

The Etheric Body

John F. Nash

Summary

This article discusses Alice Bailey's teachings on the etheric body, which permeates the dense physical human form and surrounds it as part of the aura observed by clairvoyants. Specifically, the article discusses the relationship between the etheric and physical bodies; the etheric body's role in diseases, healing and death; changes in the etheric body during spiritual development; and the etheric bodies of initiates. Our etheric bodies are built by devas of various orders and are energized through devic activity by terrestrial and solar prana.

A major objective of the article is to provide a coherent statement of the relevant teachings and a platform for further study. Another objective is to draw attention to the importance of the etheric body for us, during our incarnation cycle, and for entities who no longer need to incarnate. The article also notes the pervasive existence of etheric bodies across the whole spectrum of lifeforms in the universe and the planets, stars and galaxies on which they reside.

Introduction

Anyone who has seen a corpse, even one prepared for viewing at an open-casket funeral, knows that it looks very different from how the person is remembered. Despite morticians' best efforts, the corpse is unmistakably dead. The very obvious basis of life, what we call the etheric body, is gone. Death can be defined by the etheric body's severance from the dense physical form.

The *etheric body*, also referred to as the *etheric vehicle*, *etheric double*, *vital body*, or *energy body*, is the closest of the subtle vehicles to the dense physical form and provides the link between it and the astral and higher vehicles. In addition to investing life in what would otherwise be an inanimate collection of bones, tis-

sue, and body fluids, the etheric body mediates health, disease and healing. It undergoes important changes as a person evolves spiritually, and it continues to play a role in the lives of initiates who have completed their incarnation cycle.

Notions of the etheric body go back to antiquity, probably reflecting clairvoyant abilities pervasive at that time. Ancient Egyptian religion spoke of the *ka*. Biblical Judaism discussed the *nephesh*, which captured the sense of both life and breath. In classical Greece, the physical body was said to be animated by the *psyche*, which the sixth-century BCE philosopher Anaximenes equated to breath.¹ In India, we find the *pranamaya kosha* of Vedantic teachings and the *sthulopadhi* of Taraka Raja Yoga.² Isaac Newton famously wrote of a "subtle spirit," pervading animal bodies, whose "vibration" propagates along nerves to the brain and muscles to produce movement.³

Annie Besant wrote of the etheric body in *The Ancient Wisdom* (1897), and Rudolf Steiner in *Theosophy* (1904). Max Heindel discussed the "vital body" in *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Mystic Christianity* (1910). Charles Leadbeater published his clairvoyant studies of the etheric body in *Man Visible and Invisible* (1925) and *The Chakras* (1927). Alice A. Bailey, who served as amanuensis for the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul, provided a

About the Author

John F. Nash, Ph.D., is a long-time esoteric student, author, and teacher. Two of his books, *Quest for the Soul* and *The Soul and Its Destiny*, were reviewed in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Esoteric Quarterly*. *Christianity: The One, the Many*, was reviewed in the Fall 2008 issue. His latest book: *The Sacramental Church* was published in 2011. For further information see the advertisements in this issue and the website <http://www.uriel.com>.

wealth of information on the etheric body in her twenty-four books, beginning with *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922). The knowledge, perspective and insights offered by the Tibetan sets Bailey's work apart from other treatments of the subject.

Despite the volume of available information in Bailey's books and elsewhere, the information is fragmented, complicating detailed study. Few attempts have been made to provide a clear, coherent account of the subject. Indeed, the etheric body does not seem to be a popular topic in the esoteric literature, often glossed over in descriptions of the human constitution. Perhaps the higher vehicles are more interesting (dare one say glamorous?) yet they are scarcely more important to us, in our present phase of evolution and beyond.

This article seeks to compile and analyze Bailey's teachings on the subject, to provide a reasonably comprehensive account of the etheric body, its properties, strengths and weaknesses, and its potential for development. Occasional references are made to the works of other writers where supporting or dissenting context is appropriate. The article is divided into five sections concerned with:

- The fundamental principles of the human etheric body, including the key role of prana and its devic mediators.
- The relationship between the etheric and dense physical bodies, involving the chakras and the several physiological systems.
- The etheric body's role in disease, healing and death.
- Changes in the etheric body that occur during spiritual development, including awakening of the chakras and raising of the kundalini
- High initiates' need for etheric bodies, whether or not they work on the physical plane.

Hopefully, the present study—still brief, relative to the breadth of the subject—will stimulate greater interest and further research.

The Etheric Body and Prana

The dense physical body—which for convenience will be referred to simply as the “physical body”—is composed of matter of the three lower subplanes of the physical plane: solid, liquid and gaseous. The *etheric body* is composed of matter of the four higher subplanes. Our present focus is on the human etheric body, but animals, plants, and even rocks all have etheric bodies. We understand that the Earth, the Sun, and all other entities in the universe also have etheric bodies.

The human etheric body permeates and extends a short distance beyond the physical body and resembles its physical counterpart in shape. Some writers claim that it extends about one-half of an inch (a little over a centimeter) beyond the physical body. Charles Leadbeater reported that it extends “very slightly” beyond the physical body.⁴ Alice Bailey stated that it “may extend for a few or many inches.”⁵ She commented that the etheric body “can be studied with relative ease” in the area that extends beyond the physical body.⁶ Clairvoyants see this area as the innermost part of a person's aura. Leadbeater described it as “a mass of faintly luminous violet-grey mist.”⁷ The *astral* body, also known as the sentient or emotional body, may extend much farther from the physical body.

Bailey declared that the etheric body has one main objective:

This is to vitalize and energize the physical body and thus integrate it into the energy body of the Earth and of the solar system. It is a web of energy streams, of lines of force and of light. It constitutes part of the vast network of energies which underlies all forms whether great or small (microcosmic or macrocosmic). Along these lines of energy the cosmic forces flow, as the blood flows through the veins and arteries. This constant, individual—human, planetary and solar—circulation of life-forces through the etheric bodies of all forms is the basis of all manifested life, and the expression of the essential non-separateness of all life.⁸

She emphasized that the etheric body “of every human being, is an integral part of the etheric body of the planet itself and consequently, of the solar system.”⁹ In other words, the etheric body is not individualized to the extent that the human monad or the soul is; its energy flows from one living entity to another. This startling realization gives precise meaning to affirmations like “We are all connected” or “We are all One.” The sharing of etheric matter throughout the cosmos provides the medium for telepathy and also gives meaning to concepts like divine omniscience.¹⁰ Bailey described the “golden etheric web” through which “there is a constant circulation of energies and forces,” adding that “this constitutes the scientific basis of the astrological theories.”¹¹ Space itself, which ordinarily we consider empty, is said to be etheric in nature.¹²

The cosmic etheric web has a geometric pattern. The pattern is not uniform throughout the universe but varies from one planet or sun to another according to its point of evolution.¹³ Earth’s etheric body currently has a square structure, whereas the “etheric webs of the sacred planets are largely triangles, whilst that of the Sun is that of interlaced circles.”¹⁴ A goal of the Triangles movement, in which groups of three people at different points on the globe commit to daily recitation of the Great Invocation, is to help convert the square structure of our planetary etheric body into a triangular structure.

The human etheric body also has a structure, though it is not a simple geometric one. In Bailey’s words it is “a network, permeated with fire, or as a web, animated with golden light.”¹⁵ The etheric body serves as a receiving agency for energies coming from “the planetary aura,” “the astral world,” “the universal mind or manasic force,” and “the ego itself.”¹⁶ It also serves as a medium through which those energies circulate to produce life and health. The health aspects of reception and circulation will be discussed in due course.

The energy of the etheric body is *prana*. “Prana is the sum total of the energy in the body . . . It therefore concerns the inflow of energy into the etheric body and its outflow through the medium of the physical body.”¹⁷ Bailey

spoke of solar and planetary prana. Solar prana is the “life-essence” of the Solar Logos, “animating, vivifying and correlating” the seven systemic planes “and all that is to be found within and upon them.”¹⁸

We recall that the seven systemic planes—the ones that provide the backdrop for the whole of human existence and evolution—collectively comprise the cosmic physical plane. Our physical, astral and mental planes comprise the “solid,” “liquid” and “gaseous” subplanes of the cosmic physical plane. Our *buddhic*, *atmic*, *monadic* and *logoic* planes comprise its four cosmic etheric subplanes.¹⁹ These correspondences are of more than just theoretical interest. The four systemic etheric subplanes, from which our etheric bodies are built, have qualities that draw upon those of the four highest systemic planes. This enrichment of qualities can be expected to become more apparent as we progress spiritually.

Planetary prana has its origins in the Sun but has been imprinted with the energy of the planet. It is

solar prana which has passed throughout the planet, has circulated through the planetary etheric body, has been transmitted to the dense physical planet, and has been cast off thence in the form of a radiation of the same essential character as solar prana, plus the individual and distinctive quality of the particular planet concerned.²⁰

Solar and terrestrial prana are transmitted to the etheric body by devic activity. Solar prana, “that vital and magnetic fluid which radiates from the sun . . . is transmitted to mans’ etheric body through the agency of certain deva entities of a very high order, and of a golden hue.”²¹ Bailey gave no indication that these devas are, or are related to, the *manasaputras*, or solar angels, who serve, on a one-on-one basis, as our mentors and orchestrate our incarnational journey until we attain the fourth initiation.²²

A much larger class of devas of a lower order, called “the devas of the shadows, or the violet devas, transmit both solar and planetary prana.”²³ Their primary mission, in fact, is to work on the etheric subplanes. Devas of vari-

ous orders energize “the myriads of minute lives” that build the etheric body and “are the instigators of the creative processes on the three lowest subplanes of the physical plane.”²⁴

Scientific observation, albeit using different terminology, is now extending to the etheric physical subplanes. Electromagnetic and gravitational fields would seem to be *etheric* in nature, as the term is used here, even though physicists reject the concept of a luminiferous ether with physical properties, like elasticity, once thought to provide the medium for the propagation of electromagnetic waves. Quantum physicists no longer regard subatomic wave-particles, including protons, neutrons and electrons, as pieces of matter, like tiny marbles, but as assemblies of energy. Bailey’s assertion about the etheric nature of space may be supported by scientific research on the so-called vacuum state, or zero-point energy.²⁵ Additional support may come from recent theories of the Higgs field.²⁶

Scientists also recognize that all living things emanate a chemical field, consisting largely of moisture, and a small but measurable electromagnetic field. Kirlian photography is claimed to capture the corona discharge, suggestive of the etheric aura, around living organisms.²⁷

Meanwhile, evolutionary progress is increasing our inherent capability to view the etheric subplanes and their denizens. “People coming into incarnation on [the] seventh ray,” we are assured, “will have the eyes that see, and the purple devas and the lesser devas of the etheric body will be visioned by them.”²⁸ Elsewhere, Bailey commented: “The development of a power within the physical eye of a human being . . . will reveal the etheric body.”²⁹ This power will be distinct from, or complementary to, that of the “reawakened third eye.” The “third eye” refers to the *ajna*, or brow, chakra, to be discussed in its turn.

The Etheric Body, Life and Health

Between incarnations, the human entity’s accumulated experiences and karma are stored in the physical, astral and mental permanent atoms, which reside on the first

(“atomic”) subplanes of their respective planes. The physical permanent atom resides on the first etheric subplane, counting, as always, from above.

The process of incarnation, long planned by the solar angel, descends to the physical plane when the male sperm fertilizes the female ovum. At the moment of conception, Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson wrote, “the physical permanent atom is attached by an angel to the twin cell then formed.” The permanent atom “bestows upon the twin cell organism its ordered, biological impetus” and causes it to grow according to instructions emanating from the monad and causal body, modified by karmic and other influences.³⁰ A “field or sphere,” Hodson continued, “is established in which subsequent building will take place.” This field, the etheric body, begins to form, within which “there is to be seen, in terms of flowing energy or lines of force, each on its own wavelength, a sketch plan of the whole body.”³¹

Precisely what Hodson meant by the “twin cell” is unclear. At the time of conception the male and female *gamete* cells fuse to form a single-celled *zygote*. Subsequent cell division produces the *embryo*. In the situation of identical (monozygotic) twins, the separation of the embryos usually occurs after several cell divisions. Assuming that each human being has a unique permanent atom, it would seem that the permanent atoms must be attached to the twins some time after the phase to which Hodson referred.³²

Throughout gestation—and continuing throughout childhood and adulthood—the etheric body serves, in Alice Bailey’s words, as a “mold of the physical body” and “the archetype upon which the dense physical form is built.”³³ The etheric body and the other lower vehicles also develop, providing an increasingly capable vehicle for soul activity:

Prior to the seventh year, the vitality of the physical elemental is largely the determining factor. The soul is then focused in the etheric body . . . [I]t has simply a gently pulsating control and a gentle impulsive activity—sufficient to preserve consciousness, to vitalize the various physical pro-

cesses, and to initiate the demonstration of character and of disposition. These become increasingly marked until the twenty-first year, when they stabilize into what we call the personality.³⁴

Prana provides the energy required to build the dense physical form, and devas of the several classes collectively known as the “Builders” do the construction work. Pranic emanations, Bailey explained, “when focalized and received, react upon the dense matter which is built upon the etheric scaffolding and framework.”³⁵ The shape of the etheric body “is brought about by the fine interlacing strands of [etheric] matter being built by the action of the lesser Builders into the form or mold upon which later the dense physical body can be molded.”³⁶ “Under the Law of Attraction,” she continued, “the denser matter of the physical plane is made to cohere to this vitalized form, and is gradually built up around it, and within it, until the interpenetration is so complete that the two forms make but one unit.”³⁷

According to Bailey, the violet devas transmit solar and planetary prana to all parts of the etheric body. The golden devas—much fewer in number but with enormously greater power—allow solar prana to pass “through their bodies” and apply it only to “the uppermost part of the etheric body, the head and shoulders.” From there the prana is “passed down to the etheric correspondence of the physical organ, the spleen, and from thence forcibly transmitted into the spleen itself.”³⁸ Bailey did not explain why the process is “forcible.”

Prana’s effect on the physical body is threefold: it “preserves the animal health of the body;” it “constructs and builds in the body, through its energy and force currents, what is needed to replace the daily wear and tear;” and it is “the medium whereby man comes into physical touch with his brother man.”³⁹ “Physical magnetism,” Bailey added, “is largely, even if not wholly, dependent upon prana.”

The etheric body “is composed of interlocking and circulating lines of force,” or pathways, called *nadis*. “These nadis,” in Bailey’s words, “are the carriers of energy. They are in fact the

energy itself and carry the quality of energy from some area of consciousness in which the ‘dweller in the body’ may happen to be focused.”⁴⁰ The largest nadis, or bundles of nadis, are the *sushumna*, *ida* and *pingala*, which run up the spine, and which are “the externalization of the antahkarana, composed of the antahkarana proper, the sutratma or life thread, and the creative thread.”⁴¹ Of those three, the *sutratma* is the most important to the present discussion. The “antahkarana proper,” usually referred to simply as the *antahkarana*, will be discussed later. The creative thread is of no concern to our present theme.⁴²

The *sutratma*, popularly known as the *silver cord*, “is spun by the Ego from within the causal body much as a spider spins a thread. It can be shortened or extended at will.”⁴³ It enters the physical body through the top of the head, and is anchored in the heart to sustain the life of the physical body during the incarnation. Bailey comments that the whole etheric body “is but an extension of one aspect” of the *sutratma*.⁴⁴ The *sutratma* is lengthened when the astral body and higher vehicles separate from the physical form during sleep or in an out-of-body experience and contracts when the individual returns to waking consciousness.

Smaller nadis correspond to the meridians of Chinese medicine, while the smallest ones permeate the entire etheric body, including the part that extends beyond the physical form. The nadis, we understand, “underlie every nerve in the human body,” and “the centers which they form at certain points of intersection or juncture are the background or motivating agency of every ganglion or plexus found in the human body.”⁴⁵

Nodes, or points of intersection, in the network of nadis constitute the minor and major chakras, or in Bailey’s terminology “centers.” They are foci for the exchange of energy between the etheric and higher planes, and are entry points for the receipt of prana. The chakras “are found in close proximity to, or in relation to” major glands or organs. Indeed, the “various glands are in reality the externalization or materialization of the centers, major and minor.”⁴⁶

Bailey stated that the seven major chakras are formed in the fetus' etheric body shortly before birth. The "descending light . . . concentrate[s] itself in seven areas of its ring-pass-not, thus creating seven major centers which will control its expression and its existence upon the outer plane. . . . This is a moment of great brilliance."⁴⁷ The chakras remain in the etheric body throughout the life of the physical form, but their continued brilliance, as seen by individuals with clairvoyant vision, is not assured. The lower chakras are active in most people, but the higher ones "open" only as the individual develops spiritually. Relatively few people have all seven major chakras awakened and open.

Each chakra, or center, we learn, is related to a particular type of incoming energy, and the chakra will be awakened when the etheric body is receptive to that energy: "When the energy reaching the etheric body . . . is related [to a particular center] and the center is sensitive to its impact, then that center becomes vibrant and receptive and develops as a controlling factor in the life of the man on the physical plane."⁴⁸ The immediate impact is on the physical body:

According to the nature of the force animating the etheric body, according to the activity of that force in the etheric body, according to the aliveness or the sluggishness of the most important parts of the etheric body (the centers up the spine) so will be the corresponding activity of the physical body.⁴⁹

Four of the major chakras lie along the spine, within the torso: the *muladhara*, or root, chakra; the *swadhisthana*, or sacral chakra; the *manipura*; or solar-plexus chakra; and the *anahata*, or heart chakra. Bailey associated them, respectively, with the adrenal glands, the reproductive organs, the pancreas, and the thymus. The three higher major chakras are the *vishuddha*, or throat, chakra; the *ajna*, or brow, chakra; and the *sahasrara*, or crown, chakra, lying immediately above the head. They are associated, respectively, with the thyroid, pituitary, and pineal glands.⁵⁰

Minor chakras are located in various parts of the body, including the palms of the hands. The hands are important "for healing, blessing and . . . invocation."⁵¹ Moreover, they are "potent factors in all magical work of healing and utilization of the sense of touch is an esoteric science."⁵²

The etheric body is related to the endocrine system. The endocrine system is a system of glands that secrete hormones into the bloodstream to regulate bodily functions. The endocrine and the nervous systems both carry information, but the former is slower in its response. Whereas a nerve impulse is fast-acting, and its response short-lived, the secretion of a hormone can produce effects lasting from a few hours to more than one week. The etheric body controls the general condition of the heart, "which is the center of life as the brain is the center of consciousness,"⁵³ it thereby controls the circulation of the blood. The heart rate is affected by the nervous system, which "is controlled principally . . . from the astral body."⁵⁴ Yet the etheric body is still involved since it "links the emotional nature to the dense physical."⁵⁵

Clearly, the etheric body is a complex entity, with multiple functions:

The etheric body is the inner "substantial" form upon which the physical body is built or constructed. It is the inner scaffolding which underlies every part of the whole outer man; it is the framework which sustains the whole; it is that upon which the outer form is patterned; and it is the network of nadis (infinitely intricate) which constitutes the counterpart or the duplicate aspect of the entire nervous system which forms such an important part of the human mechanism. It is thus definitely, with the blood stream, the instrument of the life force.⁵⁶

The etheric body "conditions, controls and determines the life expression of the incarnated individual." It is "the conveyor of the forces of the personality, through the medium of the centers [chakras], and thereby galvanizes the physical body into activity."⁵⁷

The health of the etheric body is enhanced by “drawing upon the resources of vitality, stored up in the soil, in food, fresh air and outer environmental conditions.”⁵⁸ Prana is associated with the breath, and the importance of breathing fresh air cannot be overemphasized. According to “the wholeness of the breathing apparatus,” and ability “to oxygenate and render pure the blood,” Bailey noted, “so will be the health or wholeness of the dense physical body.”⁵⁹ The dangers of smoking should be obvious.

Bailey also commented that “the etheric body is vitalized and controlled by thought and can (through thought) be brought into full functioning activity. This is done by right thinking.”⁶⁰ Love, mirroring the Second Aspect of Deity, “shows itself through the heart, the circulatory system and the nervous system. This is in many ways most important for you to understand, for it controls paramountly the etheric body and its assimilation of prana or vitality.”⁶¹

Communication between mind and etheric body is only one-way. Humanity has reached a stage of development in which the etheric body functions below the threshold of consciousness: “Human beings remain unaware of the passage of forces through this vehicle and the nearest they get to the recognition of it is when they speak in terms of vitality or lack of vitality. The physical body makes its presence felt when something goes wrong or through the gratification of one or other of the appetites.”⁶²

Disease, Healing and Death

Disease strikes the physical body, but its origins lie principally in the etheric body, which controls the endocrine system and circu-

lation of the blood, or in the astral body, which controls the nervous system. Since the etheric body transmits energy from the astral to the physical body, it is involved in either case.

Weakness of the etheric body manifests as exhaustion, susceptibility to viruses and bacteria, more serious diseases, even attack by “obsessing entities.”⁶³ Eventually, it results in death. Weakness may be hereditary or karmic in nature. Weakness can be caused by an inability to receive prana, or conversely by an excess of prana, which results in congestion. The former is typical of poor living conditions, lack of fresh air, inadequate nutrition, and unhealthy lifestyles. Excessive prana is found more often in tropical countries. “The etheric body receives prana or solar rays too rapidly, passes it through and out of the system with too much force, and this leaves the victim a prey to inertia and devitalization.”⁶⁴ Sun tanning may expose the body to more risks than just skin cancer.

Similar, polar-opposite conditions arise when the etheric body is either too loosely, or too closely knit, to the physical body. The former condition is associated with poor integration of the vehicles comprising the personality and can lead to obsession or possession—frequently, but erroneously, diagnosed as insanity.⁶⁵ In the latter, “every part of the physical body is in a constant condition of stimulation, of galvanic effort, with a resultant activity in the nervous system which—if not correctly regulated—can lead to a great deal of distress.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, we are also told: “The closer [the] etheric body is interwoven . . . with the dense physical vehicle, the clearer will be the instinctual reaction,” and the greater “will be the sensitivity and the more aptitude will there be for telepathic contact and recognition of the higher impressions.”⁶⁷

The cosmic etheric web has a geometric pattern. The pattern is not uniform throughout the universe but varies from one planet or sun to another according to its point of evolution. Earth’s etheric body currently has a square structure, whereas the “etheric webs of the sacred planets are largely triangles, whilst that of the Sun is that of interlaced circles.”

Healing Therapies

Healing therapies seek to relieve pain and disability and to restore a level of health sufficient for the person to live a happy, productive life—and perhaps to complete work assigned for the present incarnation.

Conventional (“allopathic”) medicine has done much to extend life, alleviate pain, and improve body function. Modern medicine has made enormous advances, and increases in longevity are to its great credit. Yet it is limited by treatment of symptoms rather than causes, and by its emphasis on narrow, specialized therapies, with less concern for a holistic view of the patient beyond the specific disease state. It attaches little importance to patients’ cooperation—other than to take medications, participate in physical therapy, or take other external measures—or even their desire to get well.

Complementary medicine is more holistic in its approach, and seeks to address causes as well as symptoms. As noted, many of these causes originate in the etheric body or are transmitted through it. In some complementary therapies, like acupuncture, the patient is passive. In others, patient participation plays a major role.

Weakness in the etheric body can often be alleviated by enabling or encouraging the patient to change a harmful lifestyle, adopt a more healthful diet, and get more fresh air. Recognition by medical professionals of the synthesis of vitamin D by exposure to sunlight—within reasonable limits and mindful of the dangers of sunbathing—is an important step toward acknowledgement of the role of prana. Bailey pointed out that the etheric body can also be strengthened “by means of . . . violet light, with its corresponding sound, administered in quiet sanitariums.”⁶⁸

In the future, light therapy will be performed with the “direct aid” of the violet devas.⁶⁹ With regard to sound therapy, Torkum Saraydarian, believed to be one of the Tibetan’s inner group of disciples, declared that good music “coordinates the organs and glands and improves circulation,” gives energy, “purifies the body of decaying elements,” heals, and puts the body

“in contact with the constructive energies in the Universe.”⁷⁰ It also has favorable effects at the emotional and mental levels.

Some therapies involve direct interaction between the patient and a healing practitioner. Bailey used the term “healer,” but “practitioner” is now preferred to avoid any implication that the individual can, or should, take personality-level credit for the work performed. The practitioner’s goal is to serve as “an unimpeded channel” for energy coming from elsewhere. A “clear passage must be formed along which health-giving life may flow from the ‘needed center’ in the healer’s etheric body to the allied center in the body of the patient and from thence into the blood stream, via the related gland.”⁷¹ Several approaches are available to the practitioner, according to the level in the self where the problem exists:

Some diseases must be dealt with from the mental plane, and will call in the mind of the healer; others require a concentration of emotional energy by the healing agent; and again, in other cases, the healer should seek to be only a transmitter of pranic energy to the etheric body of the patient, via his [or her] own etheric body.⁷²

The transmission of pranic energy takes place through “etheric currents and the centers in the etheric body.” Therapies making use of this technique include “the laying on of hands and the establishing of relations which affect the physical body.”⁷³ Efficacy rests on the fact that the healer’s and the patient’s etheric bodies are part of the planetary etheric body, and there is “an unbreakable . . . relationship between the healer’s etheric body and that of the patient, which can be used . . . once contact has been induced, for a definite circulation of energies.”⁷⁴ Strong, healthy individuals have exceptional potential to serve as practitioners; their abundance of prana provides a ready source for transfer to patients.⁷⁵

Bailey made several comments in her works on the use of the hands in healing and other occult work,⁷⁶ which should be useful for practitioners of Reiki, Healing Touch, and similar modalities. They should also be relevant for clergy performing sacramental healing and liturgi-

cal ritual. A comment to a particular disciple, but with more general application, was the following:

I would ask you, also, to make a careful study of the use of the hands in healing. I have given various hints in my different books and there is much anent this subject in the doctrine of the Church as to the “laying on of hands” and also in the oriental teachings anent the mudras, or the use of hands in ritualistic service. Find out all that you can about the hands. Later, I will indicate the future use of this science of the hands and give further instruction on the purpose of the centers in the hands in relation to the healing art.⁷⁷

The way a healing practitioner should interact with the patient may depend on ray type:

Healers on the second, third and fifth rays use more generally the mode of laying on of hands or magnetic healing. This term applies to the direct act of laying on of hands upon the patient's physical body, and not to the action of the hands in the second method, when the hands are immersed in the etheric body of the patient and are definitely working in etheric matter. Healers on the first, fourth and seventh rays use the mode of “hand immersion.”⁷⁸

Interestingly, Bailey added: “The sixth ray healer is rare and is successful only when highly developed; he will then use both methods interchangeably.” Presumably sixth-ray people, who are not yet sufficiently developed, are called to serve in other ways.

The Death Process

Healing, of course, is only temporary in its effects. The time will come when the physical vehicle has deteriorated to the point where soul purpose is better served by withdrawal from the physical world. Alternatively, death may come earlier due to external factors such as accidents, violence—including suicide—and war.

At death, the etheric body is withdrawn from the dense physical form. A passage in *Ecclesiastes* describes the event in poetic terms: “[M]an goeth to his long home, and the

mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken . . . Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”⁷⁹

Bailey described the death process in considerable detail:

[T]he “Word of Return” is uttered, and the consciousness aspect, the quality nature, the light and energy of the incarnating man, are withdrawn into the etheric body. The life principle withdraws, likewise, from the heart. There follows a brilliant flaring-up of pure electric light, and the “body of light” finally breaks all contact with the dense physical vehicle, focuses for a short period in the vital body, and then disappears.⁸⁰

“A psychic tremor is established,” Bailey continued, “which has the effect of loosening or breaking the connection between the nadis and the nervous system; the etheric body is thereby detached from its dense sheath, though still interpenetrating every part of it.” Then there may be a pause:

This is allowed in order to carry forward the loosening process as smoothly and as painlessly as possible. This loosening of the nadis starts in the eyes. This process of detachment often shows itself in the relaxation and lack of fear which dying persons so often show; they evidence a condition of peace, and a willingness to go, plus an inability to make a mental effort.⁸¹

After the pause, which may be “of a shorter or longer period of time,”

the organized etheric body, loosened from all nervous relationship through the action of the nadis, begins to gather itself together for the final departure. It withdraws from the extremities towards the required “door of exit” and focuses itself in the area around that door for the final “pull” of the directing soul.⁸²

The “door of exit,” through which the etheric body is withdrawn, is the solar plexus for “infants and [for] men and women who are polarized entirely in the physical and astral bodies.” For “mental types, of the more highly evolved

human units” it is “at the top of the head in the region of the fontanelle.”⁸³ “In the case of an advanced person,” we also learn the process of withdrawal “is consciously undertaken, and the man retains his vital interests and his awareness of relationship to others even whilst losing his grip on physical existence.”⁸⁴

When the etheric body has fully emerged from the physical form

the vital body then assumes the vague outline of the form that it energized, and this under the influence of the thoughtform of himself which the man has built up over the years. This thoughtform exists in the case of every human being, and must be destroyed before the second stage of elimination is finally complete.⁸⁵

The etheric body may remain, in the form of a wraith, close to the physical form for a while because it “is not yet freed from its influence. There is still a slight rapport between the two.” “That is why,” Bailey explained, “clairvoyants often claim to see the etheric body hovering around the death bed or the coffin.”⁸⁶ Meanwhile the physical body begins to “fall into corruption,” and its component matter “scattered to the elements.”⁸⁷ She commented that the “entire process of the focusing of the spiritual elements in the etheric body, with the subsequent abstraction and consequent dissipation of the etheric body, would be greatly hastened by the substitution of cremation for burial.”⁸⁸

Release from the dense physical form still leaves the individual with three of the four vehicles of the lower quaternary: the etheric, astral, and lower mental bodies. The energies of the astral and lower mental bodies interpenetrate the etheric body, “and at the center there is a point of light which indicates the presence of the soul.”⁸⁹

So long as the ego remains in the etheric body, the possibility remains that the individual can be “brought back again into physical plane existence . . . though the discarding of the dense physical body has to all intents and purposes been completed.”⁹⁰ Near-death experiences are receiving increasing attention since

the early work of Elizabeth Kubler Ross and Raymond Moody.⁹¹

The time spent in the etheric body varies from individual to individual. “In the case of the undeveloped person, the etheric body can linger for a long time in the neighborhood of its outer disintegrating shell because the pull of the soul is not potent, and the material aspect is. Where the person is advanced, and therefore detached in his thinking from the physical plane, the dissolution of the vital body can be exceedingly rapid.”⁹²

During the dissolution of the etheric body, the “solar fire,” which previously flowed through the sutratma, is “gathered back to the atomic subplane where it will still vitalize the permanent atom and hold it connected within the causal body.”⁹³ The energies of the etheric body are “reorganized and withdrawn, leaving only the pranic substance which is identified with the etheric vehicle of the planet itself.”⁹⁴

The Etheric Body and Spiritual Development

The etheric bodies of aspirants and disciples develop more rapidly with age than do those of others and take on distinct qualities. Moreover, Alice Bailey explained, “the grip of the soul upon the etheric centers will be more powerful from the very start of the physical existence.” By the fourteenth year, she continued, “the quality and the nature of the incarnated soul and its approximate age or experience are determined, the physical, astral and mental elementals are under control, and the soul, the indwelling spiritual man, already determines the life tendencies and choices.”⁹⁵

Strengthening and refinement of the etheric body allows the individual to become more discriminating in what energies and impressions, including telepathic impressions, reach the dense physical vehicle: “the etheric body of a disciple or even of an advanced person can be so handled and dealt with that it can reject much that might otherwise impinge upon it, pass through it or use it as a channel.”⁹⁶

We have seen that the etheric body transmits astral and mental energy to the physical body.

This is part of the mechanism by which the personality exercises control over its vehicles. Bailey explained, however, that when a person “is upon the Path of Discipleship and, therefore, upon the reversed wheel [of the Zodiac], leading to initiation, the etheric body becomes the transmitter of soul energy and not of personality force.” In this way “the powerful effect of the second Ray of Love-Wisdom—working through the subjective six rays, according to ray type—begins steadily to dominate the vital body, producing consequently the shift of force and of intensity to the centers above the diaphragm.”⁹⁷

Bailey reminded us that integration of the personality is both a prerequisite and an effect of a life of service. The “inflowing force of the soul” not only serves “to bring all the three lower aspects of the man into one serving whole” but is “the major factor leading to demonstrated service.”⁹⁸ “With the heart and mind . . . functioning together,” she continued,

the force, flowing through the server will galvanize his etheric body into activity. Then, automatically, the physical body will respond. There is, consequently, a great need for the server to pause upon the astral plane, and there, in a holy and controlled silence, wait, before permitting the force to pour through into the centers in the etheric body. This point of silence is one of the mysteries of spiritual unfoldment.⁹⁹

The world’s great mystics would agree with her on the importance of “controlled silence.”

We know that an important element of occult training is building the antahkarana between the personality and spiritual triad, or more specifically between the mental unit (on the fourth mental subplane) and the mental permanent

atom (on the first). So why, Bailey asked, does occult work not address a gap between the physical and etheric bodies? Answering her own question, she explained that “factually there is no true gap; there is simply the ignoring by humanity of an aspect of the physical body which is of far more importance than is the dense physical vehicle.”¹⁰⁰ “The occultist,” she insisted, “never concerns himself with the dense physical vehicle. He considers the etheric body to be the true form and the dense as simply the material used to fill in the form.”¹⁰¹ Another author commented that closure of the physical-etheric gap was a major achievement of the Lemurian race and thus is long behind us.¹⁰²

As an individual evolves spiritually, the coarse matter of the lower quaternary is gradually replaced by matter of a higher vibration. On the physical plane, the effect is primarily on the etheric body and, in Bailey’s words, it “stimulates the divine flow.”¹⁰³ The process can be accelerated “by forms of breathing (respiration and inspiration), and by certain rhythmic currents set up on the mental plane and driving from thence to the lower ethers. The etheric body will thus be strengthened, purified, cleansed, and rearranged.”¹⁰⁴ Bailey warned, however, against overemphasis on the physical act of breathing.¹⁰⁵ In particular, she criticized breathing exercises which involve “holding the nose,” which she characterized as “dangerous.”¹⁰⁶

Breathing exercises, properly understood and performed, were central to the ancient yogic discipline of *pranayama*, and Bailey noted that the “The inflow and outflow of prana in the physical body is symbolized for us in the necessary inspiration and exhalation of the breath.”¹⁰⁷ *Pranayama* “refers to the control, regulation and suppression of the vital airs, the

Strengthening and refinement of the etheric body allows the individual to become more discriminating in what energies and impressions, including telepathic impressions, reach the dense physical vehicle: “the etheric body of a disciple or even of an advanced person can be so handled and dealt with that it can reject much that might otherwise impinge upon it, pass through it or use it as a channel.

breath and the forces or shaktis of the body. It leads in reality to the organization of the vital body or the etheric body so that the life current or forces, emanating from the ego or spiritual man on his own plane, can be correctly transmitted to the physical man in objective manifestation.”¹⁰⁸

Complementing pranayama is the discipline of *pratyahara*, or withdrawal of sensory awareness from the extremities of the body and even from the whole body. In Bailey’s words: “Here we get back of the physical and the etheric bodies, to the emotional body, the seat of the desires, of sensory perception and of feeling. She added: “The etheric body is organized and controlled and the astral body is re-oriented, for the desire nature is subdued and the real man withdraws himself gradually from all sense contacts.”¹⁰⁹ Some Christian esotericists, wishing to spare Jesus the agony of the cross, claim that he practiced *pratyahara*.

Much has been written about the awakening of the higher chakras. Bailey spoke of the “unfoldment and awakening of the centers in the etheric body, the centralization of the fires of the body and their just progression up the spine, in order to make union with the fire of the soul.”¹¹⁰

Bailey distinguished the brow chakra, located between the eyebrows, from the pineal gland to which it is customarily related. The brow chakra, “commonly called the third eye,”

manifests as a result of the vibratory interaction between the forces of the soul, working through the pineal gland, and the forces of the personality, working through the pituitary body. These negative and positive forces interact, and when potent enough produce the light in the head. Just as the physical eye came into being in response to the light of the sun so the spiritual eye equally comes into being in response to the light of the spiritual sun.¹¹¹

“As [the disciple’s] awareness of this light increases,” she added, “so does the apparatus of vision develop, and the mechanism whereby he can see things in the spiritual light comes into being in the etheric body.”¹¹² Whereas the mystic’s consciousness is centered “in the top

of the head,” and that of the “advanced worldly man . . . in the pituitary region,” the occultist works in that point in the middle of the head where the “light in the head” makes its appearance.¹¹³ The energy of the soul is swept into action by the power of will. And “through the etheric body and the force, directed through one or other of the centers . . . the soul carries on the work in magic.”¹¹⁴

Much has also been written about raising the *kundalini*, the “serpent fire” that lies coiled at the base of the spine. Bailey warned, in the strongest terms, of the danger of trying, by force of will, to raise the kundalini before adequate spiritual preparation has been done to ensure a clear channel up the spine. An individual who does this “stands in danger of obsession, insanity, physical death, or of dire disease in some part of his body, and he also runs the risk of an over-development of the sex impulse.”¹¹⁵

If the spine is still clogged, Bailey continued, the flame is turned “backwards and downwards,” permitting “the entrance, through the burning etheric, of undesirable and extraneous forces, currents, and even entities. These wreck and tear and ruin what is left of the etheric vehicle, of the brain tissue and even of the dense physical body itself.”¹¹⁶ She issued a similar warning in another work:

There is extreme danger attendant upon the premature awakening of the fire, and the consequent destruction of certain protective structures in the etheric body and the breaking down of the barriers between this world and the astral world, before the pupil is properly “balanced between the pairs of opposites.” There is a menace in the premature growth of the lower psychic powers before the higher nature is awakened, and the effect upon the brain can be seen as insanity in some form or other, mild or the reverse.¹¹⁷

Exercises to raise the kundalini should be undertaken only under proper supervision: “The methods for arousing the kundalini fire and blending it with the downpouring egoic force must . . . be left for direct teaching by a master in this science to his pupil.”¹¹⁸

The etheric body bears a special relationship to the Fifth Ray of Concrete Science.¹¹⁹ But we are also told that, in the present world cycle, the Third Ray of Active Intelligence is “slowly conditioning the etheric body,” under the influence of the “third sign, Gemini,”¹²⁰ Esoteric astrologer Phillip Lindsay commented:

Gemini is a sign of communication [It] rules the etheric body, the greater etheric matrix that extends to all corners of the universe; it has an innate sense of connectedness with all life; it is the chameleon who through its adaptability and penchant for communication can be all things to all people. . . . Appropriately, Gemini rules the thymus, the endocrine gland associated with the heart chakra.¹²¹

It was mentioned earlier that the etheric bodies of sacred planets have a triangular structure. Bailey also commented on the potential for advanced esoteric students to grasp “the essential beauty of coordinated and organized movement and its power to qualify and condition the entire universal pattern” through study of the triangles formed by triplets of chakras in the human etheric body.¹²²

The Etheric Bodies of Initiates

We are told that avatars have “a peculiar facility or capacity . . . to work with energies, transmitted via the etheric body of a planet or of the solar system.” In particular, Christ “transmitted the cosmic energy of love directly to the physical plane of our planet, and also in a peculiar manner to the fourth kingdom in nature, the human.”¹²³

Alice Bailey informed us that Sanat Kumara—the Ancient of Days, Lord of the World, and greatest of the avatars—took “physical form” during the Lemurian era “and has remained with us ever since.” “Owing to the extreme purity of His nature,” she explained, “He was unable to take a dense physical body such as ours, and has to function in His etheric body.”¹²⁴ That etheric body may not have been built, like ours, from *systemic* etheric matter. More likely it was constructed of *cosmic* etheric matter—that is, matter of our buddhic,

atmic, monadic and logioic planes. It will be recalled that the seven systemic planes form the cosmic physical plane.

In a later book Bailey declared that the masters’ “etheric bodies” are composed of cosmic etheric matter:

All the Masters, for instance, do not work through a physical vehicle. They nevertheless, have an etheric body composed of the substance of the cosmic etheric levels—buddhic, atmic, monadic and logioic levels. . . . Until They choose, at the sixth Initiation of Decision, one of the seven Paths of Ultimate Destiny, the Masters function in Their cosmic etheric bodies.¹²⁵

The inclusion of logioic etheric matter is surprising, given that their consciousness—or more correctly *identification*—is focused at the monadic level.¹²⁶ Be that as it may, those masters who do “work through a physical vehicle” presumably have etheric bodies like ours, perhaps interpenetrated by cosmic etheric material.

Whether or not the masters choose to take dense physical forms the way we do, they are capable of manifesting a *mayavirupa*, “a vehicle of expression which is built of atomic physical and astral substance and of concrete mental substance.” Bailey added that the masters can “create [one] at will” and cause it “to vanish at will.”¹²⁷ The *mayavirupa* has a measure of solidity but is not subject to the same constraints as are our physical bodies; for example, it can seem to pass through walls. When the risen Christ appeared to his disciples in a locked room, he is believed to have been “wearing” a *mayavirupa*.

The ability to create a *mayavirupa* involves processes which are learned even before the third initiation: processes based on combined use of the *sutratma* and *antahkarana* to produce a powerful thoughtform.¹²⁸ Bailey added the following tantalizing hint: “The power of the Triad begins to pour through, thus energizing all human activities upon the physical plane, and vitalizing in ever increasing degree the man's thought forms. The key to the formation of the *Mayavirupa* is found in the right comprehension of the process.”¹²⁹

For most of us information about the etheric bodies of masters and higher initiates is primarily of theoretical interest. Our more immediate concern is to know when, on the initiatory path, differences in the etheric body occur, and in what ways they become evident. Bailey provided a potentially useful hint: “Though the etheric body of man is an expression of the seven ray qualities in varying degrees of force, the etheric body of a Master is an expression of monadic energy, and comes into full activity after the third initiation.”¹³⁰ She also explained that the etheric body is “the agent consciously directed, of the rapidly integrating spiritual unity. It can convey into the brain the needed energies and that occult information which together make a man a Master of the Wisdom and eventually a Christ—all-inclusive in HIS developed attractive and magnetic power.”¹³¹

We have already seen that the quality of the etheric body can be enhanced by right thinking. If the process is successful, “certain transformations and re-organizations take place which eventually cause a complete change in the activities of the physical plane man. The constant cultivation of this effects an entire transformation in the threefold lower man.”¹³²

Such a transformation can be seen in the lives of the great geniuses of history, some of whom were known to sleep no more than four hours a night. We see it even more clearly in the lives of certain Indian holy men and Christian stigmatics who no longer sleep at all—and, most startlingly, no longer need to eat or drink. This latter ability may point to a future mode of physical existence in which human beings will interact very differently with the lesser lives on the planet. Meanwhile, it seems likely that the lesions on stigmatics’ bodies are caused by strong thoughtforms, propelled by strong emotion and acting through the etheric body.¹³³

At some point on the initiatory path the kundalini rises freely up the spine, and the chakras become fully awakened. “As time elapses between the first and fourth Initiation,” Bailey explained, “the threefold channel in the spine, and the entire etheric body is gradually cleansed and purified by the action of the fire till all ‘dross’ . . . is burnt away, and naught

remains to impede the progress of this flame.”¹³⁴ She continued:

As the fire of kundalini and prana proceed with their work, and the channel becomes more and more cleared, the centers more active, and the body purer, the flame of spirit, or the fire from the Ego, comes more actively downwards till a flame of real brilliance issues from the top of the head. This flame surges upwards through the bodies towards its source, the causal body.¹³⁵

The brilliant “flame” issuing from the head no doubt underlies the artistic convention of depicting saints with haloes.

The awakening of the chakras, or centers, which takes place on the path of discipleship and continues on the initiatory path, unveil new ray influences: “Through the seven centers in the etheric body, the seven ray energies make their appearance and produce their effects, but at the very heart of each chakra or lotus, there is a vortex of force to be found which is composed of pure manasic energy, and, therefore, is purely energy of the first three rays.”¹³⁶

“This energy,” Bailey continued, “is quiescent until an advanced stage of discipleship is reached. It only sweeps into its divine rhythm and activity when the three tiers of petals, found in the egoic lotus (the higher correspondence), are beginning to unfold, and the center of the egoic lotus is becoming vibrant.”¹³⁷ Finally, we learn: “Though the etheric body of man is an expression of the seven ray qualities in varying degrees of force, the etheric body of a Master is an expression of monadic energy, and comes into full activity after the third initiation.”¹³⁸

We should note that, at the fourth initiation, the egoic lotus, the causal body, is destroyed and “the soul life—as hitherto understood—fades out” and the “sum total of memory, quality and acquirements is then absorbed into the Monad.”¹³⁹ Bailey added:

The astral body also vanishes in the same great process of renunciation, and the physical body (as an automatic agent of the vital body) is no longer needed, though it per-

sists and serves a purpose when so required by the Monad. From the form aspect, you then have the Monad, the sphere of the Spiritual Triad and the etheric body upon the physical plane.¹⁴⁰

Concluding Remarks

As the citations in this article testify, Alice Bailey's teachings offer a wealth of information on the etheric body. What this article has tried to do, within its length constraints, is to compile the teachings into a coherent and logical framework for the convenience of esoteric students, and especially for those who may wish to do further research. Commentary provides continuity and context and suggests what we can learn from the teachings.

Of most immediate concern to us is understanding the critical role of the etheric body in establishing and maintaining life on the physical plane: how the dense physical vehicle is built around the structure of the etheric body during gestation and childhood, how the etheric body vitalizes the endocrine and nervous systems and the circulation of the blood, and how it strives to maintain health and function during physical embodiment. Those tasks are obstructed by poor living conditions, inadequate diet, and disease; they are aided by healthful lifestyles and, when needed, by conventional and complementary healing therapies.

When the lifetime comes to an end the etheric body withdraws from the dense physical form. In due course it too is abandoned, as the lessons learned at the physical, astral, and lower mental levels are absorbed into their respective permanent atoms. We should note that there are four lower vehicles—constituting the lower quaternary—but only three permanent atoms. The physical permanent atom absorbs the record of the etheric body and also any record of dense physical life that is to be preserved.

Of less immediate concern, but of no less importance to an appreciation of individual and collective human potential, is understanding the way in which the etheric body establishes and eventually awakens the chakras, and how it—and in turn the physical body—adapt to the

needs of aspiration, discipleship and initiation. As the individual progresses on the Path of Return, the etheric body undergoes important changes, revealing modes of physical existence already utilized by the masters and pointing to what, one day, may become the norm for humanity at large.

The four etheric subplanes can be viewed as the lower correspondents of the buddhic, atmic, monadic, and logocic planes, which in their turn serve as the “etheric subplanes” of the cosmic physical plane. Recognition of this correspondence is evocative. It reminds us that, while our etheric bodies are built of material from the four systemic ethers, they have qualities pertaining to the higher planes, qualities that unfold on the initiatory path. Indeed, we are told that the masters function in etheric bodies composed of matter of the cosmic ethers. That recognition should give us new appreciation of the etheric body and its importance, not only for us at our present stage of development but also for entities at exalted levels of consciousness.

¹ *Psyche*, customarily translated as “soul,” did not acquire its modern meaning until well into the classical age.

² T. Subba Row, “Buddhism and Ancient Wisdom-Religion,” *Esoteric Writings* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1895), 58-59. In eastern philosophy *prana* is intimately connected with breath.

³ Isaac Newton, “General Scholium,” appended to the 2nd (1713) edition of *Principia*. Online: http://www.isaacnewton.ca/gen_scholium/General_Scholium_Motte_1729_4pg.pdf. (accessed Nov. 26, 2012).

⁴ Charles W. Leadbeater, *The Chakras* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1927), 3.

⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1950), 145. Citations from Bailey's works have been brought into conformity with American spelling and quotation-mark conventions. All other changes or interpolations are disclosed by square brackets: [].

⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁷ Leadbeater, *The Chakras*, 3.

⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1953), 2-3. Parenthesis in original.

- ⁹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1942), 184-185.
- ¹⁰ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 7.
- ¹¹ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1951), 11.
- ¹² Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 178.
- ¹³ It should be noted that a planet's or sun's degree of evolution is also the degree of evolution of its ensouling Logos.
- ¹⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 479. See also the comments in *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 163.
- ¹⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1925), 79.
- ¹⁶ Alice A. Bailey, *The Light of the Soul* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1927), 220.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.
- ¹⁸ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 154-155.
- ¹⁹ For a discussion of the systemic and cosmic planes, and the position of our vehicles on the former, see John F. Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2004), 40-46, 97-103.
- ²⁰ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 92. The statement that all prana that we receive is of solar origin is not surprising, given that the Sun is the source of life for the whole solar system.
- ²¹ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 90
- ²² For a discussion of solar angels and their work see Nash, *The Soul and Its Destiny*, 177-206.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 924.
- ²⁵ Quantum theory predicts a non-zero energy for a vacuum, associated with the rapid emergence and decay of pairs of subatomic particles.
- ²⁶ Theories of the Higgs field are developing rapidly, following observation of the Higgs boson, believed to be the origin of mass. For a brief discussion of the issues see Andrew Z. Jones, "What is the Higgs Field?" Online: <http://physics.about.com/od/quantumphysics/f/HiggsField.htm>. (accessed February 20, 2013).
- ²⁷ The electromagnetic field emitted by living organisms, tentatively called the "L-field," was first observed in the 1930s by Harold Saxton Burr, anatomy professor at Yale University. Kirlian photography is named for Russian scientist Semyon Kirlian and his wife Valentina who discovered the technique of photographing electrical coronal discharges in 1939. Mainstream science embraces the basic concept but remains skeptical of its broader interpretation.
- ²⁸ Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1936), 123.
- ²⁹ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 412.
- ³⁰ Geoffrey Hodson, *The Miracle of Birth* (1929; reprint; Wheaton IL: Quest books, 1981), 82, 84-88.
- ³¹ Hodson, *The Miracle of Birth*, 84-87.
- ³² The author is indebted to a reviewer for this insight.
- ³³ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 81-82.
- ³⁴ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 463.
- ³⁵ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 82.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 90.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 857.
- ⁴⁰ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 142, 145.
- ⁴¹ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 183.
- ⁴² The creative thread is said to connect the throat chakra with the causal body.
- ⁴³ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 735.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 434.
- ⁴⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 85.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 469.
- ⁴⁸ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 143.
- ⁴⁹ Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 218-219. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 120. See also Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 412-413. Along with most other writers, Bailey assigns the root chakra to the adrenal glands and the sacral chakra to the gonads, but it should be noted that the adrenals lie above the gonads, on a level with the pancreas.
- ⁵¹ Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and The Initiations* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1960), 227.
- ⁵² Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 354.
- ⁵³ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 85.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ⁵⁵ Alice A. Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1922), 245.
- ⁵⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 79.
- ⁵⁷ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 190.
- ⁵⁸ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 512.
- ⁵⁹ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 219.
- ⁶⁰ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1934), 77. Parenthesis in original.
- ⁶¹ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 106.
- ⁶² Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 293.
- ⁶³ Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 127.
- ⁶⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 107.
- ⁶⁵ Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 79, 316.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.
- ⁶⁷ Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 114-115.

- 68 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 127.
 69 Ibid.
- 70 Torkum Saraydarian, *The Creative Sound* (Cave Creek, AZ: 1999), 65-66.
 71 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 626-627.
 72 Ibid., 26.
 73 Ibid., 645.
 74 Ibid.
- 75 A Reiki healing group, to which the present author belonged, included former Marines and Special Forces personnel whose effectiveness as practitioners was evident.
- 76 See for example Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1955), 118. Also Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 17; *A Treatise on White Magic*, 578.
- 77 Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1944), 353-354
 78 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 650.
 79 *Ecclesiastes* 12:5-7. The “golden bowl” is believed to be a reference to the etheric body.
 80 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 470.
 81 Ibid., 474-475.
 82 Ibid., 475.
 83 Ibid., 456. The *fontanelle*, or *fontanelle*, is the soft, membranous gaps between the incompletely formed cranial bones of a fetus or infant. One wonders why Bailey cited it as the etheric body’s point of exit, since the fontanelle closes in childhood. Perhaps she felt it was a more specific marker than the crown chakra, which lies a short distance above, the head.
 84 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 476.
 85 Ibid., 477.
 86 Ibid., 470.
 87 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 735.
 88 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 470.
 89 Ibid., 477.
 90 Ibid., 460.
 91 A wealth of information on near-death experiences is available from the International Association for Near-Death Studies: <http://near-death.com/>. (accessed December 12, 2012). A recent book that has received much attention is Eben Alexander’s, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2012.)
 92 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 460.
 93 Ibid.
 94 Ibid., 477.
 95 Ibid., 463-464.
 96 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 115.
 97 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 352-353.
 98 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 134
 99 Ibid., 138.
- 100 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 140
 101 Ibid., 348-349.
 102 See for example Charles DeMotte, *The Inner Side of History* (Mariposa CA: Source Publications, 1998), 72.
 103 Bailey, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, 63.
 104 Ibid., 156. Parenthesis in original.
 105 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 218.
 106 Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 77.
 107 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 218.
 108 Ibid., 182-183. In Hindu thought *Shakti* (from Sanskrit: “ability”) is the primordial cosmic energy, or motive force, believed to move through the entire universe.
 109 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 182-183. One objective of *pratyahara* is to overcome sensitivity to pain. Indian fakirs famously pierce themselves with knives or lie on beds of nails to demonstrate their prowess. Some Christian esotericists, eager to spare Jesus the horrors of the crucifixion, suggest that he was able to withdraw sensory awareness from the physical body
 110 Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 62-63.
 111 Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, 212-213.
 112 Ibid.
 113 Ibid., 247.
 114 Ibid., 216.
 115 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 126.
 116 Ibid.
 117 Ibid., 222.
 118 Ibid., 221-222.
 119 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology I*, 162.
 120 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1951), 357.
 121 Phillip Lindsay, “The Gemini Christ,” 2006. Online: <http://www.esotericastrologer.org/Newsletters/36%20The%20Gemini%20Christ%20I%20am%20made%20all%20things%20to%20all%20men.htm>. (accessed December 13, 2012).
 122 Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, 418.
 123 Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, 616.
 124 Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human & Solar* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1922), 28.
 125 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 159.
 126 Bailey, *The Rays and The Initiations*, 282.
 127 Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1957), 697. See also *A Treatise on White Magic*, 265.
 128 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 959. See also Alice A. Bailey, *Education in the New Age* (New York, NY: Lucis, 1954), 31.
 129 Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 959-960.
 130 Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 294.
 131 Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, 61.

¹³² Bailey, *The Light of the Soul*, 192.

¹³³ John F. Nash, "Stigmata and the Initiatory Path," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Summer 2012), 49-72.

¹³⁴ Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, 124

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

¹³⁶ Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, 294

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* Parenthesis in original.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Bailey, *The Rays and The Initiations*, 506-507.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 507. Parenthesis in original.