

ABOUT THE SOUL

Rosicrucian Lesson

We present below a sample lesson from the teachings of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, which explores the nature of the soul.



Dear Fratres and Sorores,

The belief in the existence of the soul goes back to the beginning of time, because, as we explained in the Third Atrium Degree, the concept of the soul appeared at the time when humans became conscious of our duality and envisaged the existence of a Supreme Intelligence or of a Transcendental Force. However, during the Egyptian civilization, and more particularly during the New Kingdom, the soul became the subject of a religious cult.

The Egyptians named the soul Ba and represented it in the form of an ibis. But at other times it took the shape of a lotus, a flower growing abundantly all along the Nile. As for the physical body, which was called Khat, the Egyptians symbolized it by a statuette sculpted in human form. This statuette was generally made from wood and adorned the burial chambers of the nobles and pharaohs. In their writings, the initiates of Egypt referred as well to the Ka, that is, the psychic body. For them, the psychic body was like our invisible double and had the power of traveling into the world of the dead, particularly during sleep. This belief reminds us of the subject of projection that was discussed in the Seventh Temple Degree.

THE HUMAN SOUL: According to our Order's teachings, the soul of each human being is an individualization of the Universal Soul and, thus, an emanation of Divinity itself. Therefore, it possesses all of Divinity's attributes and characteristics. In other words, the soul is immaterial, immortal, and perfect. In fact, we may consider it to be the expression of the Divine in each human being. The soul is thus the reflection of Divinity's Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience. This concept is found in all esoteric traditions and in most religions. Many sacred texts state, in virtually identical wording, that "Human beings were made in the image of the Divine." Naturally, this resemblance applies to our spiritual nature and not to our physical body. Unfortunately, the religious interpretation of this allegory is too often literal and distorts its true esoteric significance. However, it helps us to understand why so many people have an anthropomorphic conception of Divinity.

THE IMMATERIALITY OF THE SOUL: People who admit the existence of the soul consider it to be immaterial, that is, invisible and intangible. In other words, they believe, and rightfully so, that it is impossible either to see or touch the soul. Nevertheless, we can feel its presence under certain conditions and at certain moments, particularly at the moment of its incarnation or immediately after transition. When incarnated into humans, the soul arises as a subtle energy that permeates every cell of our being, much as air fills every room in a house.

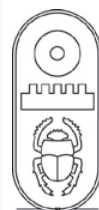
Contrary to what is taught in the lessons of many religious faiths or included in the teachings of certain philosophical schools, the soul is not confined to a specific organ, such as the heart or brain, nor is it found in a particular psychic center, such as the solar plexus or pineal gland. Such unwarranted beliefs are the result of an erroneous understanding of the soul's real nature. As a spiritual essence, the soul animates our entire body.

Here we are using the original meaning of the Latin verb *animare*, “to animate” – namely, “to endow with breath and consciousness.” It is interesting to note that the word soul is associated with the terms *anilas*, *anemos*, and *anima* which in Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin respectively mean “breath,” “wind,” and “vital breath.”

The experiment in Degree 7, No. 4, which consisted of awakening the psychic body by means of deep positive breathing, made us aware of the soul's omnipresence within us. Indeed, when this experiment is done properly, the stimulation felt immediately afterwards is not confined to a single organ; rather, it is manifested with the same intensity throughout the physical body. As we explained in the Seventh Temple Degree, the spiritual aspect of our being occupies the same dimension in us as the psychic aspect, because the second is the direct consequence of the first and cannot exist without it. Therefore, these two aspects are intimately connected and vibrate in harmony within each cell and, as a consequence, throughout our body. To understand human duality properly, we must not limit the nature of the soul by confining it to some part of the body.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL: When we acknowledge the existence of the soul and recognize its divine origin, we cannot doubt its immortality. As a spiritual energy, the soul is indestructible and unalterable. Therefore, as opposed to matter, the soul is composed of an essence that makes it eternal.

Returning to the ancient Egyptians, it is important to understand that their practice of mummification was not intended to glorify the physical body. They were not trying to immortalize the body when they dried and embalmed it. Rather, they were attempting to prolong the material existence of the deceased, believing as they did in its eventual resurrection, or to help the soul maintain in the hereafter those physical and mental faculties that it possessed during its incarnation. Because of these faculties, the soul was able to “walk” into the realm of the deceased and “see” what was happening. Although this



belief may seem quite primitive to us, it nonetheless indicates how intrigued the Egyptians were by the afterlife and how convinced they were of the soul's immortality. Thus, the initiates of the Mystery Schools understood fully that the soul could not live again in the mummy's body and that its perceptions after death did not depend on those impressions and sensations experienced while on the earthly plane.

It is impossible for anyone to prove that the soul is of an immaterial essence capable of animating every cell of our physical body, and likewise it cannot be demonstrated that the soul is immortal. What we are dealing with is inner conviction and faith, in its noblest sense. However, it cannot be denied that each human is a being conscious of himself or herself and his or her surroundings. Yet, consciousness is an invisible and intangible phenomenon.

Moreover, contrary to what some people believe, consciousness does not exclusively arise from cerebral activity, since the brain is simply the seat of our objective and subjective faculties, that is, of our sensory perception and mental processes. If the brain is either destroyed or damaged because of accident or illness, we will fall into a coma for a certain length of time. Nonetheless, we will continue to live because the vital functions of our body are not under the control of the brain. As you have learned in previous degrees, these functions depend on the subconscious, which in turn is a specific manifestation of Cosmic Consciousness, such as it manifests itself within each individual.

Moreover, it is incorrect to think that a person who is in a comatose state is totally unconscious. Indeed, after coming out of this state, many people were able to explain not only what they had perceived or felt on the spiritual plane, but were also able to describe both their whereabouts and the conversations of people in their presence, even though they seemed completely cut off from any material surroundings. The example of the "clinically dead" is even more significant, because individuals who have experienced this state were revived after having felt a momentary separation between their soul and physical body. As their testimony confirms, this separation does not involve the annihilation of all phases of consciousness. While in this state they knew at every moment who they were as individuals and could perceive with as much realism as when they were on the material plane. In most instances, their experience was so beautiful and moving that it was with much regret that they came back onto the earthly plane.

THE PERFECTION OF THE SOUL: As the human soul is an individualization of the Universal Soul and, as such, is an emanation of the Divine, it is by necessity perfect. This means that it is impossible to make it more virtuous or to increase its potential wisdom. Indeed, as an image of its source, the soul is pure, immutable, and absolute. Consequently, it is not our goal to make the soul more perfect in its divine nature, as this would imply that the soul is perfectible.

As we will see in upcoming monographs, our cosmic mission is to become conscious of the soul's spiritual dimension and to express it plainly in all that we think, say, and do. To succeed in this endeavor, we must learn to attune with the inner self and purify our personality of those imperfections which have accumulated over many lifetimes through the improper application of free will. In fact, this progressive purification is based on spiritual alchemy, which each of us has the duty to achieve within our innermost being.

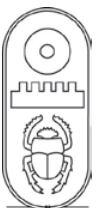
At the conclusion of this spiritual alchemy, our soul will shine at its loveliest and will illuminate our entire existence. We will then live in perfect harmony with the most elevated planes of Cosmic Consciousness, as we will have attained the state of Mastership.

Not only is it impossible for us to perfect our divine nature; it is equally impossible for us to soil, alter, or degrade it. This point must be kept in mind, as many religions teach their faithful that humans corrupt their soul whenever they commit a "sin" – in other words, whenever they do not act according to the dogmas that these religions use to determine what is good or bad within human behavior. Some religions consider that lying, stealing, or acting in some other reprehensible way will tarnish one's spirituality and thus necessitate a purification that is only obtainable after death and after remaining for a certain period of time in a "purgatory." In extreme cases, the "sinner" is condemned to burn in "hell" for eternity, as his or her sins are too grave to be expiated. It is evident that such dogmas do not correspond at all to the reality of the cosmic laws guiding our mystical evolution. In fact, whenever we act contrary to the well-being of others or do not conform to basic aspects of morality, we bring a karmic decree into action that will eventually exact some form of compensation. We will soon see why and how this is.

In keeping with the preceding explanations, each human being is animated with a soul that is immaterial, immortal, and perfect. However, mystics consider the goal of earthly existence to be an evolvment toward perfection. On the surface, these two statements seem to contradict each other. In the next lesson, we will see that this is not so and that they are perfectly reconcilable.

With best wishes for Peace Profound,

Sincerely and fraternally,
YOUR CLASS MASTER



Practical Application

During this week, we suggest that you meditate on the contents of the following quotations, as they demonstrate how intrigued the great philosophers were by the nature of the soul.

Those who do not comprehend why the soul contains Beauty within itself seek an outer realization of this beauty through laborious work. Their aim should rather be an expansion of their inner being. Rather than scattering themselves in the Multiple, they should abandon it for the One and thus increase the flow of the divine fountain whose stream flows within them. You can only grasp the Infinite through a faculty superior to reason by entering into a state where you are no longer a finite being, but where the Divine Essence is imparted into you. It is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your consciousness from its finite consciousness.

—PLOTINUS (203–270 CE)

If one will work an inward work, one must pour all one's powers into oneself as into a corner of the soul, and must hide oneself from all images and forms. Then one must come into a forgetting and a not-knowing. One must be in a stillness and silence where the ineffable word may be heard. When one knows nothing, it is opened and revealed.

—MEISTER ECKHART (ca. 1260–1327)

The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but there remains of it something which is eternal. And this something appertains to the essence of the mind; it is conceived by a certain eternal necessity through the very essence of the Divine.

—BARUCH SPINOZA (1632–1677)

Birth, life, death are the states of the soul only

Consequently, our body only is perishable, the essence of us is not perishable, and must have been existent during that time when our body had no existence. Human life is dual. It consists of two lives – one animal and one spiritual. The first life is the life of spirit; one's soul lives in that life separately from the body, and must live on in it after the separation from the body.

—IMMANUEL KANT (1724–1804)