

GOOD HEAVENS TODAY



THE SHIELD OF HERACLES THE SPIRITUAL FUNCTION OF THE EGO

Hermetic Order of the Temple of Starlight®

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THE HERMETIC ORDER OF THE TEMPLE OF STARLIGHT®

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THE SHIELD OF HERACLES

The spiritual task of the Ego

In spiritual circles people often assume that humanity has forgotten its true nature. They also assume that to become Enlightened the Ego needs to be dissolved. However, this is not the only spiritual vision on the ego. In the Western Mystery Tradition there are ideas that directly contradict this concept of ego.



By: Ina Cüsters-van Bergen

I often get confronted by people who are of the opinion that it is desirable to let go of the ego. The underlying belief is that the ego blocks spiritual development. The ego is connected with thought forms that are essentially about 'who you are'. It is connected to external appearances; having a

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beautiful house, a beautiful figure. The ego it seems creates a separation between the individual and a sense of unity. At work egos roll over the top in a struggle for power. In the spiritual world egos hunt for 'initiations' and 'higher abilities'. But strange though it may seem, I get the feeling that this is not so much a sign of a big ego but rather of a badly functioning one and of an unbalanced personality. Ownership teaches us that 'possessing = being'. All kinds of organisations take advantage of unrooted souls, promising them structure, offering them a peer group they can belong to. This works, because you do not want to Be Alone?

The dictionary tells us that the word ego means 'I am' and it has overtones of the importance of the self. It is a conscious part of the spirit that mediates between the Self and the environment, and provides self esteem

Heaven, Earth and Underworld

In the Western Mystery tradition the Inner World in a general sense is divided into three areas: Heaven, Earth and Underworld. You will find this division for example in Dante's Divine Comedy. Here the tripartite of the Inner Worlds is described as Hell, Purification Mountain and Paradise. This division is very basic, and its originates from prehistoric sources. This knowledge is essential in understanding the mythology of the pre-Christian Mystery Schools.

Sigmund Freud introduced the word ego into our language. Freud removed the sacredness of the structure of these three layers of consciousness, and replaced it with the mental construct he called id, ego and superego.

The original names derived from the sacred traditions are much more emotionally dynamic and contain sacred keynotes.

1. The Id is the demystified Nephesh, it is the animal soul which is also called the Lower Self and it is connected to the Underworld.
2. The Super ego is the stripped Holy Guardian Angel. This is also called the Higher Self or the Neshamah. This is the part that connects us to Heaven.
3. The conscious mind is the ability of the soul to experience the presence of Divinity in itself and in the world. It is the in and outgoing Divine Breath – the Ruach Elohim, and this is connected to the Earth.

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The ego connects these parts of the psyche and organises the contact with the outer world. It is able to connect the subconscious mind and can drain off psychic contents to the subconscious mind. The ego uses defence mechanisms, conscious perception, intellect and observation. The ego is partially conscious and partially unconscious. Freud described it – following the metaphors of the ancient mystery schools – as a man riding a horse. It is the Greek Centaur, the astrological Sagittarius; the human being who has transformed his animal instincts and has a conscious control over them. He shoots the arrow of his soul away using the rainbow. Within this model of the world the phenomena which many people call the 'ego', refers in fact to parts of the Underworld that have (temporarily) taken over control.

The classical conception of the Vices and Virtues

Predating Freud the Western Tradition divided the different aspects of the ego in vices and virtues. A well functioning ego is a necessary part of our psyche, a protecting shield for the soul.

In the process of spiritual development the Breath of the Divine – the Ruach Elohim – is of major importance. The Divine Breath is the in and outgoing movement upon which your psyche moves between the Inner Worlds and your environment, and between your Lower Self and your higher self. The energies were connected to the classical planets.

The neutral energies of the Ruach Elohim can work either as a vice or as a virtue. This is dependent on the quantity of the energy that comes free in relation to the given circumstances. The rationalisation of this process gave birth to morality, logic and ethics; the vices – the transformed heavenly powers – were elevated to dogma. This latter led to the development of doctrines of morality from the rational mind.

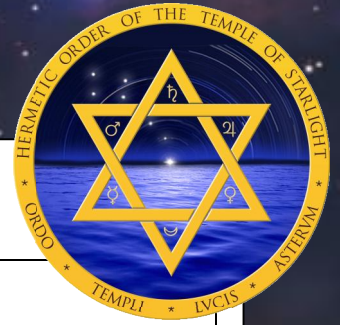
But the soul is fluid and in a state of continuous development. This is an internal and spiritual process by which neutral psychic energies bubble up from the unconscious mind. In interaction with the outside world the positive and negative effects arise. . The results of your actions will always come back to you. It is a continuous learning process, which causes you to grow in experience and in personality.

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Basic principle of the Ruach Elohim	Classical planet	virtue	vice
Principle of form, restriction, limitation	Saturn	Understanding/r eflexion/ silence	Limitation/ avarice
Principle of stabilising life force and slow harmonious growth	Jupiter	Obedience	Idolisation/tiranny, gluttony
Principle of active change and dynamic force	Mars	Energy/ courage	Cruelty/ destruction
Principle of radiation, healing and life force	Sun	Dedication to the Great Work	Pride/ exaggeration
Principle of power, vitality and beauty	Venus	Unselfishness	Unchastity/ lust
Principle of communication, rationality and trade	Mercury	Truthfulness	Dishonesty
Principle of receptiveness, magnetism, dreams and visions	Moon	Independence	Vanity

On earth the balance needs to be achieved between these dual forces. To accomplish this you need the power to discriminate

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The ego functions in this process as a protective shield. It protects against the harsh outside world, where the interests of others often conflict with our own. It protects you from issues that bubble up from your subconscious that could disturb your psychic balance. The ego is essential for building, stabilising and strengthening the personality, of the spiritually developing human being.

Your ego quality will determine how well you are able to balance the demands of yourself with those of the outside world; balance your instincts and your virtues. The ego protects against psychic damage through defence mechanisms such as repression, projection and sublimation. A person with a weak ego caused by traumatic events has a lower carrying capacity and thus needs more defence mechanisms.

A well developed personality has a strong ego; this is not a steel suit of armour, but in contrary a flexible shield. The in and outgoing movement of the psyche between the Higher and the Lower Self creates the dual character of the energy, which then results in the vices and virtues. The ego has the quality to make a choice about how to position itself between the polarities. This process is already described in its deepest and most instinctive levels in our myths and legends.

The shield of Heracles

In Greek mythology the protecting forces of the ego are symbolised by the shield. Forged from precious metals by the God of the Underworld Hephaestus – the spouse of the Goddess of Love Aphrodite - and spanned with a goat skin. The shield of the solar Hero Heracles contained magical images. By this magical protection famous heroes were able to enter into the Underworld to free the Goddess of the Underworld.

Hooking into this Greek custom the Christian apostle Paul calls this the 'Armour of God' which you can use to protect yourself against the opposer; 'Take your weapons, the Girdle of Truth, the breastplate of Justice, the Shoes of the Message of Peace and for all, take the Shield of Faith.'

From the depths of the Underworld a current of power rises up. It leads people to strive for self perfection and transformation. It is a pure life-force which starts to flow when the ego protects the soul that develops itself on the Earth in a balanced

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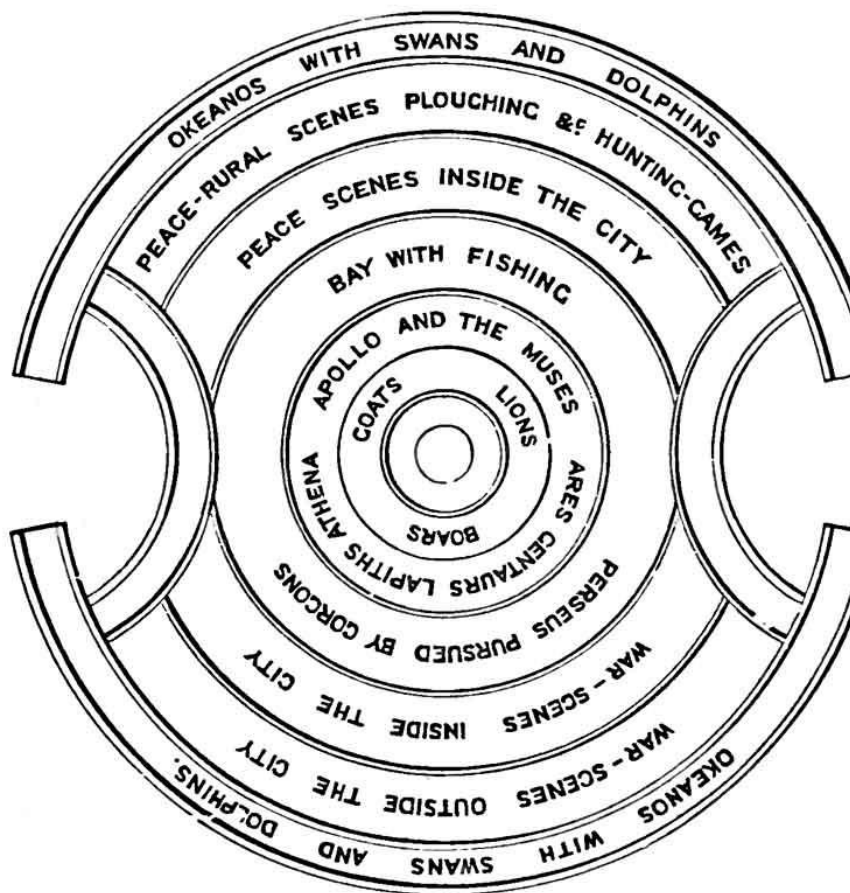
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way. According to the Greek initiate Socrates this is the Mystery of Eros. Eros is the invisible beloved of Psyche, the Soul. He is the son of the Goddess of Love. Eros is not only the god of erotic love, but most of all the god of the creative abundance of nature.



*“Around the edge
the ocean floated in
a circular stream.
This enclosed all the
ingenious
craftsmanship of the
shield. Above loud
yelling swans fly,
and many other
animals swam on
the waves of het
water, and under
them swam swarms
of fishes.’*

*From; the Shield of
Herracles door
Hesiod*

The goal of the hero's journey is to free the divine forces from the Underworld. To get access to these forces the treshold to the Sub-consciousness must be lowered. When the Ego creates a protecting shield you can start to explore the underworld and transform the raw forces that rule there. Then you can integrate your Higher Self, your conscious and your subconscious self.

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Protector

A healthy ego satisfies the needs of the unconscious mind, it serves the ideals of the Higher self and at the mean time it estimates the reality of every situation. It has no moral awareness of its own. It tries to satisfy the higher consciousness, and the sub consciousness. The function of the ego is to keep the individual safe. It allows some instincts to be suppressed. It has protecting mechanisms for when the unconscious impulses come into conflict with the environment (social codes, values taboos, individual expectations). The ego is the slave of three harsh masters; the unconscious mind, the outside world and the higher self .The Higher Self guards every movement of the ego and provides it with feelings of guilt, fear and inferiority.

The Western Mysteries teaches that in order to develop in a balanced way on a spiritual path you need to develop a healthy ego and a love for yourself. When you have that healthy ego you can **choose** to bow in daily life, and when you enter the temple of the Mysteries. In this way you can free Eros. A healthy ego **can** bow, it bows for the Higher Self when it gives instructions, and it prostrates in the appearance of Divinity, out of respect.

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Ina Cüsters-van Bergen is the Magister and the Director of Studies of the Hermetic Order Temple of Starlight®. She teaches the Western Mystery Tradition. Ina is a so called Cosmic Mediator an a Third Degree Initiate. She is a very experienced practicing ritual magician. Her lineage comes from the Golden Dawn via Dion Fortune, W.E. Butler and Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki.

Ina is a trained psychiatric therapist, psychotherapist, and healthcare manager. She is a certified NLP practitioner. She designs all her training modules in such a way that they integrate modern therapeutic systems and archaic magical systems such as Qabalah and Ceremonial Magic into one system. In this way your spiritual practice increases emotional, mental and spiritual health and growth.

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Ina is the author of the Solo Magical Training of the Hermetic Order of the Temple of Starlight, called 'The Order of the Exalted Land' and the author of the book 'The Temple of High Magic', ISBN-13: 978-1-59477-308-2

Ina teaches spiritual Ceremonial Magic through intensive training weekends all over Europe.

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