul Case) -- that singular constriction of the Ayin Soph Aur.

It is important to note that in this philosophy, The One Self is *not* separate from the

physical body. The physical body is the vehicle of the higher levels of Self. In fact, each level is inclusive of those below, and is simultaneously dependant upon those above. This echoes the concept that we each exist on a multiplicity of levels, simultaneously, but are conscious of only a small number of them at any given moment.