

**Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov**

# SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY



*Complete Works – Volume 2*

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P R O S V E T A

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## PREAMBLE

*Those who seek the reality that lies beneath the surface, will find, here, the key to the great mysteries of the Cabbalah, Alchemy and Astrology.*

*When the Everlasting Lord had set up the four Cardinal points of the compass: North, South, East and West, He created the four elements: fire, air, water and earth, from which all things were made. He then ordered them thus: Fire, which is hot and dry was placed at the North, which is cold and wet. Water, which is cold and wet, was placed at the South, which is hot and dry. Air, hot and wet, was placed in the East, also hot and wet, thus serving as a link between fire and water, by drawing to itself the heat of fire and wetness of water. The Earth, cold and wet, took its place in the West which is also cold and wet. Earth, too, served to link fire and water and, at the same time, balanced air in the East. As earth lies below water, air and fire, it received energy from all three and was thus able to nourish all creatures.*

*When earth united with fire from the North, it produced gold (the alchemists' Sun); when it was joined to water it produced silver (the alchemists' Moon). When earth was joined to air which was united to fire and water, copper (the alchemists' Venus) was formed and when it was joined to fire and water,*

*iron (the alchemists' Mars) was formed. In this way, by a proper mixing of ingredients, all the other metals and minerals, even precious stones, were formed. A mixture of earth and silver, for example, produced lead (the alchemists' Saturn), and so on.*

*And now, many things will become clear to you if you place the four symbolic animals, each in its proper place: the lion in the North, Man in the South, the eagle in the East and the ox in the West.*

*And this also you must know: the philosopher's Sulphur is the quintessence of fire acting upon air; the philosopher's Mercury is the quintessence of air acting on water and the Salt is the quintessence of water acting on earth.*

*The Philosopher's Egg*

## Chapter One

# Gentleness and humility

*‘Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one!” The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”*

*‘One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”’*

Luke 23: 32-44

As you well know, the subject of man has an important place in all my lectures and, this evening, we shall be talking about him again but from a point of view that is different from that we have taken in previous talks. What I am going to tell you is at the same time very clear and very complicated, because we shall be interpreting some very significant symbols.

Materialistic science holds that the whole of man can be reduced to his purely material components (cells, molecules and atoms); that he is nothing but his physical body. Spiritual science and all religions, on the other hand, teach that man has at least two non-physical components: a soul and a spirit. I do not intend, today, to talk about all the different systems elaborated by those who have thought about the different levels of man's being. Today we shall adopt the system implicit in Jesus' words: *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'*. We may conclude from these words that Jesus recognized the four levels in man: heart, mind or intellect, soul and spirit for, as we know from spiritual science, the only true power or force resides in the spirit. We can also relate these four principles to the Hindu system, which is also the Theosophical system, and say that the heart represents the astral body; the soul the buddhic body; the intellect the mental body, and the power the atmic body. And these four principles dwell together in the one physical body.

It appears that many people cannot distinguish between the heart and the soul. It is really quite simple: both the heart and the soul are the vehicles of our emotions, feelings and desires but whereas the heart is the seat of the ordinary emotions which arise from the torments and sorrows, or the joys and pleasures of purely physical, sensual things, the soul is the seat of divine, spiritual emotions and impulses. The most disinterested, purest form of love and the highest form of sacrifice belong to the buddhic plane. It is only on this plane that man becomes capable of uniting himself with the most exalted beings of the universe. The relationship between the intellect and the spirit parallels that between the heart

and the soul: the intellect or mental body is the vehicle of the ordinary, purely human workings of the mind concerned with the satisfaction of man's lower interests and physical needs. The causal body, on the other hand, is related to the atmic body and is the seat of purely spiritual thought and mental activity.

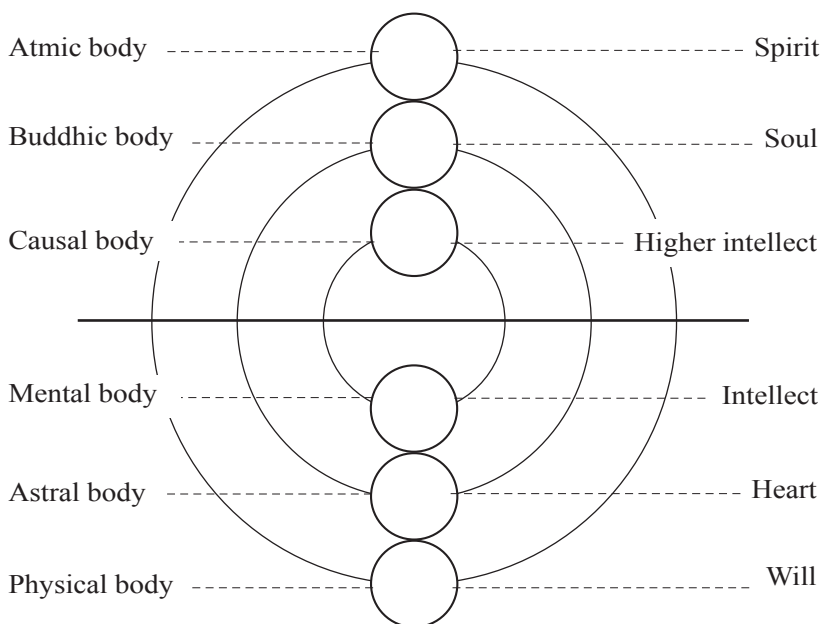


Figure 1

The soul and the heart are two expressions of one and the same principle: the feminine principle whose field of activity lies between the lower level of the heart or astral plane, and the higher level of the soul or buddhic plane. Similarly, intellect and spirit are expressions of the one, masculine principle which manifests itself on the mental and causal levels. You see, now, how the two principles, masculine and feminine, manifest themselves in man through four different vehicles: the heart, the intellect, the soul



and the spirit. These two principles and their four vehicles live together in one house: the physical body.

I know that many people have some difficulty in understanding this so I shall try to make it clearer for you with an image taken from everyday life and which corresponds in every detail. Imagine a house in which four people live: the master and the mistress, a man servant and a maid. From time to time the master of the house has to go away on a business trip and his wife stays behind, lonely and sad, waiting for her beloved husband to come home. And when he does get back, laden with gifts, it is an occasion for celebration. At other times master and mistress go away together for a long journey, leaving the servants alone, with nobody in charge of them. It is their opportunity to make the most of their newfound freedom and start exploring the storerooms and cupboards in which, naturally, they find all kinds of good things to eat and drink. And, as it is much more fun to make a party of it, they invite some friends to join them for the feast. Needless to say, after a night of orgy some of the furniture has been overturned and a few bottles – and perhaps a few heads too – have been broken. When their employers get home they are horrified with the sight that meets their eyes and they start meting out punishment and getting the house tidied up again, and before long everything gets back to normal.

Now, let's interpret this tale: the house, of course, is the physical body; the maid-servant is the heart and the man-servant is the intellect. The mistress of the house is the soul and the master is the spirit. Our spirit often goes away and leaves us and then our soul feels lonely and sad. But when the spirit returns he brings gifts: inspiration and an abundance of light and all is joyful again. At other times our souls and spirits go off together and then our hearts and minds hasten to do all kinds of foolish things together or with the help of other hearts and minds.

But we can learn a lot more from this story, particularly about the respective roles of the heart and the intellect, the soul and the spirit. In the first place, a maid's first duty is usually to

serve her mistress whereas a man serves the master. On the other hand, of course, the two servants can also act together against the interests of their employers. The master and mistress of the house are separated from their servants by their whole way of life, their interests and activities, and they do not necessarily tell them the intimate details of their life and work or their plans for the future. Our souls and spirits act without revealing their intentions to our hearts and minds. But if a maid gains her mistress's trust by her irreproachable behaviour, her mistress may sometimes confide in her and tell her plans, her happiness in her love for her husband and so on, and the maid-servant – the heart – will be filled with joy because of what she has learned. Similarly, if a man-servant, the intellect, works faithfully and wins his master's confidence, he too will learn his secrets and thus gain in understanding and lucidity. But in order to arrive at this happy state of affairs, the two servants must live together in perfect harmony in the service of their employers. If they are always quarrelling and pulling in opposite directions they will only hinder their masters' work.

There are many more combinations and applications possible with this image and you should meditate on them, for whatever state of health or sickness, joy or sorrow, you may find yourself in, it can always be explained by the interaction of these four occupants of your house.

The bond which unites these four principles explains why the heart and the intellect, when they are not subject to the control of the soul and the spirit, never do anything right. The soul represents perfect love in Nature and the spirit represents divine wisdom in the spiritual world. Eventually, the two servants may become the son and daughter of God, but for the moment they are simply servants. A son must obey his father in everything, and a daughter, similarly, must do whatever her mother asks. So, when the heart and the intellect have learned to do God's will, that is, when they have learned to act with love and wisdom, then they will be children of God. As long as they continue to be

disobedient and sceptical, full of suspicion and anxiety, they will continue to be the children not of God but only of man.

Now that you have this explanation in mind we can get back to the story of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. The Gospels give only the bare bones of what passed between them. The first thief taunted Jesus, saying, *'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!'* But the other rebuked him, saying, *'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong'*. Then he said to Jesus, *'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom'*. It is not by chance that the characters of these two thieves are so clearly depicted, for we find them everywhere, in all aspects of life and even within ourselves, for the scene of Jesus hanging on the cross between two thieves is also symbolic of man's inner life. You will soon see that the first brigand represents the intellect and the second the heart, and Christ, hanging there between them, represents the divine principle which manifests itself through the soul and the spirit in the form of love and wisdom, heat and light.

Now, let me tell you a little story: One day an old peasant was on his deathbed and he sent for the parish priest and the lawyer. When they arrived, the old man signed to them to sit by his bed, one on each side of him. The priest thought he had been sent for because the dying man wanted to confess his sins and the lawyer thought that he wanted to make his will. From time to time the old peasant looked at the two men with obvious satisfaction and then closed his eyes again without a word. A quarter of an hour went by like this, and then another and still the old man had not said a word. But the priest and the lawyer were beginning to lose patience and they asked the man's son to ask his father why he had sent for them. The son did so and his father replied, *'My son, I can die in peace now. All I wanted was to die like Christ, between the two robbers!'* Of course, this is only a tale, but it is

striking to realize that the lawyer symbolizes the intellect and the priest the heart and if they were dishonest (after all, it does sometimes happen), then they really symbolized the two thieves, in their esoteric significance.

As I was saying, the first robber represents the human intellect. And the intellect, which is full of pride, doubt, suspicion, scorn and criticism, always wants to see a miracle and, in spite of this desire and of the fact that miracles are taking place all round it all the time, it never sees them. The human intellect always thinks to itself: 'If God existed, He would let himself be seen. He would give me wealth, good health, beauty and immortality. I would have the whole world at my feet. I would never suffer again.' According to the logic of the human intellect, God exists only for the purpose of looking after our affairs. As soon as this stupidly calculating mentality leads to some little mishap, it is God who gets all the blame; the intellect storms and rages at Him. As for the heart, as it is only interested in a life of joy and pleasure, it expects everything to go smoothly for it and when it comes up against bitter reality it is enraged to see that it is not loved and made much of wherever it goes.

If the intellect is not guided by the spirit it becomes a prey to pride; if the heart is not warmed by the soul it gives way to all manner of immoderate desires. At the slightest sign of opposition the intellect is filled with hatred and the heart with anger. He who is full of pride hates everybody because he realizes that they do not have the esteem for him that he thinks he deserves. He is preparing a very bleak future for himself because that constant anger that gnaws at him can only end by poisoning him. He becomes solitary and taciturn and lives apart, in frozen isolation. The heart, on the other hand, when it allows its passions to get the upper hand, is consumed by anger when it perceives that people or things it loves do not belong to it alone. Both the heart and the intellect descend into hell when they are deprived of the assistance of the soul and the spirit, that is of warmth and light, love and wisdom.

True Alchemy does not consist in the spectacular transmutation of base metals into gold, but in the spiritual transmutation of man's own matter.

Grains of sand are transformed into pearls; summer sees twisted, blackened vine-stocks burst into leaf and bow beneath the weight of their grapes; caterpillars are metamorphosed into butterflies; galvanoplasty transforms a drab piece of base metal into a golden ornament... All these different ways of transforming things are familiar to us but we have never studied them sufficiently closely to realize that they contain the secret of our own inner metamorphosis.

If a tree, for instance, is capable of transforming the raw mineral nutrients it draws from the soil into the sugar-sap which enables it to produce flowers and fruit, why should man not do likewise? Why should we not be capable of transforming the raw juices of our instincts and passions so that they produce a rich harvest of flowers and fruit, in the form of vitality in our physical bodies, love and joy in our hearts and understanding and wisdom in our minds?



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e-mail: [international@prosveta.com](mailto:international@prosveta.com)