

The Four Human Group Souls

(Lion, Bull, Eagle, Man)

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by Dr. Rudolf Steiner
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Lecture by Dr. Rudolf Steiner
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Today we will consider some things already known to you from a certain side. But in all theosophical questions, we only fully penetrate them when they are illuminated from different aspects. And within the theosophical stream here in our central European regions, things are discussed which are drawn from the most advanced occult investigations, and which can thus be easily misunderstood. On the other hand, however, we should not advance if we did

not venture for once to speak about such things quite plainly. Just call to mind that if we go back in human evolution, through the various epochs of the post-Atlantean age, as far back as Atlantis, and then back to the older periods even in Atlantis — that then, if we turn our spiritual gaze on the events of that time, we find quite different forms of humanity.

In the last third of the Atlantean epoch the etheric body was still, to a certain extent, outside the physical body. The head of the etheric body was not yet united with the forces of the physical body, which are the forces of the ego, of self-consciousness. If we observe the process lying behind this we can say: progressive evolution consists in the widely extending etheric head withdrawing into the physical head. If we see a horse today, then the etheric head of the horse extends beyond the physical head. I have also told you what a gigantic organization the etheric parts of the elephant form, which stretch far, far beyond the physical body — quite a house, so to say. So, with man, too, in the Atlantean age, the etheric body was still outside, and gradually entered in more and more. Such an entry of a more rarefied member into a denser one brings about, at the same time, a densification of what is physical. The physical head of man before the last third of the Atlantean age thus appeared quite different from what it did later. And if we went still further back into the last Lemurian times, then one would see spiritually very little of the physical head. It existed first in a quite soft, transparent matter. Only through the gradual entry of the etheric head, through the gradual assimilation of substances, parts of the head become densified, and thus separated from their environment. Even in the later Atlantis man was still endowed, to an extraordinary degree, with what has been retained — but as a pathological state — as water on the brain, as a watery brain. In addition to this we have to think of a softening of the bones, a complete softening of the upper members of man. That sounds terrible for modern man. That which today forms the human head, and surrounds it, hardened out of this watery substance. The comparison I sometimes give is not altogether inept: the crystallizing of salt from a salt solution, in a glass. It gives a fairly correct idea, this crystallizing from a watery salt solution. What thus took place as regards the head at a later time, occurred with the rest of man at a much earlier time.

All the other members gradually developed out of a soft mass, so that we can say: Where was the human ego then, in reality? Where was the present ego? It was not really within man at that time but still in his environment. We can say: the upper members of man harden through the entry of the egos. Because the ego was outside man, it was still endowed with a quality which later became different. Through entering the physical body, the ego was enabled to become an individual I, whereas before it was still a kind of group soul.

I will here give a picture of the facts of the case. Imagine a circle of twelve men are sitting somewhere. These twelve men are sitting in a circle. Through evolution as it is today, each of these men has his ego within himself. Thus twelve egos are sitting in this circle. Let us consider such a circle of men in the Atlantean age; then the physical bodies sat thus around, but the ego is only in the etheric body which is still outside. The ego is thus to be found in front of each one. This ego, however, has another characteristic. It is not so centralized. It develops, as it were, its forces and unites with the egos of the other men so that they form a ring which again sends its forces towards its centre. Thus we have here an etheric circular body which forms a unity in itself, and within it, the egos. Thus there is a circle of physical bodies, and within an etheric circular surface, which forms a unity because the egos are caught up in it, and the single ego is enclosed. Through this image we come to a pictorial idea of the group souls.

If we go further back, then we can keep this image, but we must not imagine such a regular circle of men; these human beings can be scattered in the world in the most manifold way. Let us imagine one in west France, another in the east of America, etc. — that is to say, not sitting together. Where the laws of the spiritual world are in question the egos can still be connected, although the human beings are scattered over the world. These human beings form, then, this “round.” That which is formed through the flowing together of their egos is not indeed such a beautifully formed etheric body, but still it is a Unity. Thus a group of people existed at that time, who were united because their egos formed a unity — and indeed, there were actually four such group egos. You must imagine these human beings in accordance with the laws of the spiritual world. The group souls of the four groups passed into each other. They were not inwardly united, but passed into each other. One calls these four group souls by the names of the apocalyptic beasts: Bull, Eagle, Lion, Man. The Man, however, was at another stage of evolution than the man of today. The names are taken from the organization of the group souls. Why could one call them thus? I should like to make that clear today from another aspect.

Let us place ourselves as vividly as possible in the early ages of Lemurian life. The souls which today are incarnated in human bodies had not yet descended as far as the physical bodies. They had not yet the tendency to unite themselves with physical matter. Even the bodies which later were to become human bodies were very, very animal-like. The most grotesque physical beings were on earth, which would even seem grotesque compared with what we should call today the most grotesque creatures. Everything was still in a soft, slippery form — seething, watery, or fiery — human beings, as well as the environment. Among these grotesque forms were already, of course, the

ancestors of the human physical bodies, but these were not yet taken possession of by the egos. The four group souls, whom we have already characterized as four group souls before the entry of the spirit into the physical organization, actually represented four egos who waited to incarnate — such egos as were adapted to quite special forms, which were down there below. One category was adapted to enter the organizations already existing physically, in quite definite shapes, another category to enter another. The forms which were below must correspond in their formation, in a certain way, to the kinds of egos which waited. There were forms existing which were especially adapted to receive the Lion egos, others the Bull egos, etc. That was in a very early age of earth evolution. Now consider that the group soul we have called the Bull soul enters quite definite forms which are there below. These have a quite definite appearance. Similarly, the Lion soul was drawn to other special forms.

Thus what is physical on earth shows us a fourfold picture. The one group especially develops the organs whose functions coincide more with those of the heart. They were organized one-sidedly in the heart nature; an especially aggressive, courageous, attacking element was in them. They were courageous, self-assertive, sought to overcome the others — were, as it were, already conquerors, born as conquering natures even in their form. They were those in whom the heart, the seat of the ego, had been made strong. In others, the organs of digestion, of nourishment, of procreation, were especially developed. In the third group, it was especially the organs of movement. In the fourth group, these tendencies were equally shared — both the courageous, aggressive, and the tranquil — which comes through the development of the digestive organs. Both were developed. The group in which the aggressive quality belonging to the organization of the heart was specially developed, formed the human beings whose group soul belonged to the Lion. The second group was that of the Bull. The third group, with the mobile element that does not wish to know much of the earth, belongs to the group soul of the Eagle. They are the ones who can raise themselves above what is earthly. And those in whom these things were held in equilibrium belonged to the group soul “Man.” Thus we have, in due form, the projection of the four group souls into the physical. At that time, a quite peculiar sight would have offered itself to the observer. One would have found one kind of race, of which someone with a prophetic gift could have said: Those are physical beings who remind one somewhat of the lion, who reproduce the character of the lion, even though they looked different from the lion of today. They were lion-hearted people, aggressive human germs. Then again there was a group of bull like people, everything adapted to the physical plane. You can easily complete for yourselves the third and fourth races. The third race was already strongly visionary. While the first were combative, while the second cultivated everything connected with the physical plane and working it over, you would have found the third class of people, who were very visionary. As a

rule, they had something which, in relation to the other bodies, was misshaped. They would have reminded you of people who have much psychism and believe in visions, and because they do not bother much about the physical, have something dried up, something stunted compared with the abundant force of the other two groups. They would have reminded you of the bird nature. “I will hold back my Spirit,” that was the tendency of the eagle men. The others had something which, as it were, was mixed out of all the parts. Something else must be added to this.

If we go so far back as to meet with these conditions on the earth, then we must also bear in mind that everything that happened in the course of earth evolution, occurred in such a way that the affairs of the earth were regulated from out of the spiritual world. Everything was a detour in order to arrive at the man of today. One who could have seen more deeply into these things, could have made the experience that these lion natures (who reminded one of what we see today in quite another way in the lion body) developed a special attractive force for the male forms of the etheric bodies. These felt themselves especially drawn to the lion men, so that these were beings who had outwardly a lion body — inwardly, however, a male etheric body. There was a powerful etheric being with a male character, and a small part of this etheric being densified itself to the physical lion body. The bull race, however, had a special attractive force for the female etheric body. Thus the bull body had the special force to attract the female etheric body and unite with it. And now think further — the etheric bodies go on continually working, penetrating and transforming. The relation of the lion-like men to the bull-like was especially important in older times. The others come less into consideration. The male etheric bodies which crystallized a physical lion body out of themselves, had the power of fructifying the physical lion body itself, so that the procreation of humanity was especially cared for by the lion-like race. It was a kind of fructification from out of the spiritual, a non-sexual procreation. The bull race, however, could also bring about the same thing. That which had become physical worked back here on the female etheric body. In the course of evolution, the process fashioned itself differently. Whereas the lion nature retained this mode of procreation, since the fructifying force came from above, out of the spiritual, whereas here this process intensified, the other process was drive more and more back. The bull humanity became more and more unfruitful. The result was that on the one side there was a humanity which was maintained by fructification, on the other side, another half which became more and more unfruitful. The one side became the female sex, the other the male. The modern female physical nature has in fact a male etheric body, whereas the etheric body of the man is female. The physical body of the woman has proceeded from the lion nature, whereas the physical bull-body is the ancestor of the male body.

The spiritual in man has a common origin, is neutral, and first entered the physical body when the sexes had already differentiated. Only then was the spirit taken hold of, and only then the head hardened. The etheric body of the head united for the first time with the physical body; it was all the same to it whether it joined on to a male or female body, since both sexes were the same for it.

We must say that woman, so long as we look away from what in general transcends this differentiation, has, through her evolution, something lion-like in her nature. One will certainly find this hidden courage. The woman can develop inner courage; e.g. in war, in the care of the sick, in order to work in the service of humanity. The male physical body has that which in the true sense we can call the bull nature. That is connected with the fact that the man, as he is usually organized, has more of the activity based on physical creation. Occultly regarded, these things reveal themselves precisely thus, even if it sounds extraordinary. You thus see how these group souls have worked together. They so work that the lion and bull group souls cooperate in their work. These divine beings cooperate and, in the man of today, the labours of the different divine group souls are concealed.

These pictures which I have here put before you, in outline, will certainly have their effect. If you follow humanity ever further back, to the time when no procreation was yet possible, then we must say: The external physical female body changes into something which was lion like, whereas the male body was bull-like. Such things, however, must be taken in a holy, earnest sense, if we will understand them aright. It would be easy for those who have studied human anatomy, to deduce the anatomical differences between the physical bodies of man and woman from these lion- and bull-natures. Physical science will be utterly fruitless and only describe external facts as long as it does not penetrate into the spirit of these facts. Now it will no longer appear so strange to you that once a race of people existed who had a lion-like body. These took up the ego nature, and through this the lion nature was changed more and more into the female body. Those who received nothing of this spiritual element changed in quite another way; i.e., into the modern lion, and what is related with it. We will deal another time with the reason why these animals too are bisexual. Those who shared nothing of spirituality formed the modern lion, whereas those who did so developed the modern female body. In the course of time many, many other aspects of these things can be shown. Theosophical learning is not like the mathematical. First it was shown, for instance, that there exist four group souls of which only the names are at first given. Then some or other aspect is chosen, and the matter is illuminated from outside. And so we approach continually from another side. We go around what is first presented, and illuminate it from

the most diverse aspects. Whoever grasps this will never be able to say that theosophical matters contradict each other. This is also the case, even in the greatest things we consider. The differences come from the various standpoints from which one observes the matter. Let us take with us from this gathering what one might call inner tolerance. May we succeed in our special theosophical stream in bringing this inner spirit of tolerance into the theosophical movement. Let us take that with us as a content of feeling and try and work externally in such a way that this spirit of the most inner understanding may become effective.