

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Bringing Symbols to Life

***The gymnastic
exercises***



PROSVETA

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Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Bringing Symbols to Life

The gymnastic exercises

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Translated from the French Original title: « DONNER VIE À DES SYMBOLES - EXERCICES DE GYMNASTIQUE »

Original edition: © 2012, Éditions Prosveta S.A., ISBN 978-2-8184-0031-9

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Éditions Prosveta S.A. – CS 30012 – 83601 Fréjus CEDEX (France)
ISBN 978-2-8184-0450-8

Digital edition: ISBN 978-2-8184-0489-8

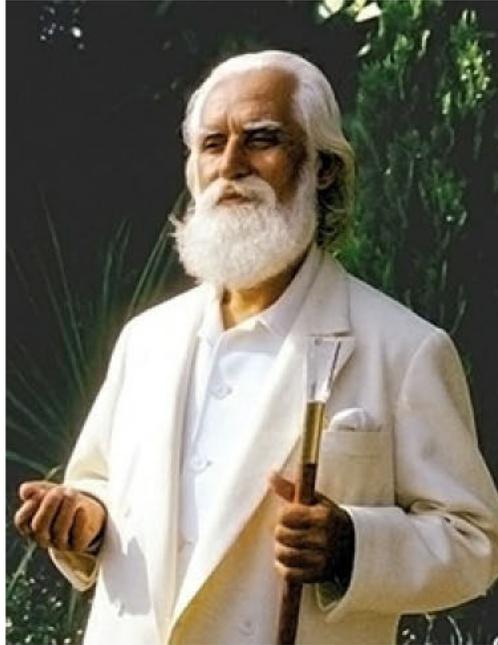
The paper version of this book includes a DVD with all the video exercises, a lecture by Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov and archive photos.

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Readers are asked to note that Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov's teaching was exclusively oral. This volume includes passages from several different lectures all dealing with the same theme.

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanov



The philosopher and spiritual Master, **Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanov** (1900-1986) was born in Bulgaria and moved to France in 1937. Although his work addresses many aspects of initiatic science, he makes it clear that *'we must all undertake our own self-development, not only for ourselves but for the good of the collectivity. Then the collectivity becomes a brotherhood. A brotherhood is a collectivity where true unity reigns, because while working for themselves everyone is also consciously working for the good of the whole.'*

Introduction

‘In order to channel water, we dig ditches and furrows, and to light our houses we install electrical circuits. These examples are analogies: if we want to be able to pick up the spiritual energies passing through the atmosphere and make them circulate, we must install channels and circuits within ourselves as well. The gymnastic exercises we do each morning are a way of capturing these energies and making them circulate. This is because the geometric figures that correspond to the different movements relate to spiritual forces and entities. When we trace these figures in space, we are attracting the forces and entities to which they are linked, so that they can work in us.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Part One

Embodying spiritual truths

The treasures hidden in very simple exercises

You all hope to live a life rich in revelation, inspiration and blessings, and for that to happen you think you need someone to come and reveal extraordinary secrets to you. If I tell you that these secrets you are waiting for consist of a few very simple exercises, you will think, 'Oh, is that all?' Well, yes, the greatest secrets that will show you how to live every day in harmony, peace, joy and hope lie in very simple exercises, and if you leave them out, you will never know the benefits of doing them.

Just take our gymnastic exercises. Do you sense just how useful they are for keeping your body flexible, energized and in balance? You do them for a few days and then you drop them, and when you want to take them up again you find you are already stiff, heavy and clumsy. You have to do them regularly, like dancers; they don't let a single day go by without training. The exercises only take ten or so minutes, so don't say they take too much time.

Let's suppose you do these exercises every day. As they are easy to do, you can do them correctly even if you are thinking of something else or nothing at all. But the only way you will really benefit from them is if you pay close attention to what you are doing. Don't simply raise your arms and legs mechanically left and right; try to get into a rhythm. In this way, all the cells in your legs, arms, solar plexus, brain and the whole of your body will gradually begin to vibrate, and one day you will sense that you are sending out fluid energy currents, which will spread harmoniously out into space.

So, as you begin these exercises, be conscious that you will be sending out waves, releasing energy currents. Also, watch your breathing, because in doing so you will help to make your body suppler, and you will rejuvenate your cells and keep your nervous system balanced and healthy.¹

People usually associate the idea of gymnastics with keeping their body in good shape and developing muscles, when for good health and energy it is principally the nervous system that needs to be supported, strengthened and stimulated. Athletes can have very strong muscles, but if their nervous system is weak and exhausted they will not be able to lift even a bottle of water. Observe yourself, and ask yourself why some days you can be active from morning to night and walk for ten kilometres without tiring, and other days you are crawling along pitifully: you still have the same muscles, but you

have less nervous energy. So, in our gymnastic exercises, it is our nervous system that we seek to strengthen first, since even our muscle function depends on it.

And what strengthens and nourishes the nervous system? The awareness, faith and fervour with which we set about the task in hand. When we do the exercises together, I certainly sense your presence behind me, but I do not always sense a conscious presence. If, from now on, you try to perform all these movements with the conviction that you are carrying out something good and beautiful, it will have a positive effect on your whole day. You will have created an inner harmony, which will also be reflected in your behaviour towards those around you: your family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and everyone you happen to come into contact with.

Our Teaching offers numerous methods, and the gymnastic exercises are only one among many others. These include prayer, meditation, singing, surya yoga (the yoga of the sun), hrani yoga (the yoga of nutrition), breathing exercises and the paneurhythmy dance. For each of these practices, I have explained to you how to direct your thoughts to obtain the best results. Of itself a method is not so important; it is only a tool. A repeated word or gesture will only release its power if we provide it with content by adding a thought and even a feeling.

You have inner resources you are not aware of, and you must learn to exploit them by being present with everything you do. Often, if you are tired, it is not because you have worked too hard, but because you do not know what efforts you need to make or, more importantly, how to make them. When, eventually, you no longer think of our gymnastic exercises only as physical effort, but also as a psychological and spiritual activity, you will sense waves of pure energy flowing towards you from the whole universe.

As we execute each movement, we silently say a formula, a prayer.² These formulas, these prayers, not only help us to become aware of the importance and meaning of each gesture, they also send out vibrations that penetrate the very substance of our being. One day I will show you how each of these movements can be linked to a symbol, a geometric figure.³

As with all spiritual exercises, it is better to be able to do these gymnastic exercises in silence, surrounded by silence, but also and above all in inner silence. So, before you begin, take a look inside yourself, and allow this silence – this expression of peace, harmony and light – to fill you. It is useless aspiring to any kind of spiritual realization while you cannot manage

to interrupt the noisy, uncontrolled flow of your thoughts and feelings. When you manage to achieve this silence, you will communicate a subtle grace and rhythm to your gestures, which will be transmitted to all your cells and will also have a positive effect on all the beings around you. I have often said to you that even animals and plants are sensitive to the atmosphere we emanate.

Once silence has been established, you can begin the exercises, saying the formulas in your mind at the same time. This inner speech is what is called the Word. The Word is speech that has not yet come down to the physical level. It is there, real and alive but inaudible, and it manifests in the invisible world as shapes, colours and vibrations. It is thanks to the Word that you can make yourself heard in the different kingdoms of nature. This is because the Word can always find an immediate appropriate expression that all creatures, even the angels and the archangels, understand; yes, the Word is the universal language.

At the end of each formula, we add 'for the glory of God'. Why? Because in the spiritual life it is essential that we know who we are serving. We must see even the gymnastic exercises as an opportunity to glorify the Lord.

I will say a few more words about this. Instead of saying 'for the glory of God', we can also say 'for the glory of our heavenly Father' or 'for the glory of my heavenly Father'. With this formula, we are seeking to contact our higher self, our divine self, more directly. For the truth is that, on high, in the divine world, we are a spark of the same nature, the same quintessence, as God, our heavenly Father. All human beings are sons and daughters of the same heavenly Father, and when we say 'our heavenly Father' or 'my heavenly Father', each one of us is emphasizing this filiation, this identity, even more strongly. We awaken an inner awareness of our divine origin, and we create a connection with the Lord so that, eventually, we will merge with him. For we are predestined one day to say, as Jesus said, '*My Father and I are one*'.

¹ [See Breathing in Part Four.](#)

² [See Part Two.](#)

³ [See Part Two.](#)

From movement to light

The spiritual life does not require us to accumulate lots of knowledge. The most important thing in the spiritual life is practice. It is good to read and study but not without ever trying to achieve what you have studied and make it concrete. Obviously, without sufficient knowledge, practice is poor and empty. But once certain ideas have been acquired, it is necessary to focus on a few exercises and repeat them every day. Our Teaching teaches us how to work with the spirit, soul, mind and heart, but also with the will. And the will is developed through the practice of movements that are the result of the activities of the spirit, soul, mind and heart.

You come across people in life who are very simple and possess just a few sheets of paper, on which they have written a small number of essential truths; they do their best to apply these truths, and you can feel they are full of spirit and light. And you meet others, scholars, who have all of humanity's sacred books in their library, which they quote from, but there is nothing spiritual emanating from them. The most important thing is to have a certain amount of knowledge and build something with it. We can call this act of building 'our future' or 'our temple'. It is this temple that St Paul was thinking of when he wrote in the second letter to the Corinthians: *'We are the temple of the living God'*.

I offer you lots of methods so that you can carry out this building work, for as an educator I have to think of you all. You do not all have the same temperament, the same needs, the same qualities, the same capacity for work, which is why I have to suggest numerous different methods. I do not tell you to apply them all, as that would be dangerous. It is up to you to see which ones suit you best. You must, of course, always bear in mind the essential rules I have given you concerning how to behave in daily life, but when it comes to the exercises, choose a few and focus on them, so that you go deeply into them. Later, you will be able to leave them and practise others, but do not dissipate your energies, as that would not be good for your balance.

Many disciples of spiritual teachings still do not understand that they ought to be practising simple methods. They dive into works on the Cabbalah, astrology, magic, alchemy, Hinduism or other kinds of spirituality

without having learned humility, purity, patience, kindness or gratitude. They do not know how to be in harmony with other people and the whole of creation, and so they are disturbed and made ill by the least thing: reading indiscriminately has taken them to the edge of an abyss. They had imagined they were going to gain access to great mysteries, solve the enigma of the universe and receive initiation. They thought that, because they were busy with these grandiose plans, they could neglect certain activities in daily life that were unworthy of them, as well as all the elementary truths that could have shed light on their path. But it is these elementary truths that are the most important, and if they had applied them they would have found the right attitude and been protected as they continued their studies.

So, I will say to you too: from now on, have the humility to do some small movements every day with attention and sincerity. Beings of light will come to protect you and divert any energy currents that might disturb or harm you. You will sense when this is happening. Make an effort each day to do at least one exercise. Do you at least say a prayer? Do you read from the **Daily Meditations**? To make any progress you need to be constantly bringing a few essential truths to mind, and you need to be making an effort and doing exercises, so that these truths become a part of everything you do. That is how the Daily Meditations that are prepared each year can help you. And don't read all the passages in one go, as some people have admitted to doing, but one a day, and meditate on them. Each and every day, you must reignite a taste for these truths in your soul.

Humans know many things, but what use is it to them to know these things if they do nothing with them? Choose a virtue like stability, for example, or patience, or kindness or gratitude, and see whether you are able to put it into practice. You come to the Brotherhood – and what a place it is for exercises! There is none better. When you live the collective, fraternal life, you are constantly asked to pay attention to others so as not to disturb or shock them. Just because they are different from you does not mean you have the right to ignore them or clash with them; it is more worthwhile to try to understand them. In this way, you will form a habit that is positive, one that will protect you later from many dangers.

There are some people who are so proud of their social standing and consider themselves so great and important that they think they needn't make any effort with the little ants. But if one day they find themselves having to pick over thousands of grains of wheat, barley or rice in just a few hours, they

will be very happy for these ants to come and help them. Or if they find themselves tied up tight with a rope, a mouse will start gnawing at the rope and free them. You will say, 'But that's just myths and children's fairy tales!' Maybe... These mice and ants are the people you mix with but have little consideration for: who knows whether the small gestures you try to make for them today might not save you later on?

And suppose you are walking along a path, and you move some stones that could have tripped someone up, or some pieces of glass that could have cut them. You do not know what you are gaining inwardly by doing so: perhaps these acts of foresight will also save you one day, because by then foresight will have become a habit. Believe me, people never have enough good habits like these; they seem insignificant, yes, but that is only how they seem.

Do not be surprised if our Teaching insists so much on practice: it is thanks to practice that you will one day have light. I have often reminded you of how primitive peoples lit a fire, and you can try the same thing. One way is to take two pieces of wood and rub them together: the rubbing produces heat, and eventually the heat will suddenly produce a flame and light. The three stages of movement, heat and light have an equivalent in our psychic life: movement (will and action) produces heat (love and feeling), and heat produces light (thought and understanding). So, to arrive at light, we have to activate the will until it produces heat – love – and until this heat, this love, becomes light. When you really apply yourself to doing exercises, you will eventually not be able to do without them, and then one day the light will burst forth.

If you have the willpower to do some exercises every day, you will gradually get the taste for them and love them, and thanks to your love the light will burst forth and their deeper meaning will become real to you. Going to the sunrise early in the morning, eating in silence while concentrating on your food, doing the breathing and gymnastic exercises, meditating, praying and singing – you may not find all these things very inspiring to begin with, but persevere. By doing these exercises, you trigger an internal mechanism, and one day, because of them, you will feel the forces of nature supporting you in your work.

Now, don't tell me that you do not have enough time to devote to exercises, because in the morning you have to go to work, and before you leave you have lots to do, and the same in the evening when you get home... I

will reply that if you do not have time to be in harmony and light, you will always have enough time for troubles, disorders and darkness. If there is one thing in life that is guaranteed, it is that everyone will experience being sad, weak and discouraged. It is less certain that they will be happy, strong and peaceful. Why? Because they keep saying, 'I haven't got time!' It's a convenient way of justifying laziness and inertia. They've got no time to meditate, pray or do exercises to become more robust and more enlightened... What kind of destiny are they preparing for themselves by being like that?

And don't tell me either that you find it boring doing the same exercises all the time, because I will ask you why you don't find it boring eating the same bread and drinking the same water three times a day. Every day, you have more or less the same food to give you strength, so that you can learn, work and love. Each day, you have an appetite for earthly food, so why do you not have the same appetite for spiritual food, which is just as necessary for living?





The gymnastics at the Bonfin, Fréjus

The population of our cells

Who is not convinced that kindness, honesty, selflessness, patience and indulgence are magnificent virtues? Everyone praises those who practise them, but so often they themselves are not kind, honest, selfless, patient or indulgent! And this does not upset them very much; the idea that true understanding can never be separate from the practice of it never enters their mind.

Human beings' intellectual capacities are not just the product of their studies and reflections. They are also the consequence of the good or bad state of all the cells of their physical body. And here again, our gymnastic exercises can be of benefit. When we do our best to make all these harmonious gestures with love, awareness and conviction, we allow an energy current to enter our body. As this current passes through our cells, it magnetizes them in such a way that they become correctly polarized.

Polarization is one of the fundamental laws of life. Everything that exists possesses a positive pole and a negative pole. Ideally, the cells in our body obey this law, with the positive pole in each one facing the negative pole in its neighbour, and so on. So many problems and illnesses that arise are due to the cells no longer being correctly polarized! These problems and illnesses can be treated with magnetism. And what is true magnetism? It is love.

You will almost certainly have experienced feeling suddenly drained of strength for no apparent reason. What has happened is that a negative current has passed through you, a harmful influence that has disrupted your magnetism. Certain feelings, emotions or thoughts can also cause major disorders in the physical body. Anyone who gives way to anger, jealousy, greed or sensuality emits waves that disrupt the harmonious arrangement of the atoms and electrons in their cells. The disruption of this subtle organization is the cause of numerous physical and psychic illnesses.

So, be vigilant: when you experience a problem or an uneasy feeling, or you feel a dark current passing through you, speak to your cells and say to them, 'Come on, calm down. I am sending you waves of harmony and love. Do as you're told, be sensible and get back to work', and concentrate on them until order is restored. Never allow a negative state to become lodged in you, for step by step all your psychic bodies, as well as your physical body, will

become invaded. Our cells are not fused together; imagine them as holding one another's hand. Our body is populated by billions and billions of cells holding hands and singing. And if from time to time you hear any cacophony or screeching, you must immediately try to restore harmony.

Jesus said, *'I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.'* In the same way, we are the shepherd for all the cells in our body. We must protect them from the wolves that try to get into our sheepfold. What are these wolves? There are microbes and viruses, of course, but also harmful spirits from the invisible world, undesirables that try to worm their way into us. Protecting ourselves from the wolf means paying constant attention, being aware and alert at all times. Again, it is only an image, but you need to take it seriously. You are all shepherds: the sheepfold is your body, the sheep are your cells, and you have guard dogs to protect you from the wolf, beings of light that are always ready to intervene. If the wolf comes in, it means you have foolishly opened the gate to it or not reinforced the fence.

A fence is a limit, a barrier, so it is also a protection. It is precisely the role the skin plays for the physical body, and on the spiritual plane it is the aura that provides this protection. The aura is the true fence that keeps us safe from wolves, and we must reinforce it properly and raise it as high as possible. How? Through the work of our heart and mind. The heart keeps the fence strong and fills in any holes so that the fence will resist impact, for love works in a special way by strengthening cells and enabling them to deal with illness and ordeals. As for the mind, enlightened by wisdom, it raises a wall of light that the harmful spirits cannot breach.

So, keep watch over your sheep, your cells, every day, and do your best to give them a good example too. You will say, 'Give a good example to our cells?' Yes, and now I will tell you why and how to do so.

When you are with other people, you try to present a good image of yourself. But when no one is there to see you, what do you do, and what feelings and thoughts do you have? You think you are alone, and you give in to any impulse. You do not know that your cells, which are little living souls, are also endowed with memory: everything is recorded in them, which is why they then reproduce the way you behave. If you have broken any laws, your cells will imitate you, and you will become disturbed and ill, but without understanding why, of course.

So, cells are also like children, in need of education, and the only true education for cells, as for children, is example. You are alone at home, and

apparently nobody is there to see you. But you are quite mistaken; inside you, it is just as if a vast number of eyes are watching you. Be aware of them, and learn to show self-control and wisdom, not only in your gestures and all the ways you express yourself outwardly but also in your thoughts and feelings. Has someone annoyed or irritated you? Instead of brooding on it and staying in a bad mood, call on peace, light and love to come to you, and send them to this person and to all beings you know, even those you don't. This peace, light and love is recorded in your cells, which will take note and imitate you. So, you will benefit.

What else can you learn from the exercises recommended by our Teaching? That it is better to make small amounts of effort each day rather than force yourself to make a spectacular effort once in a while, which would do violence to your physical and psychic bodies. Small amounts of effort made patiently and constantly are what will win the approval of your cells. So, although our gymnastic exercises may seem so simple and insignificant, if you manage to do them every day you will become strong and robust as a result. You need a lot of patience, a lot of tenacity, to remain faithful in the little things, and it is this patience and tenacity that will one day allow you to overcome greater obstacles. People so often prefer the excessive effort of a moment! But the condition for true success in our physical life, as in our spiritual life, is not violent effort but the daily repetition of small efforts. It is like constantly dripping water, which eventually makes a hole in the hardest rock.

So, do not let a single day go by without making small amounts of effort. The gymnastic exercises offer you a magnificent opportunity for this. Do them with the conviction that not only are they keeping you flexible, they are also improving your breathing and your circulation and bringing you into harmony with the universe. They attract cosmic energies to you and distribute them harmoniously throughout your body, so that your cells feel regenerated and bathed in joy.

Part Two

Inhabiting sacred figures

Introduction

Symbols, the language of Cosmic Intelligence

How can we define the symbols used in Initiatic Science? For the initiates, a symbol is a form that manifests a reality of the spiritual world. A symbol has its origins in a quintessence, an idea, and this quintessence, this idea, incarnates on the physical plane. An idea in itself has no form; it is simply a force, an energy current, but it can be given form by a symbolic figure. As soon as the idea takes form and appears to us and we try to understand it and put it to work in us, it takes over our entire being and projects us to the realms where it originated from.

A symbol is an idea made flesh, a spirit that comes to incarnate. Through this flesh – this symbolic body – we must try to retrieve the idea, the force, the energy, that exists on high. As we learn to decipher symbols, so we become familiar with the language of Cosmic Intelligence.

The fact that the realities of the psychic life can appear to us in this way in symbolic form means that there is a relationship between the human subconscious and the universal Soul. And because the same laws govern the universe and all creatures, it is possible intuitively to find certain correspondences between the world of ideas and the different realms of nature. It is this intuition that the initiates possessed, and they bequeathed us their discoveries. But as this symbolic language is the expression of life at its most essential and mysterious, it is not enough to have an intellectual knowledge of it to understand it. To understand the symbols, you have to live them. If you do not live them, you will never understand them, even if you are given all possible interpretations. If you want to know the true meaning of symbols, you have to go deep inside yourself and live them.

Symbols, and particularly geometric figures, are a summation of everything, condensed and reduced to the simplest lines, but the greatest riches are hidden in them. I personally nourish my soul with symbols every day.

In order to channel water, we dig ditches and furrows, and to light our houses we install electrical circuits. Examples like these help you to understand that you too must install channels and circuits within yourself to allow you to pick up and circulate divine energies. If you have not anticipated or prepared anything, how will all the energies travelling through the atmosphere find their way into you? If you take the gymnastic exercises seriously, you will sense that they are a method for picking up these energies:

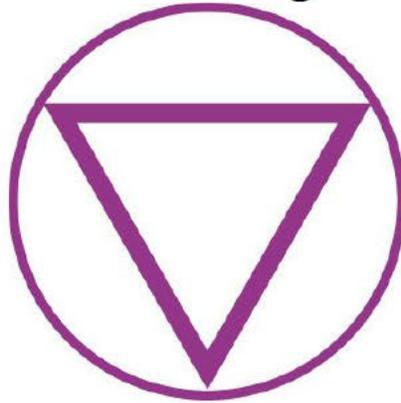
the geometric figures that correspond to the different movements relate to spiritual forces and entities. And when you trace these figures in space, you are attracting the forces and entities to which they are linked, so that they can work in you.

While you are doing these exercises, think that what you are doing is bringing signs and figures to life. Sometimes they will take you to unexplored realms of your soul, and at other times they will help you to incarnate, in you and on earth, a strength, quality, virtue or idea that lives in the divine world.



The gymnastics at the Bonfin, Fréjus

First exercise: the triangle of the spirit



If we are to master a situation, the time to do it is at the beginning. A whole chain of facts and events depends on how things began. So, when we want our actions to be full of divine grace for ourselves and all creatures, before we do anything we must ask for heaven's blessings.

In the first book of the *Zohar*, or the Book of Splendour, it is written: *'Already, two thousand years before the world was created, the letters (of the alphabet) were hidden, and the holy One, may he be blessed, contemplated them and took delight in them.'* And when he wanted to create the world, all the letters came to him, but in reverse order, and revealed to him their qualities, to show him that they deserved to be there at the origin of his creation. One after the other, God dismissed them, until the second letter, beth, presented itself. It said, 'Master of the universe, will you please place me first in the creation of the world, since I represent the blessings (berakoth) offered to you from above and below.' And God replied, 'You are the one I will employ to carry out the creation of the world, and so the work of creation will be based on you.' And in fact the first two words in the book of Genesis begin with the letter beth: 'Bereschit bara'. The letter beth, which is the letter of blessings, is also the letter of beginnings.

When we perform the first exercise of the gymnastics, we say in our mind, *'May all the blessings of heaven pour down on us and on all of humanity, for the glory of our heavenly Father.'*

All human beings are inhabited by the divine spirit as their higher self, but in order to feel its presence they must place themselves at its service. When they do so, not only do they clear a path for it to their consciousness, they also allow it to come down into the matter of their physical body. When we raise our arms, we are sending out a call to our higher self, to our spirit, to ask it to come into all the cells of our organs and also into every human being

serving the divine will. Heaven is ready to pour all its blessings on us, but in order to receive these we must understand the nature of spirit's work on matter.

We can observe this work of the creative spirit, God, the masculine principle, on matter, the feminine principle, in all parts of the universe. And because human beings have been created in the image of God, they are constantly reproducing this work of spirit on matter, no matter what they are doing. Even when a farm worker uses a plough to till the soil, or a mother prepares a meal for her family, or a craftsperson makes an object, in some way their spirit is acting on matter. And when you decide to work on yourself to improve your character and behaviour, this is also your spirit acting on your matter. You become polarized: the emissive, positive pole, the spirit within you, acts on the receptive, negative pole, your psychic matter.

So, spiritual work requires us, first of all, to distinguish between our spiritual self and our material self. We have to distance ourselves from this material self to be able to come closer to our higher self, our divine self. That is when the true work of spirit on matter begins – the work of our spirit on our matter. Thanks to the efforts we make to touch this summit within us, we generate a light and we arouse a force, which comes down into our body to enliven all our cells.

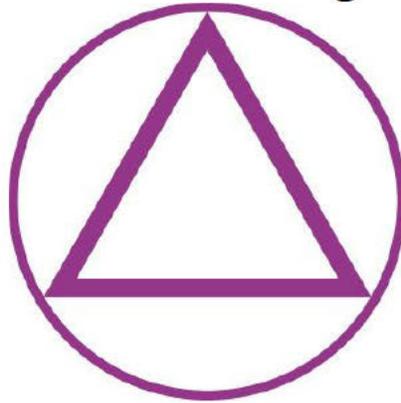
This descent of the spirit within us occurs progressively. How? I will give you an image. You know how to light a wood fire. You use a match to set paper alight: the fire spreads to twigs, the twigs set branches alight, and the branches set large logs alight. To understand the connection between us and this fire, we have to apply the law of analogy. We have a physical body and, beyond it, other increasingly subtle bodies: the astral, mental and causal bodies. So, let's say that the lit match corresponds to the causal body, the spirit, which is the cause of all phenomena. The causal body sets the mental body (the mind) alight, which sets the astral body (the heart) alight, which sets the physical body alight.

So, everything begins above, in the causal body, the spirit; then the spiritual fire moves from body to body until it eventually reaches the physical body. No true fulfilment is possible on the physical plane all the while we have not begun to work with the spirit, as it is the spirit that gives the impulse from above.

'May the blessings of heaven pour down on us and on the whole of humanity.' To receive these blessings, you must strive to work for the light,

to make sacrifices for the light. Each time you make a sacrifice, each time you give up a weakness or let go of a bad habit, it is as if you are lighting a fire high inside you. The fire will move down through your different bodies and one day reach your physical body, bringing with it purification and light. At that moment you will feel all heaven's blessings flowing within you.

Second exercise: the triangle of matter



This exercise involves moving our hands up from our feet to just above our head while saying in our mind, ‘May all my cells be magnetized, vivified and resuscitated, for the glory of our heavenly Father.’ By doing this, we are directing our energies to the top of our head so as to awaken our most spiritual faculties. Symbolically, this summit within us represents God. The life we receive has its source in God, and we must send it back to him so that it will find its original purity once more.

It rarely occurs to anyone to find ways for the currents of life passing through them to rise again to the divine Source. God gave them this life, but they spend their time wasting it in activities that are so much less important than the life itself! Since they are alive, they think that anything is allowed. And when, after exhausting themselves satisfying their desires and ambitions, they are one day forced to take stock, they realize they have lost almost everything and gained very little. What sense is there in acting that way?

We can compare the human being to a skyscraper: each floor of this building is occupied by inhabitants that have to be fed energy. The last floor is the brain. But what is there left for the brain’s inhabitants, if all the water, the vital fluid, is used to feed only those living on the lower floors – the instincts, passions and selfish desires? The poor ones at the top are numb, paralysed; they can no longer produce anything. To be able to evolve, we have to learn to direct our energies to the higher regions. Then these energies will awaken faculties in the brain cells that no one even suspects exist.

We receive our life from God, but we can only fully benefit from his riches if we learn to return it to the Source. And when I say the Source, God, I mean the summit of our being. It requires great know-how to direct energies upwards to feed the brain cells. And the two areas where this knowledge is most necessary are nutrition and sexuality.

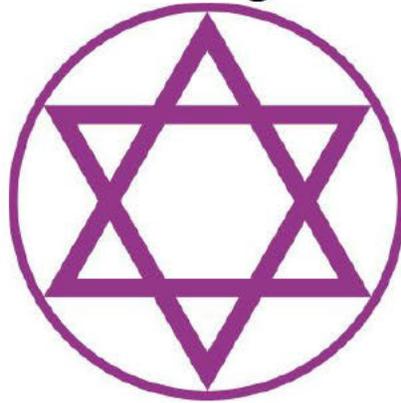
When initiates give instructions concerning control of the sexual force, it is not their purpose to bully people by depriving them of pleasures they obviously have a right to experience. When they teach that sexual energies can be sublimated, it is because they know there are other possibilities besides allowing these energies to be expressed below. When men and women understand these energies and treat them properly, they can use them to awaken higher faculties. These enable them to carry out spiritual work of the greatest importance, and that is where they will experience true joy.

The yogis in India have revealed a great deal about this, and I have spoken to you about the kundalini force, the chakras and tantric practices. But I will repeat what I have already told you: it is dangerous for westerners to throw themselves into these practices, unless they have first made great efforts to practise purification and self-control. I myself have given you methods that will offend no one.

Love can be compared to a tree, where the roots represent sexuality. These roots are deeply buried in human beings; they cannot uproot them, and they must not try to, as they are indispensable, just as roots are indispensable to the tree. But the way they must explore love is by seeking always to go further and higher than the roots, up into the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the flowers and the fruit. And the work of disciples is to learn to control and make use of the underground forces they draw up through their roots, so that, at the summit of their being, they will produce flowers and fruit.

As you perform this second gymnastic exercise, think that it is your task to protect, purify and sanctify the life God has given you, and you do this by continually directing it upwards. It is this illumined, enlightened, intense life that will be of greatest benefit to you and all those around you.

The meeting of the two triangles: the seal of Solomon



Master Peter Deunov said, *‘The positive energy of the sun and the negative energy of the earth attract each other. Where they meet, the process is triggered by which rain is born and falls to earth.’* Let’s interpret this image. The negative energy of the earth is that of our purely human nature; the positive energy of the sun, that of our divine nature. When these two energies meet, they produce rain, which we can take to mean a lifegiving element. In fact, rain is hugely beneficial for the growth and blossoming of vegetation in the whole of nature!

Symbolically, the first two exercises enable the meeting between earth and sun; we could also say between earth and heaven. With the first movement, we draw the energy currents down from heaven to earth, and in the second we raise them from earth to heaven. The meeting of these two movements, of these two currents, occurs in the solar plexus, and from this meeting bursts forth the water of life. Jesus said, *‘Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’* The belly – or guts, according to other translations – is the area of the solar plexus. When the descending and ascending currents intersect harmoniously in our solar plexus, it is as if a spring of water is opening inside us, and beneficial waves spread throughout our body.

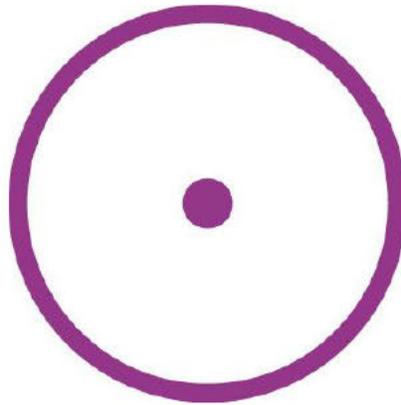
With the movement of the first exercise, from high to low, we bring spirit down into matter, and with the second, from low to high, we raise matter back up to spirit. The meeting within us of these two currents brings us fulfilment. And I must recommend that you do these first two exercises in the order I have just indicated. Try not to reverse them, consciously or unconsciously. You have to begin with the descending movement and continue with the ascending movement. Why? Because it is a cosmic law: spirit must descend, for involution to take place, so that matter can rise and evolve.

Matter is inert, unformed, and spirit comes down into it to give it life and fashion it. We can observe this process everywhere in numerous aspects of nature. Spirit comes down to animate matter – this is involution; matter, animated by spirit, rises again – this is evolution. No evolution would be possible if there had not first been involution. Otherwise, where would these forces, these energies that have allowed forms to diversify and be refined, come from?

The evolution of material forms – of stones, plants, animals and humans – has been able to take place only because of the descent of the spirit. That is another illustration of the symbolism of the two triangles. The triangle pointing downwards is the symbol for the spirit, the masculine principle, which comes down into matter to animate it and give it life; the triangle pointing upwards is the symbol for matter, the feminine principle, which wants to evolve and join the spirit again. The meeting of the two triangles, symbolized by the seal of Solomon, represents the perfect union of spirit and matter. It is this meeting and interpenetration of the two triangles, the two principles, that creates the magical power of the seal of Solomon.

If you are unable to do all the gymnastic exercises for one reason or another (lack of time, physical impairment), try at least to do the first two. This will have a good effect on your solar plexus, which is your true energy reserve, and you will feel in a good mood for the rest of the day.

Third exercise: the solar disc



This exercise involves swinging our right and left arms alternately forward in circles from behind our body, while saying in our mind, ‘May I swim in the ocean of cosmic light, for the glory of our heavenly Father.’

In the book of Genesis, it is written that on the first day of creation God called the light: ‘*Let there be light!*’ So, at the origin of the created universe is light. Light is the subtlest state of matter. What we call matter is in reality only condensed light. Even the physical world as we know it is a condensation of the primordial light, but in an extremely dense state.

We are not naturally able to see this primordial light, because our physical vision is limited. We have not developed the organs of spiritual vision that would allow us to discover the reality of this light. And yet, in exceptional circumstances, certain beings have been able to experience it. In the accounts of mystics, the word that comes up the most often is ‘light’. This is precisely because the mystical experience is the discovery of the true reality of the world, and this true reality is light.

Let’s focus now on the circles we make alternately with our right and left arms. The circle is a geometric figure in which all points of the circumference are at an equal distance from the central point. There is great science contained in this figure. The circle is the symbol for the universe, and the central point represents the supreme Being who gives it life and sustains it. Because the centre is equidistant from all points on the periphery, it keeps the circle balanced. Between the central point and the periphery continuous exchanges take place, and these exchanges produce and maintain life.

The figure of a circle with a central point is also used traditionally to represent the sun, the centre of our universe and the source of light. In the sun, the ideas of circle and light meet. In the morning, you go to see the sunrise: a luminous sphere emerges slowly from the darkness, until its

brilliance fills the whole of space. Immerse yourself in this light, as if in an ocean of vibrating, throbbing life. Gradually you will feel as if you are swimming in it, merging with it, breathing and drinking it.

As you are doing this third exercise, try to relive the sensations you experience at the sunrise. Let yourself become absorbed in the light, until all your cares and sorrows eventually dissolve in it.

When you have learned to merge with the light, it will accompany you everywhere. This is also why you should concentrate on light, each day, several times a day, when you have a few minutes: imagine the entire universe and all the creatures in it bathed in light. And whenever you experience the kind of tiredness and discouragement that threatens to destroy your faith, your hope and your love, think of doing this work with the light; it will give meaning back to your life.

Fourth exercise: Schin



In this exercise, we raise our arms horizontally right, then left, as if we were scything, and we say, ‘May all my ties with evil be severed, for the glory of our heavenly Father.’

So many people stifle the voice within them that aspires to rise higher! They do not realize to what extent they are bound hand and foot. Because they are not forced to serve a tyrant or to be prisoners or slaves, they think they are free. Yes, but how are they really, deep down? They are often like domestic animals – goats or horses, say – tethered to a post by a rope a few metres long. They are only as free as the rope they are tethered to allows them to move about. If they want to move to another place, they soon realize they cannot. Of course, no one feels limited if they have no ambition beyond the satisfaction of their material appetites or crude desires, but if one day they happen to aspire to contacting subtler regions within themselves, then they cannot help but notice how bound and powerless they are. True freedom consists in not being held captive by any ties, whether physical or psychic.

‘May all my ties with evil be severed.’ We say this formula in our mind as we make the scything movement. This gesture is similar to the letter schin (ש) in the Hebrew alphabet. This letter is at the centre of Jesus’ name. In fact, Jesus’ name in Hebrew, yod heh schin vav heh (יהושה׳), is made up of the four letters of the name of God, yod heh vav heh (יהוה), to which the letter schin (ש) has been added at the centre.

What connection is there between Jesus’ mission and the letter schin, which is shaped like a trident? The trident is the sceptre of Neptune, the sign of his power over the waters. Furthermore, the depths of the sea were thought by the ancients to be inhabited by monsters, and in psychology they are associated with the abysses of the subconscious, inhabited by dark powers that not only torment humans but threaten to overwhelm them.

Initiatic Science reveals to us that before the arrival of Jesus the path of evolution was obstructed by monstrous entities that fed on the blood of victims offered to the gods. Before Jesus, all religions practised blood sacrifices, and the spirits of the lower astral region, the larvae and elementals that fed on the emanations produced by the blood of the victims, continued to multiply, forming a dark, slimy atmosphere around humans. In order to repel these entities obstructing the path, Jesus was willing to give his own blood, by submitting to be crucified, in place of the blood of the victims the entities fed on. Yes, it is a great mystery: the power of blood. And the Gospels tell us that in the garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus began to feel the agony of death, already 'his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.'

Jesus had attained such a degree of purity that his blood had become a condensation of divine life. When the entities of the astral world smelled this blood, they rushed to drink it, and it produced the same effect on them as liquor that was too strong for them. It was as if they were drunk, chloroformed; they were unable to resist and they freed the way.

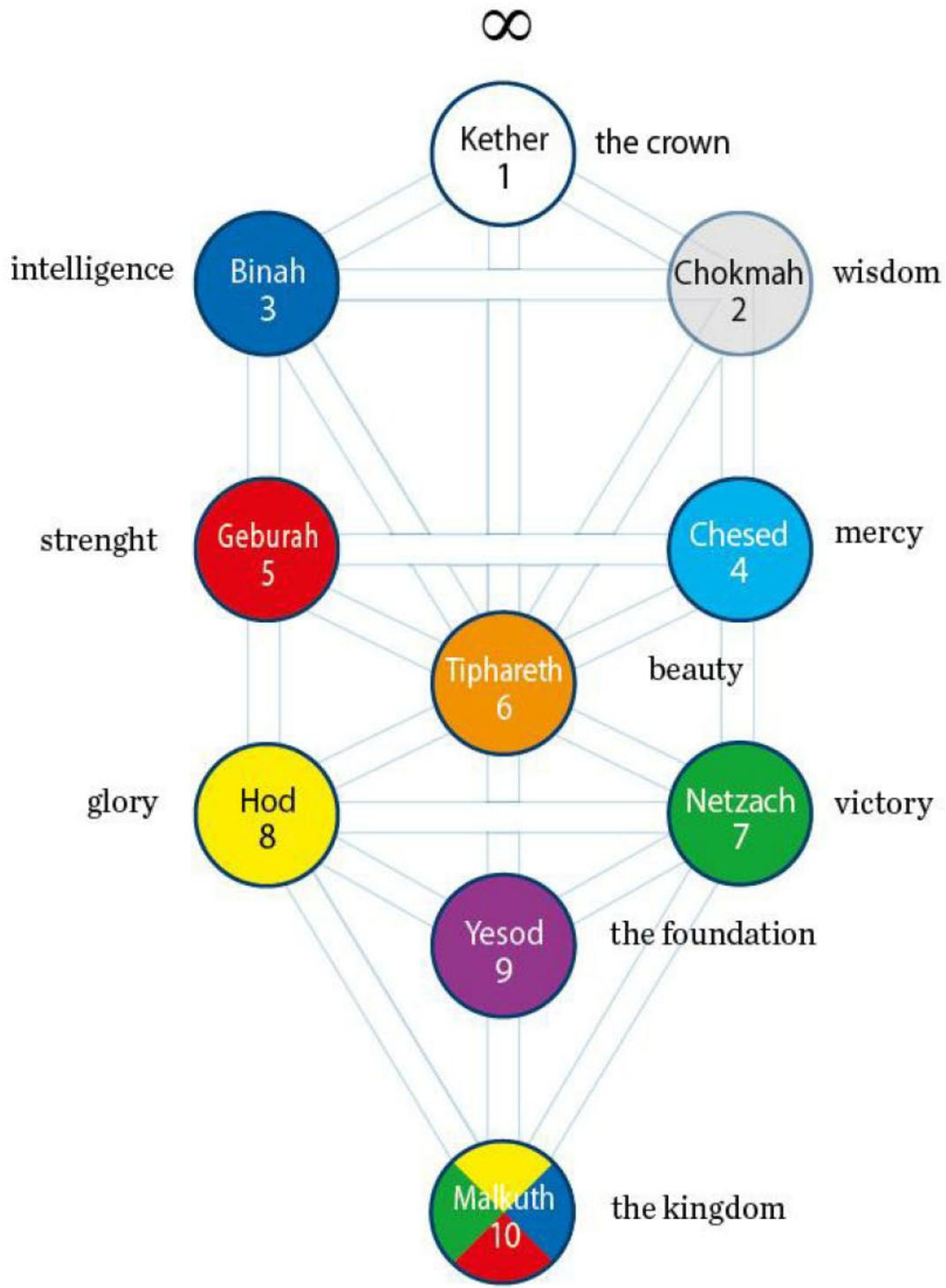
Jesus sacrificed himself to free the path leading to the divine world. The five letters of his name have the power of a pentacle – the pentagram. This sacred sign is used by initiates as a protection against dark entities. And when they throw forward their hand to ward off danger, the five fingers also form a pentagram. On the sephirothic Tree, the number 5 is the number for the sephirah Geburah, 'strength'. The mission of the angels of Geburah, the seraphim (meaning 'ablaze'), is to fight evil. We can invoke them as well to help us cut negative ties.

What are these negative ties that need to be cut? The present lifetime of any human being is in large part determined by the nature of the ties formed during previous lifetimes. Yes, the difficulties and torments, satisfactions and successes you encounter now in your physical and psychic life come from these visible and invisible ties you contracted in the past. Knowing that, you must be vigilant and take care when you form bonds. Whether you are aware of it or not, each day, you are constantly relating with human beings, invisible entities, nature and the whole universe. So, start by reviewing the ties you have already contracted. Decide which are good to keep, and strengthen these, and cut those that are bad.

But cutting ties is a whole science. You cannot detach yourself from a thing or a being if you have not first taken the precaution of attaching

yourself to another. You cannot detach yourself from everything, as absolute detachment does not exist. Whatever you do, you will always be 'attached', and that is where you need to have a clear head and be careful. Are you tormented by a passion or person you want to free yourself from? To succeed, you cannot just decide to be free. The only solution is to try to attach yourself to another activity or person that is the opposite of the one that has you captive. Make an ally of them, and they will act as a beneficial power to help free you from what is tormenting you.

There is no such thing as absolute freedom; the law of attraction rules everywhere, and if you want to free yourself from darkness you have to work with light, because only light has the chemical (or physical) properties to dispel darkness. When you have succeeded in linking yourself to the light, it keeps you within its field of attraction; you can no longer leave it, and the negative ties are cut.



The sephirotic Tree

¹ Hebrew is read from right to left.

Fifth exercise: the caduceus of Hermes



While we are doing this exercise, alternating between our right and left leg, in our mind we say the formula, ‘May perfect balance reign throughout my being, for the glory of our heavenly Father.’

This exercise is not as easy to do as the others, as we have to be careful throughout not to lose our balance. With our hands on our shoulders, we stand first on our left leg, then on our right, while making several movements with the opposite leg and, at the same time, spontaneously adjusting our upper body to keep our balance.

Our physical balance is dependent on the healthy functioning of the centre situated in our inner ear. And the reason the initiates associated wisdom symbolically with the ears is because wisdom is the virtue that also allows us to maintain psychic balance in all life’s circumstances. You should never lose sight of the analogies that exist between the physical world and the psychic world. This is why I want to show you that there are more lessons to learn from this fifth exercise. When your lower nature, represented here by the legs, tries to express itself, your higher nature, represented by the upper body and the arms, must immediately respond to restore balance. It is your higher nature that will keep you in the regions of light. If you are not vigilant, an impulse of anger, fear, bitterness or discouragement can knock you off balance for the slightest thing.

How often I have told you that examples from everyday life are what make me reflect on the problems of the psychic life – and they solve them for me! I find these examples everywhere – even at the circus. I have sometimes watched tightrope walkers and admired the ease with which they walk, jump and dance on their rope. To be able to perform these acts with so much precision, suppleness and grace requires such hard work! Their freedom of movement comes from practising over a long period not to get distracted by

outside elements that would otherwise make them lose their concentration and get thrown to the ground. So, to be able to remain in the higher regions, you too must keep yourself safe from any disturbance by remaining aware, attentive and vigilant. At the slightest warning sign, make very sure that your mind does not move away from these regions of light and inner silence.

Existence is a tightrope, along which we walk, pulled this way and that by opposing impulses. Every day we have to maintain a balance between our lower nature and our higher nature, but also between our heart and mind, the two pans of our inner scales. If our heart is too partial and our feelings have too much say, it is important to get our intellect, our mind, to intervene, and vice versa. There is always something to add or take away.

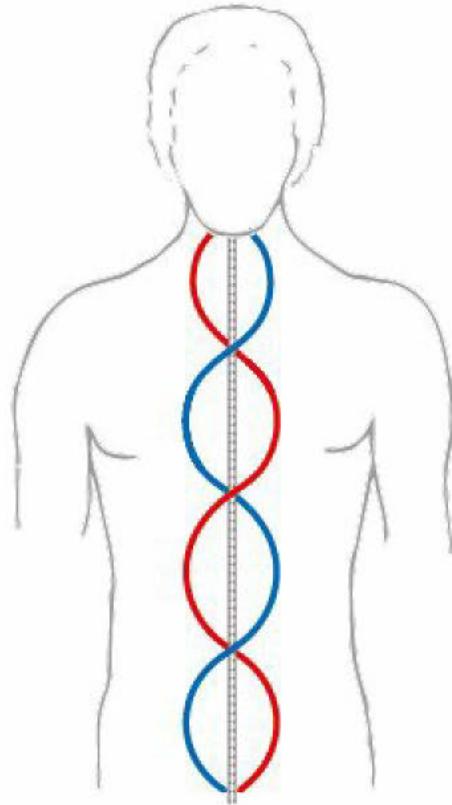
We have two feet for walking, which we move one after the other. In the same way, on the psychic plane, we must move forward by calling alternately on our heart and mind. When and how much the heart or mind should intervene is a difficult question. It is rare to meet people who have been able to develop the qualities of heart and mind harmoniously, who are able to be perceptive and rigorous while remaining lenient, flexible and open to others. To succeed in this, it is necessary to learn to consciously alternate activities that nourish the heart with those that nourish the mind.

Another aspect of the balance we must acquire is provided by the very structure of our bodies. We find this structure represented in the caduceus of Hermes, which doctors and chemists have made the symbol of their profession. Study of the human brain shows us that the functions of the two hemispheres are not identical: the left hemisphere is the seat of the analytical faculties (logic, reasoning), which we can describe as masculine, and the right hemisphere is the seat of the synthesizing faculties (intuition, sensitivity), which we can describe as feminine. So, the two hemispheres complement one another as regards their activities, and our psyche can be said to be based on the masculine and feminine, positive and negative, polarities, which we must constantly keep in balance.

In the symbol of the caduceus of Hermes, two curving lines cross at different places along the central staff. These curved lines are not randomly placed. They correspond to two serpents, two energy currents, which circulate by passing alternately from one side of our spine to the other. The Hindus call them *ida* and *pingala*, and the central channel inside the spine they call *sushumna*.

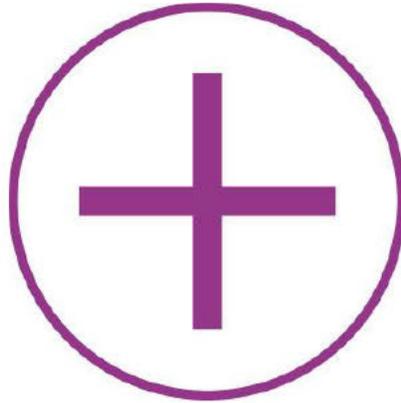
When we do our breathing exercises each day, it is these two currents, the

ida and pingala, that we activate: we close the left nostril and breathe air in through the right; then we close the right nostril and breathe air out through the left. Then we do the opposite: we close the right nostril and breathe in through the left, and then we close the left nostril and breathe out through the right. These breathing exercises help the two currents – the masculine, positive current and the feminine, negative current – to flow properly along our spine, and they play a part in maintaining both our physical and our psychic balance.



Ida (in red) and pingala (in blue), on alternate sides of the sushumna

Sixth exercise: the cross



The sixth exercise is performed with the right knee bent and is in two parts. In the first part, you breathe out as you throw your arms forward, and in your mind you say, 'May all negativity in me be expelled'. Then, in the second part, you bring your hands back to your face and then open them wide as you breathe out and say in your mind, 'May all the enemies of the Universal White Brotherhood be put to flight, banished, for the glory of our heavenly Father'.

But be very clear that when we mention the Universal White Brotherhood, we are not thinking of the handful of men and women in the association of this name. The true Universal White Brotherhood is not here below, on earth, but on high: it is formed of all the saints, prophets, initiates and great Masters. These are the glorified souls connecting humanity with the angelic hierarchies. We here on the earth are only, in some ways, a society seeking to benefit from their support and light, so that we can execute their plans.

And when we mention the enemies of the Universal White Brotherhood, be clear about that too: we are not thinking of human beings but of the evil spirits that infiltrate them to fight good and the light. As St Paul says, 'For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.' So, we are not declaring war on humans but on the evil spirits acting through them.

In the Gospels, Jesus says, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.' That means that human beings are constituted in such a way that they harbour different kinds of entities. And although it is possible that these entities may be the Lord, the Holy Spirit and the Christ, unfortunately they may also be infernal spirits. Several passages in the Gospels mention Jesus freeing men or women from demons: Mary Magdalen, the man from Gerasa

and many others. These demons, these undesirables, are creatures of a lower order that make their home in human beings to encourage them to act in ways that are harmful for themselves and others.

I do not want to describe these spirits to you, because speaking of them strengthens them. I will only say that those people who indulge in thoughts, feelings and actions of a selfish, hostile and wicked nature prepare the conditions for these spirits to come. Another way of saying this is that each time disciples of the Universal White Brotherhood have not been vigilant enough, they too attract enemies, and these enemies destroy the good work being done by them and in the world.

How can these dark spirits be repelled? You will sometimes hear stories of crosses that drive out demons. No, no cross, whether made of wood, iron or gold, has ever driven out demons. The only cross that can put them to flight is the living cross of the human being. For the human being is a cross. When we open our arms wide, we become a cross in space and we connect with the four cardinal points. And the movements we make with our arms in this sixth exercise also form a cross. But to be able to repel everything negative and dark, we have to have worked for a long time beforehand to purify ourselves.

I have shown you numerous methods of purification, particularly methods relating to the four elements – earth, water, air and fire. These elements are also depicted as three crosses on the circle of the twelve signs of the zodiac. You can look out these exercises and practise them.

The four elements are ruled by four angels, and you can also turn to them for help. Ask the Lord for these angels to help you; say to him:

‘Almighty Lord God, Creator of heaven and earth, Master of the universe, I ask you to send me your servants, the four angels.

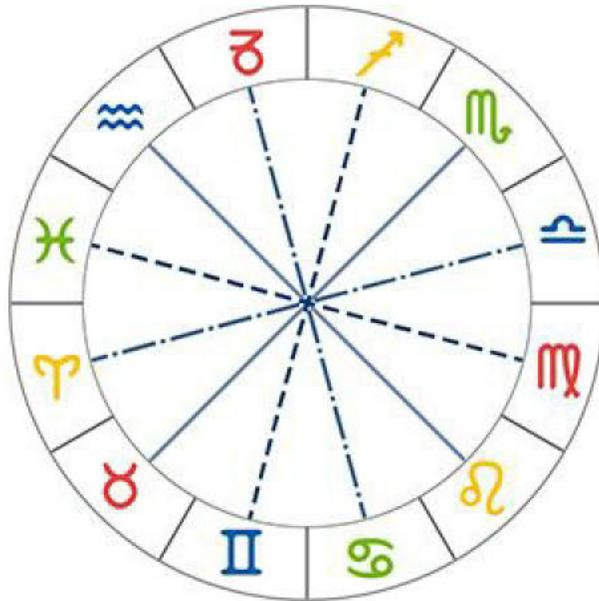
May the angel of earth absorb all that is unclean in my physical body, so that it can become your temple and express your will.

May the angel of water wash all stains from my heart, so that selfless love can dwell there.

May the angel of air purify my mind, so that it shines with wisdom and light.

May the angel of fire sanctify my soul and spirit, so that they become the dwelling-place of your truth. Amen.’

The purified, sanctified human being is the true cross, the living cross with arms extended, projecting beams of light in space in all four directions.



The three crosses of the four elements (fire, air, water, earth) as depicted on the zodiac.

Eighth exercise: infinity



We raise our arms on either side, then as we slowly bring our hands down over our ears and chest, we say in our mind, ‘May the blessings of heaven pour down on us and on all of humanity, for the glory of our heavenly Father.’ In this eighth exercise, the figure we are tracing in space is a horizontal 8: ∞, which is used by mathematicians to symbolize infinity.

The figure 8 is formed of two circles placed one above the other and touching at one point. The higher circle represents the world above, the lower circle the world below, and these two worlds are connected. The two circles of the figure 8 are exactly symmetrical, illustrating the principle expressed by Hermes Trismegistus in the Emerald Tablet: ‘Everything below is like what is above, and everything above is like what is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.’ The lower circle is like the one above, and because they touch, in effect they accomplish the miracle of one thing.

We find this same idea in the Lord’s Prayer, where Jesus said, ‘*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*’ His wish was for the world above to come down into the world below, so that the earth could one day be an exact reflection of heaven. Heaven above must come down to the earth. And the earth also includes us humans; our mission is to connect heaven to earth and earth to heaven within ourselves by manifesting the virtues of heaven on earth.

When we write the figure 8, we start at the top, and following a circular path we return to the top: everything that comes from on high must return there. This is also the sense of the first two gymnastic exercises, where the first draws down currents from above, and the second causes currents to rise up from below. Whether we use the symbols of the two triangles or the two circles of the figure 8, it is the same process: energies come down and rise again, and the descending and ascending currents come together at the centre

in the solar plexus. A balance is established between high and low, which is why there can be harmonious exchanges between them.

In this last movement of our gymnastic exercises, we no longer bring our arms right back down, as we did in the first two exercises: each arm describes a circle either side of the body at the same height. So, we are drawing a horizontal 8, which is the symbol of infinity: ∞ . The balance that exists between the higher and lower parts of the vertical 8 is found again in the horizontal 8, reminding us of the two pans of the scales, the symbol for cosmic balance.

The two pans of the scales also find their correspondence on the sephirotic Tree: the two pillars, known as yakin (the pillar of mercy) and boaz (the pillar of severity), are situated on either side of the central pillar, the pillar of balance. At the top, beyond the first sephirah, Kether, in the region they call ain soph aur, 'limitless light', the cabbalists placed the sign of infinity¹. But in infinity there is no longer either high or low, right or left: we are entering a mysterious, unknown dimension.

¹ [See the diagram of the sephirotic Tree](#)

Part Three

Every gesture we make resonates in space

We learn from an initiatic teaching that whatever we do is only truly meaningful if we strive to live simultaneously on all three levels – the physical, the psychic and the spiritual. This is why we do not view the gymnastic exercises as simply physical exercises: we put our heart, mind, soul and spirit into them as well. Only then will they have the most beneficial effects on us, on the whole Brotherhood and, beyond that, on so many other creatures in the world.

Anyone can do these exercises alone at home, and this is mostly what happens. But when we come together during congresses and do these exercises all together, we become a formidable collective power: each gesture, multiplied by hundreds of brothers and sisters, produces waves, which spread a long way out into space. The greater the number of us who do these exercises with the desire to create currents of love and harmony, the more powerful will be the life-enhancing waves breaking over humanity, and millions of souls will wake up to the new life and will work for the coming of the kingdom of God.

Just because each human being is a distinct individual does not mean that each individual is separate from the others. Even if you cannot see it or feel it, somewhere on the subtle planes you are all linked to every other being, and everything you do affects them in some way or another. As you become more attentive and more enlightened, even without either you or them being aware of it, you communicate to them some of the riches and light you have received. Because of the progress you make, they progress too. Likewise, if you begin to grow dark in yourself, they become subject to unhealthy influences because of you. Whatever you do, you are responsible.

And that is true responsibility. We say that someone who is a director, business manager, minister or head of state has great responsibilities. Yes, but that is nothing compared to the responsibility all humans carry in relation to one another. Unfortunately, most do not know this, and this ignorance is the cause of much suffering. So, if you want to be useful and of benefit to others, try to make everything you do an opportunity to raise yourself up spiritually, because, even imperceptibly, you will be taking other beings with you.

When you are about to begin the gymnastic exercises, be conscious of the fact that your hands are like antennae, able to pick up energy currents from space and also send them out. But if you want to be able, one day, to attract

and send out only beneficial currents, you must begin by paying great attention to all the gestures you make in daily life, since each gesture, however insignificant, produces a sound, a vibration. Yes, each gesture resonates in space.

You receive a spiritual teaching, but do not make the mistake many spiritual people make and neglect the physical plane on the pretext of giving priority to spirit. Whatever task you are performing, give it all your attention. Try to make moderate, harmonious gestures, in the knowledge that you are setting in motion forces and elements that allow you to transpose what you are doing onto the spiritual level and so attain higher degrees of life. I would even say that any everyday task, like sweeping, washing up, doing the laundry and so on, can be spiritualized if you know how to inject a divine element into it. On the other hand, prayer, meditation or any other so-called 'spiritual' practice becomes extremely prosaic if it does not serve a higher ideal.

Spirituality does not consist in devoting oneself to particular activities to the exclusion of others. True spirituality consists in working with the light and for the light, in other words, in using whatever work we are doing as a means for bringing our thoughts, feelings and gestures into line with cosmic harmony. Each gesture you imbue with a divine idea is written in the archives of your higher consciousness, which is where love, hope, joy and all beneficial energies spring from. So, however modest the task you are performing, try to do it with the conviction that you are playing an active part in the good order of things and in the harmony of heaven and of the earth.

Part Four

Description of the gymnastic exercises

(related notes compiled by the editor)

Breathing

‘Breathing is such a natural, instinctual act that few people are conscious of doing it. And yet, they could derive such benefits from breathing consciously – benefits for physical health, of course, but not only that. When we really understand about breathing and do it consciously and deeply, it can bring many improvements to our psychic and spiritual life. It acts not only on our physical body but also on our heart and mind and, higher still, on our soul and spirit. As Indian yogis have long taught, the functioning of our subtle bodies and chakras depends on our breathing.

Breathing is a key. Those who know how to use it also possess the secret of how to make contact with spiritual entities and gain benefit from their knowledge and powers.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Three important notes

1

Before we begin any exercise, the Master advises us to become aware of our breathing.

‘Put aside all your worries, and relax. Bring your attention to your breathing to the exclusion of all else. Be conscious only of your breathing. It brings a harmonious rhythm to your thoughts, feelings and gestures. A sense of wellbeing settles in you, and now you can begin the exercise.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Breathing consciously will be easier if you make sure, before you do any movements, that your weight is evenly distributed and your posture is good, with your back straight and your eyes on the horizon. Then, without moving, begin to take a few deep breaths, gently and slowly.

Between the exercises, make sure you are standing in a stable, relaxed position, and take another deep breath. This will allow you to perform the movements with a greater freedom of movement and precision, and you will have better results.

Throughout the exercise, keep the natural rhythm of your breathing, so that you always feel comfortable.

2

The Master describes the basic principle concerning the rhythm of our

breathing as we do the gymnastic exercises:

‘During these exercises, try to harmonize your breathing and your gestures: breathe in when you raise your arms, hold your breath for a moment, and do not breathe out again until you lower your arms. So, you breathe in as you stretch and breathe out as you bend your body. When you link your gestures correctly to your breathing, the meaning of the movements will become clear to you and the results will be better.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Breathe in through your nose.

Breathe out more slowly through your mouth.

This way of practising breathing helps you distinguish between its different stages.

Exercises 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 begin on an inbreath.

Remember to breathe out consciously before you begin; you will be more relaxed and ready to breathe in again.

3

The Master gave a formula to say in our mind for each of the eight exercises, so that our thinking would be part of the gymnastic movements. This association between ‘breath and awareness’ maximizes the potential effects of each movement and imbues our whole being with the meaning of these words.

‘Our breathing keeps us alive – the ebb and flow, alternately emptying and filling us, is a universal law of nature. Humans, animals, plants, even stones, all breathe. It is breathing that maintains and renews the life of each creature.

And, through our breathing, we humans are able not only to draw on energies that improve our health but also to develop certain qualities and find solutions to many of our problems.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Description of the exercises

Introduction

In 1937 Mikhaël Aïvanhov left Bulgaria with a mission: to make the teaching of his Master, Peter Deunov¹, known in France². Gymnastic exercises form part of Peter Deunov's teaching³. They consist of very simple harmonious movements. Although they keep the physical body fit, their main function is to release and strengthen psychic and spiritual energy. This is why each one is accompanied by a formula to be said inwardly.

During the years that followed, Master Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov felt the need to make a few small modifications to these exercises, including formulating the prayers that accompany them. But the most important addition was his description of how each movement can be seen to correspond to a symbolic figure⁴. So, these gymnastics could be called 'prayer in movement'.

For the nature and aim of these exercises to be understood, they need to be seen in the light of the list of human activities presented by Master Aïvanhov in what he called 'the synoptic table'⁵. This table gives an insight into the structure of the human being and the different activities that correspond to this structure. The table consists of five columns.

- The first column shows the six principles that go to make up the human being: the physical body, will, heart, mind, soul and spirit.
- The second column has the heading 'Ideal', as each of these six principles has a purpose and its own aspirations, which it is trying to fulfil.
- In order for each principle to be able to attain its ideal, it needs to be nourished, so the third column has the heading 'Nourishment'.
- The fourth column is dedicated to 'Price': the price that has to be paid to obtain this nourishment.
- Finally, the fifth column, 'Activity', shows the work that each principle must provide in order to receive the currency to pay for this nourishment.

PRINCIPLE	IDEAL	NOURISHMENT	PRICE	ACTIVITY
SPIRIT	eternity	freedom	truth	identification
SOUL	infinity	impersonality	ecstasy	contemplation adoration prayer
MIND	knowledge learning light	thought	wisdom	meditation
HEART	happiness warmth	feeling	love	harmonious and artistic activities
WILL	power movement	strength	gesture breath	breathing exercises gymnastic exercises paneurhythmy
PHYSICAL BODY	health life	food	money	physical work

The synoptic table

It can be seen from this table that the purpose of the gymnastic exercises is to develop the will. The ideal that the will aspires to is power, and it is strength that nourishes it. It obtains this nourishment from gesture and breathing, both of which are involved in the practice of the breathing and gymnastic exercises, as well as the paneurhythmy.

To clarify the meaning of these exercises, we need to remember the general symbolism of the six directions in space as they relate to the physical body (right and left, forward and back, up and down).

- Right and left:

Our physical body is polarized: the right side is positive and emissive, corresponding to thought and the mind, while the left side is negative and receptive, corresponding to feeling and the heart. If our body is polarized, this is even truer of our psychic and spiritual being. The movements we make in these exercises show how these emissive and receptive principles work either successively or simultaneously and sometimes join together to become one.

- Forward and back:

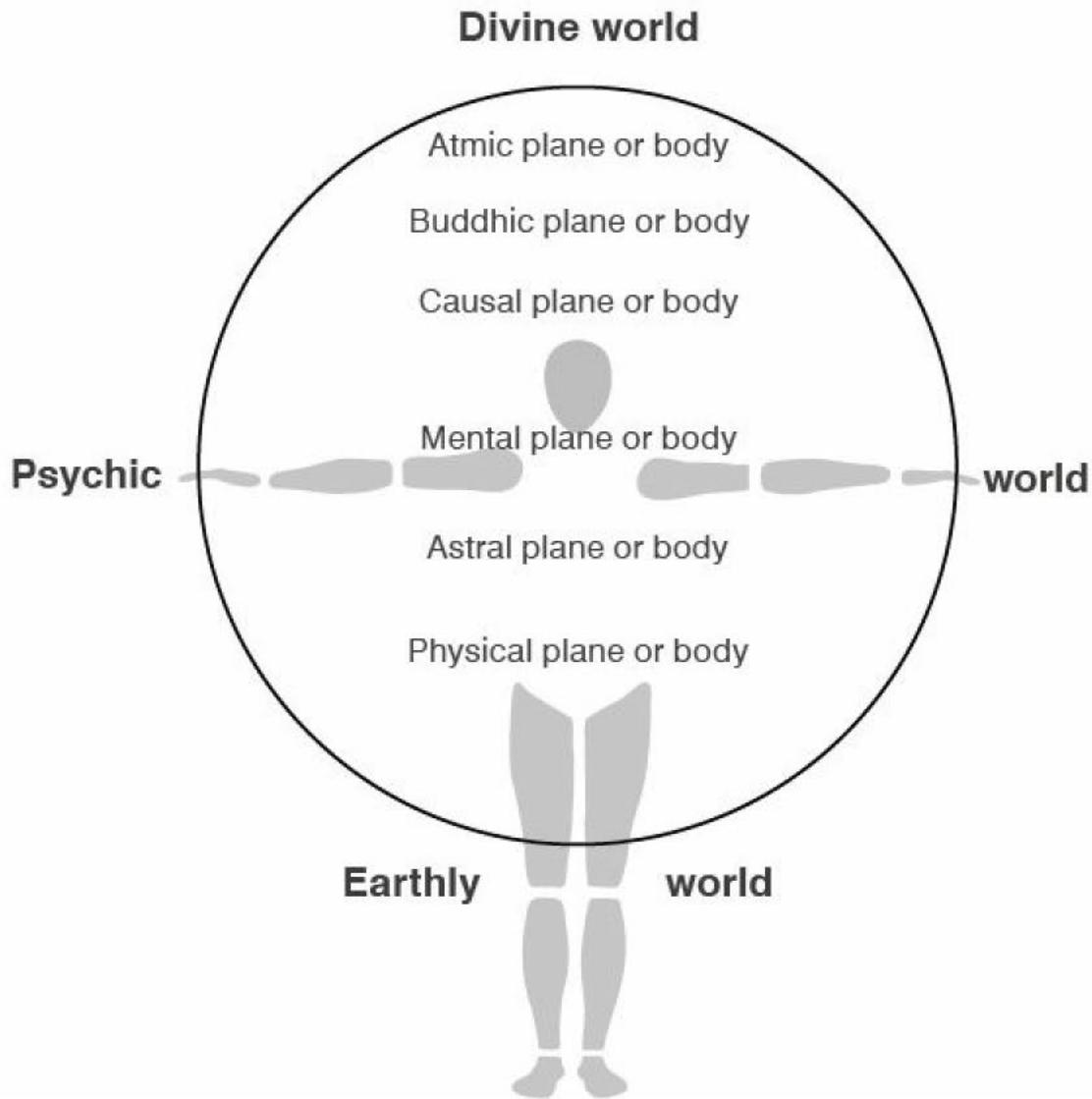
There are eight gymnastic exercises. For the first five, we begin by taking three steps back, followed by three steps forward. The three steps back correspond to a stage where we take stock: we go inwards, so that then, when

we take three steps forward, we are coming back out to meet the world as a better, more adaptable person.

- Up and down:

The space in which we make the movements is important and precise. We generally associate up with heaven and down with the earth. This is the case when a human being is in a standing position. Symbolically, the top of the head, in the subtle area beyond the skull, represents the divine world, the world of the spirit, while the lower limbs and the part of the body below the diaphragm represent the material world. The middle area, where exchanges take place between high and low, represent the psychic world, the world of the soul.

Now let's take this division (divine, earthly and intermediate psychic worlds) and see how it relates to the division of a human being into six bodies (the physical, astral, mental, causal, buddhic and atmic), as described in certain Initiatic Science teachings⁶. Just as we use our physical body to act on the physical plane, so we use our astral and mental bodies to act on the psychic plane, and our causal, buddhic and atmic bodies to act on the divine plane. So, the gymnastic exercises are not just physical exercises, since we are able, by means of our subtle bodies, to have an effect in the psychic and divine worlds.



However, we must be clear that the physical body is not limited to the defined contours of the shape we see. The physical body of itself is only a covering; it receives its vitality from its etheric double, a true fluidic body, whose energies penetrate the physical body and extend a dozen centimetres or so beyond it⁷. This is why, during the gymnastic movements, we do not touch our physical body but simply trace its etheric contour with our hands.

Since the gymnastic exercises are designed to harmonize us with cosmic currents, it is advisable to do them before midday, as the earth's polarity is especially receptive in the morning to the sun's influence. They will be of most benefit if they are done every day, preferably in the open air, after the morning meditation and breathing exercises⁸ and before breakfast; or else, during the morning, but in any case before the midday meal.

All these exercises can be done alone at home, but we must also emphasize the importance of doing them collectively during Brotherhood meetings. It is like when the singers in a choir are all singing at the same tempo. Doing the gymnastics collectively really creates a choir in movement. Everyone follows the tempo of whoever is leading on that particular day, as that person represents the soul of the group for the duration of the exercises.

Preliminary remarks

– Before we begin the exercises, we stand and concentrate for a few moments to bring our thoughts and feelings into harmony. We prepare to contact the world of spirit to harness its currents of energy, for which our gestures will act as conductors on the physical plane. We also pause for a few seconds between exercises, and the same before the final greeting.

– The description of each exercise is preceded by the formula, which we say inwardly each time we perform the movement (six times for exercises 1 to 7, and three times for the last two exercises).

– The term Brotherhood, referred to in the sixth formula, should be understood in its most universal sense: the brotherhood of all the sons and daughters of God who work to bring about unity and peace in the world. And when we say *‘for the glory of our heavenly Father’* at the end of each formula, we are again emphasizing this fraternal link: we are all brothers and sisters, since we are all children of the same Father.

¹ **Peter Deunov** (1864-1944), founder (in about 1914) of the White Brotherhood.

² As soon as he arrived in France, Master Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov wanted these exercises to become known. In 1938, he gave his first public talk in Paris, on the theme of the second birth, entitled *‘No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit’*, and during this talk he demonstrated the exercises.

³ See **The Second Birth – Love, Wisdom, Truth**, Complete Works, vol. 1, chap. 1: *‘The second birth’*.

⁴ [See Part Two.](#)

⁵ See **Man’s Psychic Life: Elements and Structures**, Izvor 222, chap. 2: *‘The synoptic table’*.

⁶ See above, chap. 3: *‘Several souls and several bodies’*.

⁷ See **Christmas and Easter in the Initiatic Tradition**, Izvor 209, chap. 6: *‘The body of glory’*.

⁸ **Respiration: spiritual dimensions and practical applications**, Brochure 303.

First exercise

'May all the blessings of heaven pour down on us and on all humanity, for the glory of our heavenly Father.'

We receive heaven's blessings through the sun, the centre of the planetary system to which we belong. In fact, for us, as inhabitants of earth, the sun represents the Divinity with its trinity of light, warmth and life. This energy current leaves the centre of the sun and penetrates to the centre of the earth, and we also receive it in ourselves to bring life to our whole being.

Description of the movements

A. The beginning of the exercise

- Raise your arms to either side of your body until they are above your head and your fingertips touch. In doing this, you are seeking the highest possible blessings from the causal, buddhic and atmic planes, which represent the divine world¹. Only your fingertips touch.

'It is from on high, from the divine world, that light, peace and true joy come to us. As you take a deep breath, think that heavenly entities are sending you their blessings through the air.'

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

B. The movements for the three steps back

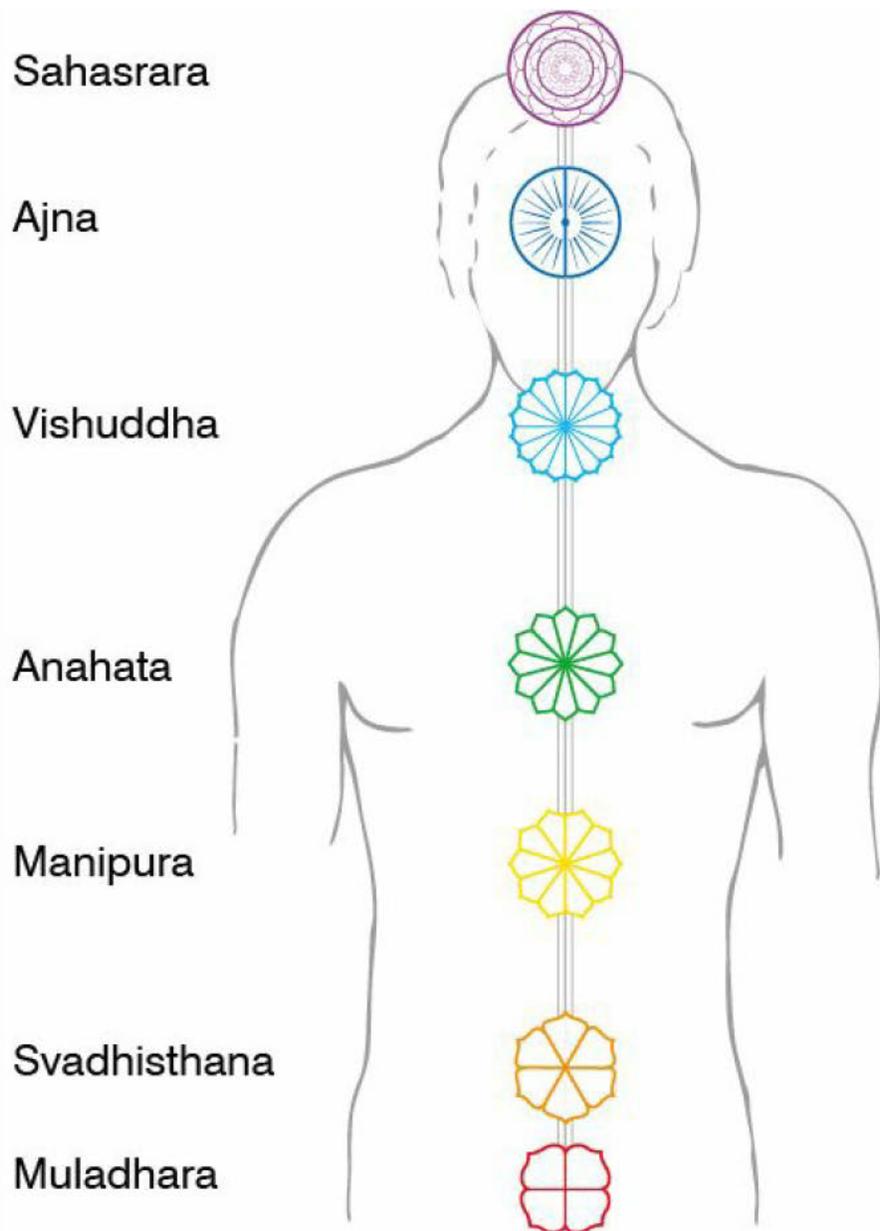
- As your fingers meet, symbolizing the unity that exists on high between the masculine and feminine principles, step back onto your right foot. Receive blessings with your hands and bring them down to the top of your head. This is where the crown chakra, also known as the thousand petalled lotus (sahasrara), is situated on the etheric plane, and where the centres of love, faith and hope, the three virtues that link us to God, are situated in the brain.
- Separate your hands, and bring the energies down either side of your head (the mental plane) and upper body (the astral plane).
- When your fingers reach the level of your diaphragm, they will be facing up. Turn them over and continue to move them down your body and then your left leg (the physical plane); your upper body will be leaning forward, with your legs slightly bent.
- When your hands are level with your ankle, stand up slowly, smoothly turn your wrists outwards, and take your arms back up above your head in two semi-circles.
- As soon as your fingers touch again, step back on your left foot while sliding your hands down either side of your head and then down the

right side of your body.

- Bend forward, sliding your hands down along your right leg to the ground.
- Stand up slowly, raising your arms again.
- When the tips of your fingers touch above your head, step back on your right foot, and slide your hands down either side of your head and upper body.
- Bend forward, sliding your hands down along your left leg to the ground.
- Stand up slowly, raising your arms again.

C. The movements for the three steps forward

- Before your hands touch, do the same movement again as you step forward on your right foot,
- then your left foot,
- then your right foot.



The seven chakras

When you have finished the last movement, your arms will be above your head. Bring your left foot level with your right foot, before your hands meet above you. Then gently touch the top of your head with your hands before sliding them down either side of your head and upper body.

Symbol



This first exercise corresponds to the symbol of the downward pointing triangle, symbolizing spirit coming down into matter to give it life.

¹ [See the diagram of the six bodies.](#)

Second exercise

‘May all my cells be magnetized, vivified and resuscitated for the glory of our heavenly Father.’

In the second exercise, we connect with the current that comes from the centre of the earth, then passes through the layers of the atmosphere before reaching the centre of the sun.

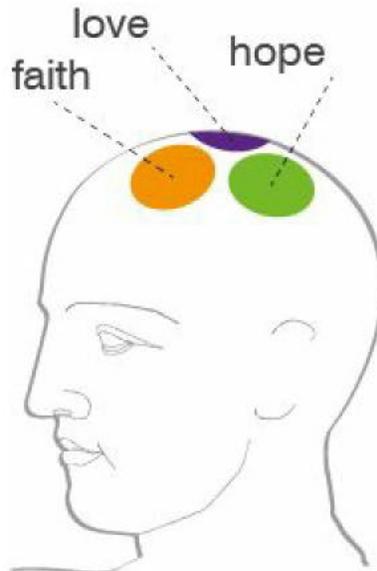
Description of the movements

A. The beginning of the exercise

- As in the first exercise, raise your arms to either side of your body until they are above your head, but this time with the palms facing up.

B. The movements for the three steps back

- As your fingers touch above your head, step back on your right foot, then turn your palms forward as you bring your arms slightly apart.
- Bend forward, bringing your hands down level with your left ankle to draw energy up from the earth.
- Slowly stand up, bringing your hands up along your left leg and then your body, with your fingers pointing down.
- When you reach your neck, reverse the direction of your hands and, with your fingers pointing up, move your hands up either side of your head, a few centimetres away from your face.
- When your hands come together at the top of your head, lightly touch the spiritual centres and then send the collected energies up to the heavens with your hands.
- Step back on your left foot, and begin the second movement, which is similar to the first, except that you are now bending forward to your right ankle to receive the earth current from beneath your right foot and take it up along your right leg and the length of your body.
- End the movement as in. As you step back again, do the same movement on the left side.



C. The movements for the three steps forward

- Raise your arms, and do the same movement with your hands,
- as you move forward on your right foot,
- then your left foot,
- then your right foot.

At the end of the sixth movement, bring your left leg forward level with your right, turn your palms out and bring your arms down to your sides.

Symbol



This second exercise corresponds to the upward pointing triangle, which represents matter rising to spirit.

‘Breathing brings all creatures into contact with the life of nature. The day you realize that you can receive this life not only through your lungs but also through the tiniest cell in your body, you will begin to feel truly alive.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Third exercise

'May I swim in the ocean of cosmic light, for the glory of our heavenly Father.'

Description of the movements

A. The beginning of the exercise

- The first movement begins on the right side: with your feet together and your left arm by your side, gently stretch your right arm forward with the palm facing up, then bring it down and back behind you in a circular motion.

B. The movements for the three steps back

- Continue this circular motion: when your right arm passes vertical, continue to send it forward as you take a step back on your left foot.
- Continue the circular motion with your arm until your hand reaches your right ankle, then bring your hand up to knee level: your upper body and arms are bent.
- Stand up straight and start the second movement with your left arm, bringing it forward with the palm facing up, and then repeating the same circular motion, back, up and over to the front, but on the left side. When your left arm passes vertical, step back on your right foot, continuing to move your arm forward and down to your left ankle and bringing it back up to knee level.
- As you step back on your left foot, do the same movement with your right arm.
- Stretch your right arm forward and repeat movement , stepping back on your left foot when your arm passes vertical.

C. The movements for the three steps forward

- Repeat these three movements, taking a step forward each time.

You will notice that when you step back, the arm and leg movement are on opposite sides, whereas, when you step forward, the arm and leg movement are on the same side.

Your arm movements should be sweeping, flowing and continuous.

Symbol



This third exercise corresponds to the symbol of the circle with its life-

giving central point.

‘Like the fish in the sea, human beings can use their breathing to find the etheric elements they need from the surrounding atmosphere. These elements are necessary for keeping their physical body healthy and their subtle bodies working properly.

Those who are learning how to breathe no longer need to resort to as many chemical substances, which overload their organism or even weaken it in the long term. They draw precious elements from the atmosphere, which will nourish and heal them.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Fourth exercise

‘May all my ties with evil be severed, for the glory of our heavenly Father.’

In this life or in past incarnations, without realizing it we have formed relationships with entities that keep us prisoner. We must free ourselves from these ties, as they hinder our evolution.

Description of the movements

A. The beginning of the exercise

- Stand with your arms by your side and your feet together.
- Raise your arms forwards, parallel to one another, to shoulder height, with your palms facing down and your fingers and thumb together.

B. The movements for the three steps back

- Step back on your right foot, bringing both arms horizontally to the right, with your right arm straight and your left bent.
- After an initial small upward arm movement, lean forward slightly, bending your knees. At the same time, swing your arms to your left in an energetic downward arc until they are horizontal again. Do this movement with your hands straight, as if you were scything the undesirable ties on the mental, astral and physical planes.
- Step back on your left foot, raise your hands slightly, and swing your arms to the right, describing the same arc as before.
- Repeat the movement, as you take another step back on your right foot.

C. The movements for the three steps forward

- Do these movements three more times, taking a step forward each time (right, left, right). At the end of the exercise, bring your left foot forward level with your right, as you stretch your arms out parallel in front of you, with your palms facing down. Finish by bringing your arms apart horizontally and then lowering them to your sides.

The arm movements are energetic but measured; when you raise your hands to the side, do not take them past head level.

Do not swing your arms behind you, as you need to avoid turning your body.

Symbol



This movement corresponds symbolically to the Hebrew letter schin. You are forming the shape of the letter in space with your arms, while your head and upper body represent the vertical, central line.

Fifth exercise

'May perfect balance reign throughout my being, for the glory of our heavenly Father.'

The aim of this fifth exercise is to teach us to balance our energies, in other words to balance the masculine and feminine principles, the mind and the heart

Description of the movements

A. The beginning of the exercise

- Raise your arms on either side, with the palms facing up.
- Bend your elbows, and with your fingers together place your fingertips in the hollow by each shoulder. Keep your arms in this position throughout the exercise. It requires full concentration to keep your balance while you make the movements with your legs.

B. The movements for the three steps back

- Rest your weight on your left leg.
- Bring your right leg back, bending your right knee and placing the toe of your right foot behind your left knee.
- Swing your right leg out to the side.
- Bend your right knee again, bringing your toe up behind your left knee.
- Swing your right leg out to the side again.
- Bring your foot up behind your left knee for a third time.
- Place your right foot behind your left foot.
- Kneel down on your right knee.
- Stand up.
- Repeat the swinging and bending movement
 - with your left leg,
 - with your right leg.

C. The movements for the three steps forward

- Resting your weight on your left leg, cross your right leg in front of your left knee, then swing it out to the right in a semi-circle.
- Repeat
- Repeat the crossover for a third time without swinging your leg out to the right, and place your right foot a little way in front, heel first.
- Kneel down on your left knee.
- Stand up, and move your weight onto your right leg.
- Continue the exercise, crossing your left leg in front of your right knee three times and kneeling down on your right knee.

- Repeat, but crossing your right leg in front of your left knee three times, then kneeling down on your left knee.
- After the final time of kneeling, stand up and bring your left foot level with your right.
- Open your arms wide to either side in semi-circles, gradually turning your palms down to face the ground by the time they are horizontal, and then lower them to your sides.

Meaning and symbol



From a physiological perspective, this exercise involves the centre of balance known as the organ of Corti, situated in the inner ear. In fact, the ears, which symbolize wisdom, are astrologically placed under the influence of the planet Saturn, and so it is the saturnine qualities of concentration, discernment and moderation that help us to maintain our equilibrium in life. You will also notice that the knee is very predominant in this exercise. According to astrology again, the knee is linked to the constellation Capricorn, whose ruling planet is Saturn.

Notice also that, in the first part of the exercise, the movements where we swing the leg out to the side recall the masculine principle, whereas the semi-circles in the second part are characteristic of the feminine principle.

This fifth exercise corresponds to the caduceus of Hermes. As we bend our arms and touch our shoulders, we are reminded of wings, and the movement of the legs is reminiscent of a snake or of the two snakes wound around the staff.

‘When we go to contemplate the rising sun in the morning, we collect that very precious quintessence the Indian yogis call prana

‘Prana is an energy that extends throughout nature, a river of life that flows into us through our nostrils and all the pores of our skin. When we consciously take in air through our nostrils, we set subtle centres in motion that work to extract the quintessence from the air. Once this quintessence has been taken in, it begins to circulate. Just as blood circulates through our veins, arteries and capillaries, so prana circulates through our nervous system, helping to awaken our spiritual faculties.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Sixth exercise

This exercise is made up of two parts..

In the first part we say in our mind the following formula:

'May all negativity in me be expelled.'

In the second part we say,

'May all the enemies of the Universal White Brotherhood be put to flight, banished, for the glory of our heavenly Father.'*

Description of the movements

A. The beginning of the exercise

- Raise your arms above your head, with the palms facing each other. Let your fingers touch and then separate.
- Step forward on your left foot, and lower your arms in front of you to shoulder level at the same time as you kneel down on your right knee.

B. First part

- Bring your hands up to your face, then down to abdomen level, taking the impurities from all your organs – brain, lungs, heart, abdomen – one after the other in a single movement.
- Make your hands into fists, symbolically holding these impure fluids.
- Raise your fists to shoulder level, and vigorously throw your arms forward, with your hands open and your palms facing each other. Accompany this movement with a forceful outbreath through your mouth. This must be done with intense concentration, so that the impure fluids are absorbed by the earth and, being the good alchemist it is, it can then transform them.

Repeat the same movement five more times.

C. Second part

After the sixth movement, your arms are out in front of you and your right knee is on the ground.

- Breathe in, bringing your hands level with your mouth, with your palms towards your face, and then turn your palms outwards.
- Breathe out through your mouth, stretching your arms out wide to either side. This gesture repels and dispels negative currents.
- Repeat the same movement five more times..

At the end of the exercise, your arms are horizontal, with your palms facing the ground.

- Stand up.
- Bring your right foot level with your left.

- Slowly lower your arms to your sides.

Meaning and symbol



Each of the two parts of this exercise is made up of six movements. In the first part, the arm movements are vertical, and in the second they are horizontal. So, the symbolic figure formed is a cross.

‘If you become accustomed to thinking of the breathing exercises as exercises of the mind, you will one day be able to go down into your subconscious. In the subconscious too, there is much work to be done, to neutralize the dark forces and make it possible for the powers of light to manifest.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Seventh exercise

'May all my cells and organs be supple, for the glory of our heavenly Father.'

This movement, which is done to a more sustained rhythm than the others, teaches us what true suppleness is. It is the ability to adapt to different situations while still remaining in control.

Description of the movements

For this exercise, we do the same movement six times:

- Take a big step back with your right leg while bending your left knee and raising your arms as an extension of your body.
- Stand up straight, bringing your right leg forward until it is slightly behind the left.
- Shift your weight to your right leg, leaning your upper body and head back, with your shoulders relaxed, and your arms falling freely behind you. Make sure your head follows the angle of your upper body in a harmonious movement without forcing it further.
- Stand up straight, returning to your initial position.

After you have done this six times, bring your right foot level with your left and your arms to your sides.

Meaning and symbol



This movement relates to the Hebrew letter aleph (א). Symbolically, aleph represents the gesture of those who work to become intermediaries between heaven and earth. They reach up with their hands to receive the energy currents from above, and with their palms facing down they pour these energies onto the earth.

'When you breathe, you absorb air and then you send it back out, but you can also do this with light. Imagine, as you breathe in, that you are drawing in light and, as you breathe out, that you are giving it to others. Obviously, this second part of the exercise will only really be effective if you have first worked hard on your thoughts and feelings, so that what you are giving comes from the best and purest part of yourself.'

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

Eighth exercise

'May the blessings of heaven pour down on us and on all of humanity, for the glory of our heavenly Father.'

Although the formula we say in the first and last exercise is identical, the movements we make in space are a little different.

Description of the movements

This eighth exercise, which is the shortest, is performed three times continuously, without stepping back or stepping forward. Keep your legs still and parallel, almost together, and stand very straight.

- Raise your arms either side simultaneously in two great semi-circles, bringing your hands together above your head, and lightly touch the centres there.
- Bring your hands down either side of your face and your upper body, keeping your body vertical.
- Repeat this movement twice more.

Meaning and symbol



When you are making the circular movements with both arms at the same time, your arms are drawing the infinity symbol in space.

'When you know how to work with your thoughts as you breathe in and out, breathing will reveal great mysteries to you. As you breathe in, imagine all the energy currents in space converging on you, on your ego, which is like an imperceptible dot, the centre of an infinite circle. Then, as you breathe out, imagine yourself extending to the limits of creation. Again, contract, and again expand... By making this movement conscious, you are entering cosmic harmony.'

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

The final greeting

When we finish these exercises collectively and are about to go our separate ways, we take our leave of the person who has led the exercises that day. We do this by raising our right arm, with the elbow bent and with our hand open and the palm facing the person. Master Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov often emphasized how important it is for us to know how to greet one another:

‘No gesture is isolated; everything has repercussions, both inwardly and outwardly. This is why I insist on you learning to greet one another consciously, in such a way that you communicate life to one another through your hand, in the form of currents of energy and coloured rays. We can put so much love and light into this gesture and into the expression on our face as we make it! So, let your soul play a part in your greeting, and your spirit too, so that when you greet others, they feel they are receiving something inwardly that is having a positive effect on them.’

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

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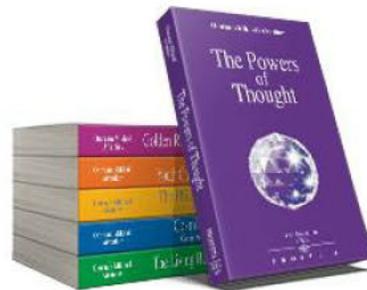
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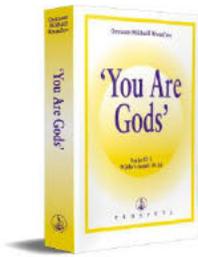
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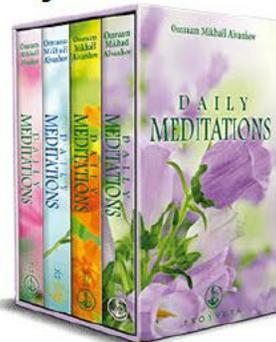
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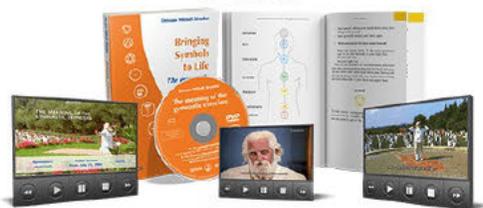
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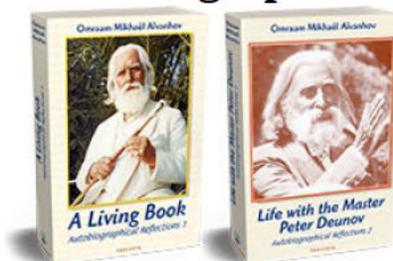
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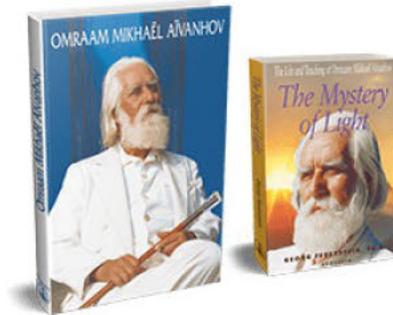
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About the Universal White Brotherhood

The aim of the Universal White Brotherhood association is the study and practice of the Teaching of Master Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, published and distributed by Prosveta.

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