# THE IDEA OF UNITY in Ancient Egypt

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THE IDEA OF UNITY



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#### 1. STRUCTURED BELIEF SYSTEMS

# a. Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt followed prehistoric Egypt around 3100 BC. It owed its success as a culture to its ability to adapt to the Nile River and use its fertile plains in the development of agriculture. The predictable flooding and controlled irrigation of the flood plain produced surplus food for its population, which in turn encouraged social development. With surplus resources, the Egyptians explored the surrounding regions for minerals, developed a writing system, mathematics, medicine, ship-building, glass technology, literature, construction, agricultural projects, traded with other regions and created a viable military. All this was under the control of a pharaoh who reigned over the population with an elaborate system of religious beliefs. The strong institution of kingship developed by the pharaohs, served to legitimize state control over land, labour, and resources that was essential to the survival and growth of ancient Egyptian civilization. The pharaohs were not only kings, but also a connection to their gods and the life hereafter.

Ancient Egypt is an example of the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture giving their culture stability and predictability. They took advantage of the regular flooding and fertility of the Nile River to tame the land for their own needs. The earliest depictions of deities of the people of the Nile valley related to known mammals or birds, which represented the transition from hunting to farming. This later evolved into hybrid animal/human deities with animal heads and human bodies.¹ The worship of these characters reflected the slow transition from hunting to agriculture. In other words, the age-old projection of unconscious contents onto objects and animals, as it was in animism, changed to the worship of personified elemental forces that reflected their agricultural pursuits. The worship of objects and natural phenomena became ritualised and institutionalised through the pharaohs.

The projections changed because the Egyptian's lives changed. Instead of hunting and foraging for food, they learned to cultivate food where they lived on the fertile plains of the Nile River.

.....the Egyptians worshipped, though generally without cult, the great divinities of nature: the Sky, the Earth, the Sun the Moon and the mighty river which, in the words of Herodotus, created Egypt - the Nile.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 10

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> LAROUSSE, New Encyclopedia of Mythology, Hamlyn Publishing, 1968, page 9

With this change came different concerns. Instead of animals, it became the natural environment of the objects and phenomena that enable agriculture. These include the earth, air (sky), fire (sun) and water (moon). These objects and features are the fundamental and essential components of agriculture, and their characteristics and behaviour formed part of their ideas. For example, the sun needs to shine for things to grow, but needs to be balanced by water. Insufficient water and plants whither, too much water and they drown, infertile earth such as sand, does not promote plant growth and sky without rainfall, again leads to dryness and withering. It is the balance of these natural elements that gave the ancient Egyptians the right environment for their agriculture and hence their own growth.

Ideas of objects such as the sun, moon, sky and earth are different to the objects themselves. For example, knowledge of the sun was limited to how it affected their bodies and their crops through their immediate perception. They realized they were dependent on the elements and were aware of these characteristics. In addition to observation, individuals related to them from known patterns of behaviour in their own lives. This connection of outer characteristics and inner patterns is the way we relate to things initially. It is the age-old projection of complex ideas of inner characters of parents (model) and siblings (copy) onto external objects and in this instance became the gods of ancient Egyptians.

The sky goddess Nut (sky) or Hathor was depicted either as a cow standing on the earth bent over with her feet and hands, or as a woman arched over touching the earth with the tips of her feet and hands. Nut was often depicted with the head of a falcon whose eyes opened and closed, which caused night and day and the appearance of the sun and moon. In contrast, the earth was a masculine god called Geb (earth), and sometimes depicted lying prone on his belly with all the world's vegetation growing out of his back.<sup>3</sup> At other times, Geb is depicted lying on his back with an erect penis, trying to reach his twin sister/wife Nut. We can see from this how these deities related to elemental characteristics. The sky provides fructifying nurturing moisture in the form of rain that made crops grow which in turn relates to how Nut was depicted as the over-arching cow that feeds its young with nurturing milk. The earth relates to the sky sexually by receiving her nurturing moisture and bringing forth vegetation from his back. The back is associated with the hard work of tilling the soil and tending to the crops. The following excerpt describes how the sun fits into this scenario:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Ibid

The sun had many names and gave rise to extremely vast interpretations. In his aspect of solar disk the sun was called Aten. Depending upon whether he rose, or climbed to the zenith, on he was given the names Khepri, Ra or Atum. He was also call Horus and it was under this name, joined with that of Ra, that later reigned over all Egypt as Ra-Harakhte. It was claimed that he was reborn every morning of the celestial cow like a suckling calf, or like a little child of the sky-

Goddess. He was also said, be a falcon with speckled wings flying through space, or the right eye only of the great divine bird. Another conception of him was that of an egg laid daily by the celestial goose, or more frequently a gigantic scarab rolling before him the incandescent globe of the sun as, on earth, the sacred scarab rolls the ball of dung in which it has deposited its eggs.4

The sun's mythology is more complex than the sky and earth. In this instance, the sun is masculine and has many names. Unlike the earth, which is stable and always present, the sky has her moods of clear, cloudy and rainy, whereas the sun has regular cycles of day and night but occasionally obscured by clouds. The sun is born every morning and dies every evening, to be reborn again in the morning, which as an idea is the precursor to reincarnation. The moon, in this instance, is also masculine:

> The moon, too, was called by different names: Aah, Thoth, Khons. Sometimes he was the son of Nut, the sky-Goddess. Sometimes he was a dog-headed ape, or an ibis; at others, the left eye of the great celestial hawk whose right eve was the sun.5

This shows that the moon and sun have complimentary characteristics of a great bird's eyes flying through the sky (Nut). When one is eye closed, the other is open and the corresponding celestial body is present. There is however, no mention of the moon being present during the day. The sun and moon are therefore not ultimate deities. They are both masculine and exist within a feminine context of sky. Both Ra (sun) and Thoth (moon) are Nut's (sky) children, and are therefore of lower rank in the Egyptian deity family tree. This is an interesting interpretation of the behaviour of the celestial elements. On one hand, the sky is the context and background to the sun and moon, and nourishes the earth with her water (milk). Of the four elements sky, earth, sun and moon, the sky is the only feminine character, and in some instances regarded as the mother of the three other masculine characters. She contains the sun and moon in her arched body and nourishes the earth, which indicates a closer relationship between sky and earth than sky, sun and moon. The rain and earth and their relationship, sustained the Nile delta and therefore, the agricultural basis of the Egyptian culture. The different

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid

elemental deities show that their myths were at the beginning stage of development and interpreted differently in regions around the Nile.

It is an attempt to relate the earth to the celestial elements and fit them into a pattern. If we compare this development with animistic practices of projection onto animals and natural objects, we can see the evolution from recognition and connection to the behaviour of objects, to how those objects relate to each other. The ancient Egyptians began to see these connections between objects and how they influenced their lives and is an indication they were becoming aware of the unity surrounding them.

The ideas projected onto animals slowly anthropomorphised to human form in early Egyptian culture. In other words, their deities became more human. In this way, one has the ability to relate to these objects as we would relate to another person. For example, it is easier to ask the sky to provide nourishing rain if it is personified as a woman or cow. This in itself is a form of connecting the inner characters to celestial elements through projection.

The following passage describes the creation of the world through the deities of Moon (Thoth) and Sun (Ra) and adds Ptah (demiurge) and Osiris, one of the central deities.

In his own temple Thoth, Ra, Ptah and Osiris was each proclaimed to have created the world, but each in his own way. Sometimes it was taught that the Gods had issued from the mouth of Demiurge and that all had been created by his voice. Sometimes it was alleged that they were born when the creator spat or performed an even cruder act. Again it was said that men had been engendered by his sweat or by a flood of tears gushing from his eyes. Another explanation was that men, together with the entire animal world, had emerged from the sun-dried mud of the Nile. It was also taught that the Demiurge had modelled them from the earth and fashioned them on a potter's wheel.<sup>6</sup>

In this creation myth, Ptah conceived the world by thought, will and word<sup>7</sup>, or another act of creation through spittle or ejaculation. Another form of creation includes the modelling of men and animals from mud or clay. The ideas behind these methods of creation show a process similar to the creative inspiration of an artist through a bodily function or modelling skill. They show that the tribes of Egypt had varying interpretations that coalesced into the stories contained in the Ennead of Heliopolis.

The Ennead describes the first god Nun representing the idea of the primordial chaos of water that had no active features. It was creation in

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/culture-magazines/egyptian-myths

potential and the beginning of existence. Nun is transcendent at the point of creation alongside Atum, the creator god. From the chaos of the primordial soup emerged the sun as the first act of creation. In the Coptic language, Nun or its derivation, Nu, relates to the Coptic word for 'deep' and 'abyss'. This in itself is an interpretation of the myth-making unconscious as the source of all ideas.

Formerly, according to the priests of Heliopolis, the Sun God reposed, under the name of Atum, in the bosom of Nun, the primordial ocean. There, in order that his lustre should run no risk of being extinguished, he took care to keep his eyes shut. He enclosed himself in the bud of a lotus until the day when, weary of his own impersonality, he rose by an effort of will from the abyss and appeared in glittering splendour under the name of Ra. He then bore Shu and Tefnut who, in their turn, gave birth to Geb and Nut, from whom issued Osiris and Isis, Set and Nephthys. These are the eight great Gods who with their chief Ra - or more exactly Ra Atum, since Ra and Atum were identified with each other - form the divine company or Ennead of Heliopolis. §

Atum was contained within this chaos as a spirit in 'potentia', and from his birth all other gods, men and all living things emerged. He later became the god of the rising and setting sun, and the sun's daytime features became the god, Ra. The spirit within chaos (Atum) is differentiated into and the spirit born from chaos (Ra).

Ra became the second stage and fully developed sun as it is in the daytime. The description of Atum and Ra shows that the ancient Egyptians regarded Atum as the bridge between chaos and the order of daylight. This indicates an association between Nun, chaos and night (no sun), Atum emerging from chaos as twilight, and Ra as fully emerged sun of daylight. This seems to be a very apt staged interpretation of the emergence from unconsciousness into the daylight of consciousness.

At the same time Ra had created a 'first' universe, different from the present world, which he governed from the 'Prince's Palace' in Heliopolis where he normally resided. The Books of the Pyramids minutely describe for us his royal existence and how, after his morning bath and breakfast, he would get into his boat and, in the company of his scribe, Weneg, inspect the twelve provinces of his kingdom, spending an hour in each

As long as Ra remained young and vigorous he reigned peacefully over Gods and men; but the years brought with them their ravages and the texts depict him as an old man with trembling mouth from which saliva ceaselessly dribbles. We shall see later how lsis took advantage of the

10 Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nu\_(mythology)

<sup>9</sup> New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, Hamlyn Publishing, 1968, page 11

God's senility, made him reveal his secret name and thus acquired sovereign power. <sup>11</sup>

The development of Ra had some intermediary stages. First, he resided in a palace in Heliopolis from where he inspected the twelve provinces in twelve hours of daylight. This indicated that the ancient Egyptians were already aware of daylight being divided into twelve hours, hence a twenty-four hour day, and that time was related to Ra's (sun) movement across Nut (sky). The myth states that Ra aged and became decrepit and open to the ravages of time and his subjects plotted against him. He became enraged, consulted with his council, and decided to throw his divine Eye as the goddess Hathor and began massacring his subjects but stopped due to his goodness. He now had distaste for the world and withdrew to the heavens where Nut (sky) turned into a cow and took Ra (sun) on her back to ride her boat across the sky every twelve hours.

This mixture of myth and physical reality shows how we have an innate need to relate celestial cycles and events with our everyday lives. For example, Ra is given the qualities of a person born in the morning, grow to the zenith, and steadily decline to old age and death. This is exactly how the sun behaves. His wrath may relate to the occasional droughts that occur at that time where his Eye is relentless and shines on his subjects without mercy until his goodness returns to natural cycles of sun, clouds and rain. The cycle of Ra includes both day and night, where he sheds his light onto the world until night and descends into darkness and sheds his light onto the inhabitants of the underworld. This indicates that his spirit lives on in the underworld and returns the next day. This observed fact as well as the cycles of seed, growth, harvest and death in agricultural pursuits, is the basis for their death/resurrection myths and as we shall see shortly, relates to the life of Osiris.

The god Khepri depicted as a scarab-faced man further differentiates the behaviour of the sun and its relation to human life. He was the god of transformations and his name means 'he who becomes'<sup>13</sup>, 'come into being' and 'develop'<sup>14</sup>. The scarab beetle rolls balls of dung across the ground, a behaviour the Egyptians saw as a symbol of the forces that move the sun across the sky. This is an indication that the ancient Egyptians already had an idea of individuation<sup>15</sup>. Khepri then replaced Atum in the morning, relegating him to the evening sunset. Ra gave birth

12 Ibid, page 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ibid

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> WILKINSON, Richard H., The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt, Thames & Hudson, 2003, page 230

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> An individual's life path.

to twins named Shu (air) and his sister Tefnut (dew and rain), further differentiating the realm between Geb (earth) and Nut (sky).

The myth of Osiris is the most developed story of the ancient Egyptian deities. He was a nature and fertility god of vegetation and earth, which dies with the harvest and is reborn with the new grain sprouts. After his dismemberment by his brother Set<sup>16</sup>, he became known as the god of the moon, underworld, the dead, and the afterlife and above all, the god of resurrection and regeneration. Osiris, Isis and Set were the children of Geb (earth) and Nut (sky). Isis, his sister queen, was believed to help the dead enter the afterlife, and was considered the divine mother of the pharaoh. She is the goddess of magic and wisdom, kingship and protector of the kingdom. Set is the villain in the ancient stories and the god of desert, storms, disorder, violence and foreigners.

Plutarch (AD 46 – AD 120), the Greek biographer and writer, wrote an essay on Isis and Osiris detailing their lives and experiences. The following text also relates the ancient Egyptian gods to the Greek gods, showing common threads of interpretation. It is however, unclear where Plutarch got his information about the Egyptian stories. Later in this study, I shall review the story distilled from actual hieroglyphs found on ruins and ancient scrolls.

One of the first acts related of Osiris in his reign was to deliver the Egyptians from their destitute and brutish manner of living. This he did by showing them the fruits of cultivation, by giving them laws, and by teaching them to honour the gods. Later he travelled over the whole earth civilizing it without the slightest need of arms, but most of the peoples he won over to his way by the charm of his persuasive discourse combined with song and all manner of music. Hence the Greeks came to identify him with Dionysus.<sup>17</sup>

This passage emphasises the civilising and liberating aspect of Osiris and his unifying attributes. He was instrumental in expanding consciousness in both directions<sup>18</sup>. On one hand, he introduced agricultural techniques, thus making food production more efficient, and laws that tamed behaviour and honouring one's parental authorities. On the other hand, he brought joy, fun and instinctive behaviour mixed with intoxication, which is akin to the characteristics of the half brothers Apollo and Dionysus of Greek mythology, in one character.

<sup>17</sup> PLUTARCH, Moralia Vol. V, translated by Frank C. Babbit, The Loeb Classical Library, pages 35-37

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> There are several versions of the myth and Osiris's dismemberment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> This is the nature of expanding awareness. It is bi-directional in that we have to be aware of the animal (characters) within and their urges and intrigues, as well as the civilising aspects of reason, insight, and understanding.

During his absence the tradition is that Typhon attempted nothing revolutionary because Isis, who was in control, was vigilant and alert; but when he returned home Typhon contrived a treacherous plot against him and formed a group of conspirators seventy-two in number. He had also the co-operation of a queen from Ethiopia who was there at the time and whose name they report as Aso. Typhon, having secretly measured Osiris's body and having made ready a beautiful chest of corresponding size artistically ornamented, caused it to be brought into the room where the festivity was in progress. The company was much pleased at the sight of it and admired it greatly, whereupon Typhon jestingly promised to present it to the man who should find the chest to be exactly his length when he lay down in it. They all tried it in turn, but no one fitted it; then Osiris got into it and lay down, and those who were in the plot ran to it and slammed down the lid, which they fastened by nails from the outside and also by using molten lead. Then they carried the chest to the river and sent it on its way to the sea through the Tanitic Mouth. 19

The preceding passage details the return of Osiris to the kingdom that was up to that time, controlled by Isis. This seems to indicate that Isis was a better leader than Osiris and was less prone to manipulation by his brother Typhon<sup>20</sup> (Set), and co-conspirators. Osiris plays a part in his own sacrifice and is willingly tricked into an ornate coffin or sarcophagus. Set nails the chest shut and weighs it down with lead entombing Osiris and sends him into the darkness of the river and out to sea (unconscious).

But Isis wandered everywhere at her wits' end no one whom she approached did she fail to address, and even when she met some little children she asked them about the chest.......Thereafter Isis, as they relate, learned that the chest had been cast up by the sea near the land of Byblus and that the waves had gently set it down in the midst of a clump of heather. The heather in a short time ran up into a very beautiful and massive stock, and enfolded and embraced the chest with its growth and concealed it within its trunk. The king of the country admired the great size of the plant, and cut off the portion that enfolded the chest (which was now hidden from sight), and used it as a pillar to support the roof of his house.

Isis grieves the loss of Osiris and embarks on a journey to recover him. She discovers that the sea (unconscious) had not taken Osiris, but gently returned him to the land where he became part of the landscape as a strong and beautiful tree. A king admired the tree with the hidden chest inside and cut it down for use as a central pillar to hold up his own house (kingdom). Osiris, as an agricultural spirit, therefore supported another

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> PLUTARCH, Moralia Vol. V, translated by Frank C. Babbit, The Loeb Classical Library, pages 35-37

Typhon is the Greek name given to the Egyptian name Set

kingdom in death as he had done in life. We cannot kill a spirit like Osiris because he gives knowledge and insight, which once attained is difficult to remove.

Then the goddess disclosed herself and asked for the pillar which served to support the roof. She removed it with the greatest ease and cut away the wood of the heather which surrounded the chest; then, when she had wrapped up the wood in a linen cloth and had poured perfume upon it, she entrusted it to the care of the kings and even to this day the people of Byblus venerate this wood which is preserved in the shrine of Isis <sup>21</sup>

Isis removes the chest from the tree with great care not to undermine the kingdom it held up. She beautifies and venerates the chest with linen and perfume, and provides a substitute totem for the king to venerate.

As they relate, Isis proceeded to her son Horus, who was being reared in Buto, and bestowed the chest in a place well out of the way; but Typhon, who was hunting by night in the light of the moon, happened upon it. Recognizing the body he divided it into fourteen parts and scattered them, each in a different place. Isis learned of this and sought for them again, sailing through the swamps in a boat of papyrus. This is the reason why people sailing in such boats are not harmed by the crocodiles, since these creatures in their own way show either their fear or their reverence for the goddess.

Of the parts of Osiris's body the only one which Isis did not find was the male member, for the reason that this had been at once tossed into the river, and the

Lepidotus, the sea-bream, and the pike had fed upon and it is from these very fishes the Egyptians are most scrupulous in abstaining. But Isis made a replica of the member to take its place, and consecrated the phallus, in honour of which the Egyptians even at the present day celebrate a festival.<sup>22</sup>

Once again, Typhon (Set), the jealous brother, tries to eradicate the spirit of Osiris by dismembering his body into fourteen parts. There is no information on the parts separated, but we can assume it was the primary parts of the body. Beheading is the differentiation of bodily from mental functions. If we extrapolate this idea to the complete dismemberment of the body of Osiris, we can suggest that fourteen parts may refer to firstly the senses of sight, hearing, smell and taste as the eyes, ears, nose and tongue making seven parts. The arms with which we do and make things, legs, in which we walk through life, head which houses our thinking, the

 $<sup>^{21}</sup>$  PLUTARCH, Moralia Vol. V, translated by Frank C. Babbit, The Loeb Classical Library, pages 37-43

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Ibid, page 47

torso and our vital organs, including the heart, and finally the penis, which is symbolic of a man's procreative masculinity. This part was not retrievable and eaten by fish, which are associated with ideas because they swim in the water (unconscious). Re-creating the penis is the transformation of the procreating masculine force and completion of the resurrected body. The lost and remade penis is therefore the spiritualisation of the masculine procreative force, and relates to the idea of fertilisation and rebirth as described in the following passage.

Later, as they relate, Osiris came to Horus from the other world and exercised and trained him for the battle. After a time Osiris asked Horus what he held to be the most noble of all things. When Horus replied, "To avenge one's father and mother for evil done to them," Osiris then asked him what animal he considered the most useful for them who go forth to battle and when Horus said, "A horse," Osiris was surprised and raised the question why it was that he had not rather said a lion than a horse. Horus answered that a lion was a useful thing for a man in need of assistance, but that a horse served best for cutting off the flight of an enemy and annihilating him.<sup>23</sup>

Osiris returns from the dead to train his son, Horus to avenge the wrong done to him and his mother Isis by his uncle Set. Horus surprises Osiris in his practical choice of a horse, rather than a powerful beast like a lion that can devour the enemy. A horse can outrun, chase and more importantly, be tamed to serve, something difficult to do with a lion. Symbolically, a lion represents the position of power and nobility of the untamed jungle, whereas a horse is a tame, useful companion that increases the power of a man in battle.

Now the battle, as they relate, lasted many days and Horus prevailed. Isis, however, to whom Typhon was delivered in chains, did not cause him to be put to death, but released him and let him go. Horus could not endure this with equanimity, but laid hands upon his mother and wrested the royal diadem from her head but Hermes put upon her a helmet like unto the head of a cow.<sup>24</sup>

Isis is, in fact, the female principle of Nature, and is receptive of every form of generation, in accord with which she is called by Plato the gentle nurse and the all-receptive, and by most people has been called by countless names, since, because of the force of Reason, she turns herself to this thing or that and is receptive of all manner of shapes and forms. She has an innate love for the first and most dominant of all things, which is identical with the good, and this she yearns for and pursues but the portion which comes from evil she tries to avoid and to

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 24}$  PLUTARCH, Moralia Vol. V, translated by Frank C. Babbit, The Loeb Classical Library, page 49

reject, for she serves them both as a place and means of growth, but inclines always towards the better and offers to it opportunity to create from her and to impregnate her with effluxes and likenesses in which she rejoices and glad that she is made pregnant and teeming with the secreations. For creation is the image of being in matter, and the thing created is a picture of reality. <sup>25</sup>

Plutarch not only tells the story of Isis and Osiris, but also gives his own analysis with reference to ancient Greek thought. He describes Isis as the female principal of love and creativity, and through her compassion, lets Typhon (Set) go without punishment, much to the disgust of Horus.

It is not, therefore, out of keeping that they have a legend that the soul of Osiris is everlasting and imperishable, but that his body Typhon often times dismembers and causes to disappear, and that Isis wanders hither and yon in her search for it, and fits it together again for that which really is and is perceptible and good is superior to destruction and change.<sup>26</sup>

Plutarch hints at the dismemberment of Osiris as a recurring theme of an eternal 'soul' and the principle of love being stronger than destruction, which Typhon (Set) represents. These ideas show that the ancient Egyptians were becoming aware of universal patterns later established in the Christian tradition.

One might conjecture that the Egyptians hold in high honour the most beautiful of the triangles, since they liken the nature of the Universe most closely to it, as Plato in the Republic seems to have made use of it in formulating his figure of marriage. This triangle has its upright of three units, its base of four, and its hypotenuse of five, whose power is equal to that of the other two sides. The upright, therefore, maybe likened to the male, the base to the female, and the hypotenuse to the child of both, and so Osiris may be regarded as the origin, Isis as the recipient, and Horus as perfected result. Three is the first perfect odd number: four is a square whose side is the even number two but five is in some ways like to its father, and in some ways like to its mother, being made up of three and two. And panta (all) is a derivative of pente (five), and they speak of counting as "numbering by fives." Five makes a square of itself, as many as the letters of the Egyptian alphabet, and as many as the years of the life of the Apis.<sup>27</sup>

In the above, Plutarch describes the honour that the Egyptians bestowed on the numbers three, four and five, hence the triangle and pyramid. He also describes the opposites of father (Osiris) and mother (Isis), united through the perfected third (Horus). Later in this study, we shall see that

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid, page 131

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ibid, pages 135 & 137

Horus is indeed the union of opposites, as he became a sun god with down to earth principles. Plutarch describes the number five like father and mother, thus uniting them in one number. This also relates to the Axiom of Maria, the first Alchemist, which states: 'One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the one as the fourth', which shows an unfolding staged development towards the number five as unity and completion of four.

E. A. Budge translated the following version of the Osiris myth from ancient ruins and scrolls. This version of the myth emphasises the dismemberment and scattering of Osiris's body across the land, but there is no mention of a chest<sup>28</sup>, and Horus had a greater role in Osiris's resurrection.

For some time the priests kept secret the manner of his death, but at length some of them, being unable to keep the knowledge to themselves, divulged the matter. Osiris was, in fact, murdered by his wicked brother, Typhon, who broke his body into twenty-six pieces, and gave a piece to each of his fellow-conspirators, to make them equally quilty with himself, and so to force them to raise him to the throne of Osiris and to defend him when there. Isis, the sister and wife of Osiris, with the assistance of her son Horus, avenged his murder, and took possession of the throne of Egypt. She searched for and found all the pieces of her husband's body save one, and she rejoined them by means of wax and aromatic spices, and made the body to be of the former size of Osiris. She then sent for the priests and told each of them that she was going to entrust to them the body of Osiris for burial, and she assigned to them one-third part of the country to serve as an endowment for his worship.......lsis also ordered that models of the missing part of the body of Osiris should be made, and they were adored in the temples, and were held generally in great veneration<sup>29</sup>

As we can see, the story is slightly different to Plutarch's interpretation, as there was secrecy over the manner of Osiris's death, and he was dismembered into twenty-six, rather than fourteen pieces. It also details the method of re-joining the pieces with wax and spices and the veneration of the 'missing part' (penis) in the temples dedicated to him. The ideas common to both versions are the murder of Osiris by his brother Set, the dismemberment and reassembling by Isis and Horus, and the reconstitution of the lost part (penis), sometimes fashioned out of gold<sup>30</sup>, and the veneration of this spiritualised masculinity. The body part

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Budge does include the story as told by Plutarch in his book, but there is no mention of the chest as the murder weapon in the translated hieroglyphs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> BUDGE, E. A. Wallis, Osiris & the Egyptian Resurrection Vol. 1, P.L Warner 1911, pages 11-12

 $<sup>^{30}</sup>$  PIOTR O. Scholz (2001). Eunuchs and castrati: a cultural history. Markus Wiener Publishers. p. 32

lost had to be created anew, and was therefore not the original masculine instinct, but a new transformed version of it which was worshiped by the people.

Osiris was a good, benevolent, and just king, who was murdered by his brother Set. Isis, his sister and wife, was a faithful and loving wife, who protected him and his interests with unremitting care during his life, and cherished his memory unceasingly after his death. She endured sorrow, pain, and loneliness in bringing forth his son Horus, and spared herself neither toil nor care in rearing him. As he grew up she taught him that it was his duty to avenge his father's murder, and encouraged a warlike spirit in him. Nephthys, her sister, attached herself to her with loving faithfulness, and assisted Isis by word and deed in all the trouble which she suffered through the murder of her husband, and through the poisoning of her child Horus. Set was the husband of Nephthys, and begat by her Anpu, or Anubis, who acted as embalmer of Osiris. Thus we see that the Egyptians regarded these gods and goddesses as a sort of holy family, all the members whereof were god-men and godwomen.<sup>31</sup>

This passage explains the allegiances and relationships between the family members surrounding Osiris. He married his sister Isis and Set, Osiris's brother, married his sister Nephthys, thus forming a quaternity of couples with Osiris and Set in opposition. This is natural in an agricultural society, as the forces of fertilisation (birth), growth, harvest (death) and renewal that Osiris represents, oppose the forces of destruction such as storms, floods, drying lands (desert) etc., that Set represents. The balance of forces between feminine love, acceptance, birth and new life represented by Isis as 'useful or excellent goddess' and Osiris, is opposite to the destructive forces of Set. Isis gives birth to Horus the falcon god after the death of Osiris, who took his place as heir to the throne. Horus was a sky deity who contained both sun and moon in his right and left eyes respectively, and took over the role of opposition to Set in honour of his father.

In the magical and religious literature of Ancient Egypt, there are many references to the mutilations which were inflicted on the bodies of the greatest of the beneficent gods by the gods of evil and the powers of darkness, and also several allusions to mutilations which the good gods inflicted on their own bodies under the stress of emotions of various kinds. Thus Set, the Typhon of the Greeks, by means of eclipses blinded temporarily both the eyes of Horus, and tore them out of his head, and under the form of a black pig he swallowed the left eye, which he found one night as he was wandering about the sky. The disappearance of the right eye of Horus, i.e., the sun, from the sky each night, was also

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> BUDGE, E. A. Wallis, Osiris & the Egyptian Resurrection Vol. 1, P.L Warner 1911, page 28

caused by Set, and every month, after full moon, the moon was eaten away piecemeal by him. In addition to the eyes the two arms of Horus were removed and destroyed by Set. These facts are made clear by the CXIIthi and CXIIIth Chapters of the Book of the Dead. According to the former chapter Horus looked at the black pig into which Set had transformed himself, and at once received a terrible blow of fire in the eve, and through the whirlwind of fire which followed it the eve was destroyed. When Ra had ordered Horus to be put to bed, and declared that he would recover, he announced that the " pig was an abomination to Horus," and ever after it was so. The daily restoration of the eye of Horus was effected by means of a ceremony which was performed in the great temple of Amen-Ra at Karnak. The priest approached the closed shrine which contained the figure of the god, and having broken the seal and untied the cord he said: "The cord is "broken, the seal is undone, I am come to bring thee " the Eye of Horus, thine eye is to thee. O Horus. "The mud of the seal is broken, the celestial ocean is penetrated, the intestines of Osiris are drawn out (i.e., fished out of the water). I am not come to "destroy the god on his throne, I am come to set the "god on his throne." The priest next drew the bolt, which symbolized the removal of the finger of Set from the Eve of Horus, and when he had thrown open the doors of the shrine, and the light fell upon the face of the figure of the god, he declared that the "heavens were opened," and the ceremony was complete.32

In the above the author describes the characteristics and relationship between Horus and Set. This interesting perception of the day and night and the sun and moon as the eyes of Horus and the cyclic waxing and waning of the moon, (eaten piecemeal) show a keen observation of celestial behaviour and a projected relationship to that behaviour. Ra the great sun god puts Horus to bed (unconscious) to recover after Set's onslaught and the cycle begins anew. This is an excellent example of how everyday events such as sun and moon phases are the beginnings of mythological projection and a way for people to relate to them. It is an example of our nature to project the unconscious characters onto physical objects and relate to them as if they were people.

From the above passage it is clear that Horus did not only collect and reunite the flesh and bones of Osiris, but that he made him once more a complete man, endowed with all his members. Having done this, it was necessary to restore to Osiris the power to breathe, to speak, to see, to walk, and to employ his body in any way he saw fit. To bring about this result Horus performed a number of ceremonies, and made use of several words of power which had the effect of "opening the mouth "of Osiris....... When the body of Osiris was ready to leave this earth for heaven, some difficulty, it seems, arose in raising him up to the sky, and a ladder was found to be necessary.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> lbid, pages 62-63

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, page 74

The myth continues, with Horus resurrecting Osiris from the devastation of Set and bringing back his soul to his body in the form of breath, senses and ability to walk. Living the life cycle of death, dismemberment and resurrection makes him the 'complete man'. Horus (Osiris's inner child) had the task of bringing back all those aspects of his personality cut off and put together to make him alive and complete. Breath is often associated with soul, and to speak is the ability to relate, seeing the ability to perceive and walking the ability to move through life. This is a differentiation of the aspects of life into their components. In other words, the dismembered into fourteen or twenty-six parts were re-integrated into a living being, with each part now differentiated and related to the whole. As we shall see shortly, the ancient Egyptians knew the difference between spirit, soul, body and shadow as components of the complete man.

Horus, being a practical god (horse rather than lion), could not simply send Osiris to heaven but had to find a ladder to complete the transformation. This indicates that the journey from life to death, dismemberment, reconstitution and resurrection requires many steps and great effort. It is a myth based on known cycles of nature that oscillate between the benevolent Osiris and the constantly thwarting Set and his malevolent surprises and deviations. For the ancients, these cycles were partly environmental and celestial, and partly symbolic projections. The idea of ladder to get Osiris to heaven also relates to Jacob's ladder in the Book of Genesis.

When Osiris stepped from the ladder into heaven, he entered in among the company of the gods as a "living being," not merely as one about to begin a second state of existence with the limited powers and faculties which he possessed upon earth, but as one who felt that he had the right to rule heaven and the denizens thereof. He possessed a complete body, the nature of which had been changed by ceremonies which Horus, and his sons, and the assistant Tcherti goddesses, had performed for him; the number of his bones was complete and every internal organ and limb were in their place and in a perfect state. Besides these he possessed his forms, or attributes," and his similitude, his heart, his soul," his Ka, or double, his spirit, which was the head of all the spirits, and his power. He had gone to life, and not to death, he was the "Chief of the Living Ones by the command of Ra," and was the " Great God " par excellence} He was "Chief of the Powers," he was "master of heaven," and he had the power to bestow " life and well-being "upon those in heaven who went to him. He transmitted his own odour to those whom he loved, and his chosen ones sat on his shoulder." He sat upon a throne, holding sceptres emblematic of his various powers in his hands, and he was surrounded by his bodyguard, and nobles, and trusted servants, after the manner of an African king; at the proper

moment these cried out, "the god Cometh, the god cometh, the god cometh,"34

Having ascended the ladder and achieved entry into heaven, Osiris takes his rightful place on the throne. He has gone through the sacrifice and reconstitution of his body and spiritualisation of his masculinity with the help of his son Horus and his sister wife Isis, and differentiated his body (Khat) from soul (Ba, heart) and spirit (Ka). He is the bringer of life, benevolence and kindness in opposition to his brother Set. With this, we can see the Christian ideas already formulating and ripening in the ancient Egyptian soul.

The ancient Egyptians knew the reality of the natural cycles of the psychic and physical environments. On the one hand, we have everyday elements of sky, sun, moon, river, desert, storms, rain etc., and on the other, a family of gods and goddesses (inner characters) projected onto those elements. It is these projections, and the source of these projections that the Egyptians regarded as the afterlife.

The offerings found in the pre-dynastic tombs of Egypt prove that the indigenous inhabitants of the country believed in the existence after death, and the persistent allusions to "everlasting life" and immortality which are found in the texts of all periods show that a belief in a resurrection was general.<sup>35</sup>

They believed the body (KHAT) already had a spiritual living being (Ka) when born, which directed and guided the body until death. They regarded Ka as the "double" of the body and depicted him with two arms extended at right angles, as if open for embrace. Upon death Ka lived on and the body was preserved, so that the Ka could visit it from time to time. The following passage describes Ka's need for spiritual food and clothing.

Not only was it necessary to provide a figure for the Ka to dwell in, but if it was not to perish of cold, hunger and thirst, offerings of meat, drink, clothing, etc., must be placed in the tomb by the friends and relatives of the dead, so that the Ka might eat and drink, anoint and dress itself, even as its body had done when upon earth. The Ka did not, of course, consume the actual offering of food which were given to it, but only the spirits, or "doubles" of the bread, beer, vegetables, meat, oil, etc., and similarly it arrayed itself in the spirits of the suits of line apparel which were offered to it.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pages 77-78

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> BUDGE, E. A. Wallis, Osiris & the Egyptian Resurrection Vol. 2, Dover Publications, 1973 page 116

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Ibid, pages 117-118

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Ibid, page 120

The above passage is important because it shows that the ancient Egyptians were aware of objects having a spiritual "double". In other words, they already knew the difference between the object and the idea of the object in projected form, something that Plato, Schopenhauer and particularly Kant also recognised<sup>38</sup>. The person's body was dead, but the idea of the person (Ka) lives on and is immortal. In addition to becoming aware of Spirit, Soul and body, the ancient Egyptians also recognised the shadow (Khaibit) that the sun god Ra casts onto the body, as well as the shadow of the double that accompanies the spirit into the afterlife.

In the Theban Book of the Dead the deceased prays that his Ba and Khu and Shadow may not be shut in the Other World, and elsewhere we read, "O keep not captive my Soul (Ba), O keep not ward over my Shadow, but let a way be opened for my Soul and for my Shadow, and let [me] see the great God in the shrine, on the day of the Judgment of Souls, and let [me] recite the words of Osiris, whose habitations are hidden, to those who guard the members of Osiris, and who keep ward over the Khu (Spirits), and who hold captive the shadows of the dead, who would work evil against me, lest they work evil against me." <sup>39</sup>

The text shows that there is a connection between the Shadow, Soul and Spirit and they were afraid of capture by evil shadows already in the 'Other world'. In reality, there are two shadows cast on an object. The first is the projection that falls onto another object like the ground and the second, an attached shadow on the object on the opposite side to the light source. The projected shadow casts a dark outline of the object without distinct features, and the darkness depends on the intensity of the light source. If the sun is the light source, the shadow moves and changes shape with the sun. The projected shadow follows a person around and never detaches from their body unless they are detached from the earth or other solid object. Birds lose their projected shadow when in flight as it is left on the ground. The attached shadow is the dark side on the object and cannot be projected. Without a light source, an object is in complete darkness and enveloped by the projected and attached shadows.

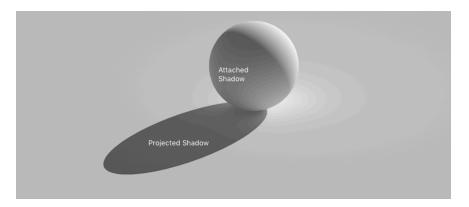
The attached shadow therefore represents the body and all its mammalian functions that cannot be separated or projected, except at physical death. The projected shadow is the idea of the body and its functions. Unity is the acceptance of our earthly body and soul, including positive and negative emotions, our weaknesses and desires, our

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<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 4- Ideas of Unity in Philosophy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> BUDGE, E. A. Wallis, Osiris & the Egyptian Resurrection Vol. 2, Dover Publications, 1973, page 126

sensuality and sexuality, to the matter of our bodies, intake of nutrients and excretion of urine and faeces. As long as we have a body with the same functions as other mammals, part of us will always be a beast.



These facts are universal perceptions that do not change over time and attract psychological projections of many kinds. The ancient Egyptians saw their shadows having a mysterious life of its own, as the following passage emphasises.

These passages are important, for they show: (1) That there were believed to exist certain evil Shadows who would do harm to their fellow Shadows if they could (2) That the Shadow was associated with the Soul; (3) That the Shadow had the power to move about and to go where it liked. The difference between the spirit-body and the Shadow is so slight that we can readily understand how easily one was confounded with the other in men's minds.<sup>40</sup>

The above shows they regarded the shadow(s); body, soul and spirit having a close relationship expressed both physically and symbolically. The sun (spirit, Ka) shines on the body (Khat) and creates the shadows (Khaibit), which is felt by the soul (Ba), and expressed through the body with heartbeat, emotions etc. The ancient Egyptians gave these functions characters, which make it more complex. It shows a distinct ability to perceive the difference between functions. For example, they could already see the differences between the spirit, body and shadow, and the relationship of soul to the spirit and the body. The following passage considers this relationship.

THE SOUL OF THE KA, OR BODY-SOUL To one of the constituents of man's spiritual economy the Egyptians gave the name of "Ba," a word which, by general consent among Egyptologists, is translated

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, page 127

"soul."...... It was not incorporeal, though its nature and substance were somewhat ethereal......The Ba of a man was represented by a bird with a bearded human head.<sup>41</sup>

The Ba is therefore a flighty soul with masculine qualities, which seems more characteristic of the Ka (spirit) and indeed, relates to the hermaphroditic quality of the alchemical soul Mercurius. This dual nature of the soul as part body and spirit with the head of a bird shows that ancient Egyptians had not quite differentiated their inner characters into their human and earthly form, and still had much to do with their animal nature. The text continues:

"Ka." Now the vignette of this Chapter in the Papyrus of Ani is a heart, which proves that in the XVIIIth dynasty the heart was somehow associated with the Ba and the Ka, and we must, it seems to me, conclude that the Ba was the soul of the Ka, and that its seat of being was in the Ka.<sup>42</sup>

There are inklings that the heart somehow associated Ba (soul) with Ka (spirit). In other words, the ancient Egyptians were becoming aware of the relationship between soul and spirit through the heart, but could not distinguish between the functions of heart and mind. This shows that the ancient Egyptian's understanding of soul and spirit was still to some extent, contaminated with each other and their characteristics undifferentiated, as the following text shows:

THE HEART. In Egyptian (hieroglyphic representation), which literally means "heart," is used to express wish, longing, desire, lust, will, courage, mind, wisdom, sense, intelligence, manner, disposition, attention, intention, etc., and it is clear that the heart was regarded as the seat of life, and as the home of the passions, both good and bad, and as the seat of the pleasures derived from eating, drinking, and the carnal appetite. There appears to have been a soul which was connected with the heart. It was not, I believe, the soul as we usually understand it, but the heart-soul.<sup>43</sup>

The characteristics that we would regard as part of our spiritual function, that is to say, in the head, are the to ancients Egyptians part of the heart. For example longing, manner, desire and lust we would consider part of the functioning of the heart, whereas, will, courage, mind, intelligence, disposition, attention and intention, part of the functioning of our spirit. The spirit therefore contaminates their idea of soul and what is physical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Ibid, pages 128-129

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, page 130

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Ibid, pages 130-131

with what is psychic. They did however; know the difference between soul and 'dream soul'.

The name "Dream-soul" is given to that part of a man which is thought sometimes to leave him during sleep, and to wander away into strange places, where it sometimes meets with remarkable adventures. Some times it enjoys its freedom so greatly, and so delights in its intercourse with other Dream-souls, that it forgets to come back to its body before the man wakes up.<sup>44</sup>

It is not clear from this passage if the ancient Egyptians understood the similarities between the dream soul while asleep and the spirit (Ka) of the afterlife. Both go somewhere else, have adventures and may or may not return to the body. Their embalming rituals and provision of food for the dead show that they believed the spirit did return to the body on occasion.

Ancient Egypt was the first great civilisation to emerge from the prehistoric animistic world and transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture. Their myths expressed elemental systems related to their agricultural pursuits and their projected deities gave them answers to the mysteries and behaviour of objects like the sun, moon, rain, earth and so on. They perceived the sun as hot, drying, bright, a daytime object and differentiated its behaviour into several deities. This includes where the sun went at night and its disappearance behind clouds and storms. The characterisation gave them relationship to the object and became a male father figure that sailed his boat across the sky with periodic conflict with other characters. Set was responsible for the destructive storms, thunder, lightning, and disappearance of the sun at night.

The story of Osiris shows how an individual evolves from agricultural cycles to the elevated position of god in heaven. Isis, Horus and others help Osiris achieve this ascension and the myth brings all characters into family relationship and a family hierarchy. Sky (Nut) and the earth (Geb) were Osiris's mother and father. He married his sister (Isis), fought with his brother (Set) who killed and dismembered him. His son (Horus) and wife (Isis) bring him back to life and ultimately, to heaven. As an agricultural character to begin with, Osiris represented the cycles of germination, growth, harvest, germination, and so on. He was a good god in contrast to his brother Set, who was bad, and the shadow of Osiris. We can find this universal principal throughout nature, including human nature. It is present within the very structure of matter in the balance of positive and negative charges in the atom and the balance between predator and prey, sky and earth, fire and water, and so on. It is the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, page 137

positive feeling of love by Isis and Horus that overcame the trickery of Set and the dismemberment of Osiris.

It is interesting to note that Set did not confront Osiris man to man, so to speak, but had to trick him into his death, which means that Osiris was not aware of his brother's intentions and almost willingly accepted his path based on natural cycles of life and death. Cutting and processing of grain, vegetables and animals for food may be the basis to the idea of dismemberment. It may also have an allusion to the way the unity of the personality fragments into its components when a strong emotion overcomes the individual. Small children having a tantrum show this dissolution and overwhelming emotion. Indeed as the conscious ego was just emerging from the ocean of the unconscious in ancient Egypt, this is a distinct possibility. The following passage on death also alludes to this possibility:

DEATH. The Egyptian theologians believed that there was a time when there was no death, but that time was when the god Temu alone existed, and before he created the heavens and the earth, and men and "gods." How and why death came the texts do not tell, but, judging from the views which are held in the Sudan at the present time, we may assume that the Egyptians regarded death as the means necessary to enable man to continue his existence after the breath left his material body. The present world was to them merely the ante chamber of the Other World; a man's house in this world was a temporary abode, but his tomb was his 'eternal house' 45

The 'Other World', is the myth-making unconscious and the physical existence of consciousness is a mere 'ante chamber'. This shows that the emergence of the ego from the unconscious was in its beginning stages of development, and that the dreams and myths of the ancient Egyptians were very much in the foreground of their minds. Osiris was a central character in their mythology, with evil on one side and the love of a dedicated wife and son on the other. The parallels between this myth and the Christian myth are unmistakeable.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, page 143

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