

WHEN DOES PERSONALITY ARRIVE?

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The concept of personality is one of the most intriguing presented to us by our spiritual teachers in the pages of The URANTIA Book. The fascination aroused by this concept is due to more than man's rather strong tendency towards narcissism. "The more completely man understands himself and appreciates the personality values of his fellows, the more he will crave to know the Original Personality, and the more earnestly such a God-knowing human will strive to become like the Original Personality." (*30:5) "When all is said and done, the Father idea is still the highest human concept of God." (*2097:3)

In addition to its high value, the concept of personality is also the most profound of all concepts presented to us (at least in the opinion of this reader). Nothing is more immediate and simple than the experiential fact of the presence of the value-feeling of our own personality or the personalities of others. But the attempt to grasp the reality of personality as an intellectual concept very quickly reveals the infinite depth beneath this simple surface. Although there is much about the concept of personality which is somewhat difficult of comprehension, nevertheless, the potential spiritual discoveries resulting from the study of this concept recommend the effort. "Effort does not always produce joy, but there is no happiness without intelligent effort." (*556:10)

Methodical Approach

The question "When does personality arrive?" has been very useful to me because it establishes an intellectual focus and a structured channel for the study of the concept of personality. Concepts are always developed more fully when they are approached methodically; and persistent, systematic study is always punctuated by those sudden and surprising illuminations of insight into the more profound levels of meaning and value contained in concepts.

Personality is always the direct bestowal of the Universal Father (cf. 70:5), but we are not directly informed of exactly when the Father chooses to bestow personality upon that material energy system which is the living body. This question of when personality arrives can be placed in its proper perspective by relating personality to the other three cosmic realities which constitute man - spirit, mind, and matter.

Domain of Personal Experience

Personality, spirit, mind, and matter are the four different types of reality which form the whole, which is man. Experientially, matter is that reality which is brought into man's awareness by perceptions and sensations; mind is that reality which is living consciousness and is most easily identified self-consciously in the activities of language; spirit is that reality which we feelingly experience as quality and value: "Mind knows quantity, reality, meanings. But quality - values - is felt. That which feels is the mutual creation of mind, which knows, and the associated spirit, which reality-izes." (*1219:6) The domain of personal experience is fully defined by the events of feeling, thinking, and doing which make up the component parts of self-conscious experience, and these three categories of experiential events can be correlated with the actualities of spirit, mind, and matter. However, personality is only directly aware of the reality of mind.

Spirit is an objective reality which we feel with the powers of perceptual sensitivity which are present in the soul. This perceptual sensitivity of the soul is the complementary equivalent of the automatic and instinctive perceptual powers present in the lower levels of material mind which enable us to "feel" the material energy disturbances of perceptions and sensations which occur in the central nervous system. (cf. 1435:2) Just as the subconscious levels of material mind respond to material energy and this response is registered in awareness as perception, the superconscious levels of morontia mind respond to the reality of spiritual energies and this response is registered in awareness as the appreciation of qualities and values.

The things, meanings, and values of experience constitute what we are. Spirit, mind, and matter are the parts of the whole, the personality system; but personality is something more than the what of man. Personality is the who of man. It is this "who" which feels values, thinks ideas, and perceives things.

There are two essential characteristics of personality which make it a reality different from the realities of spirit, mind, and matter. Whereas spirit, mind, and matter are uniform realities in their original natures (that is, prior to the influences of time and experience), "Personality is unique, absolutely unique: It is unique in time and space; it is unique in eternity and on Paradise; it is unique when bestowed - there are no duplicates; it is unique during every moment of existence; it is unique in relation to God ... 11 (*1225:12) This absolute uniqueness of who we are is also eternally stable. Unlike spirit, mind, and matter which are transformed in their natures by time and experience, ". . . there is one part of you that remains absolutely unaltered, and that is personality - permanence in the presence of change." (*1225:1) Age and experience have absolutely nothing to do with who we are and everything to do with what we are.

Armed with these few ideas, how can we respond to the question of when this absolutely unique and changeless reality of personality is bestowed by the Universal Father?

Personality is present prior to the arrival of the Thought Adjuster, which usually occurs around five years, ten months, and four days of age. (*1187:1) It is the first moral choice of the personality, as this registers in the first functioning of the adjutant mind-spirit of wisdom, which results in the dispatch of the Thought Adjuster from the shores of Divinington. (*1186:6) Personality is present at the time of the bestowal of the Thought Adjuster, but how soon before this event is personality bestowed?

Identity of Soul

Our teachers make a very clear distinction between the intellectual identity (the so-called ego of psychology) and the morontia identity of the immortal soul. "Human beings possess identity only in the material sense. Such qualities of the self are expressed by the material mind as it functions in the energy system of the intellect. When it is said that man has identity, it is recognized that he is in possession of a mind circuit which has been placed in subordination to the acts and choosing of the will of the human personality." (*1232:6) "Material mind is the arena in which human personalities live, are self-conscious, make decisions, choose God or forsake him, eternalize or destroy themselves." (*1216:5)

The self-consciousness of the intellectual identity is a cosmic reality (cf. 1479:7) because it is the manifestation of the will of the personality, but does self-consciousness exist prior to the activation of the adjutant mind spirit of wisdom and the bestowal of the Thought Adjuster?

"Human self-consciousness implies the recognition of the reality of selves other than the conscious self and further implies that such awareness is mutual; that the self is known as it knows. This is shown in a purely human manner in man's social life." (*195:10) "The social consciousness is ... a cultural development and is dependent on knowledge, symbols . . ." (*196:1)

The fundamental technique which enables the self to know other selves is personal communication, and language is one of the most potent techniques of personal communication. Children learn to talk around two years of age -almost four years prior to the bestowal of the Thought Adjuster. Not only will a conversation with a two year old provide conclusive proof of the existence of a mind controlled by a sometimes intractable will, but conversations with others many years older sometimes provides conclusive proof that there can be personal communication even in the complete absence of the active functioning of the adjutant of wisdom.

Personality is definitely present, then, at the birth of language, but how much prior to the age of two is personality bestowed?

"A child has been in existence about nine months before it experiences birth." (*1130:7) This statement led me to check back to Gabriel's appearances to both Mary and Elizabeth. Gabriel appeared to Elizabeth about nine months prior to John's birth. When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he said, "To you, Mary, I bring glad tidings when I announce that the conception within you is ordained by heaven . . ." (*1346:5) We are also told that, "Gabriel's announcement to Mary was made the day following the conception of Jesus . . ." (*1347:3)

The Chief of Evening Stars tells us that, "Joshua ben Joseph, the Jewish baby, was conceived and was born into the world just as all other babies before and since except that this particular baby was the incarnation of Michael of Nebadon . . ." (*1317:2) Also, in describing the mortal bestowal careers of Paradise Sons, a Perfector of Wisdom from Uversa tells us that, "The method whereby a Paradise Son becomes ready for mortal incarnation. . . , becomes enmothered on the bestowal planet, is a universal mystery . . ." (*228:6)

From these statements there is no doubt that personality is bestowed by the Universal Father before birth. The personality of a Paradise Son becomes "enmothered" on the bestowal planet just as the personality of every human becomes enmothered, but it is a universal mystery how a local universe Creator Son is able to have his personality so bestowed. But does personality actually arrive at conception, as seems to be implied?

A Marked Pattern

If we look at Michael's six previous bestowals, a marked pattern appears. On each of these six bestowals Michael is accompanied to the bestowal planet by another personality. On the first bestowal an omniaphim accompanies him to the Melchizedek world. On his second bestowal a tertiiaphim accompanies him. A seconaphim accompanies him to the headquarters world of System 87 in constellation 61 on his third bestowal and accompanies his credentials to the Mystery Sovereign. On the fourth, fifth, and sixth bestowals Gabriel presents the incarnation of Michael to the bestowal planet and presents his credentials to the planetary authorities.

The pattern seems to be quite clear. The incarnation of Michael is always accompanied to the bestowal planet by another personality who presents Michael's credentials to the planetary authorities. If this pattern holds true for the seventh bestowal and Gabriel presents Michael's credentials to Mary because the Lucifer Rebellion left Urantia without recognized planetary authorities, then personality must be bestowed by the Universal Father very soon after conception.

This is quite an amazing conclusion and one which stretches our conventional ideas of personality far beyond their limits. Is it truly possible that the reality of personality could be associated with the profound primitive material life form of a zygote? that is, with a single celled organism? This question is no more difficult to answer than the question of how personality, an eternal and qualified absolute, is able to enter into association with finite levels of reality.

"Personality, while devoid of identity, can unify the identity of any living energy system." (*1225:7) "The phenomenon of personality is dependent on the persistence of the identity of selfhood reaction to universe environment; and this can only be effected through the medium of mind." (*1235:2)

The distinction between personality and identity is crucial to an understanding of the technique whereby personality is able to associate with finite reality. This distinction is not made anywhere else that I am aware of except in The URANTIA Book. Personality is who we are, and spirit, mind, and matter constitute what we are, then identity is where and when we are. Identity is the cosmic focal point in time and space where the personality is able to experience reality. Personality is existential. Identity is experiential. Who we are is an eternal reality. Where and when we are is relative and subject to perpetual change.

Personality and Identity

Personality is an eternal reality, and the only technique whereby personality is able to contact temporal reality is by creating a personal identity upon finite levels of reality; and such an identity is always created out of the substance of mind and is associated with personality through its inherent power of will. (cf. 1232:6) It is the will of personality which spans the cosmic gulf between the eternal and the temporal, the qualified absolute nature of personality and the relative and finite nature of the identity. This distinction between personality and identity is difficult to grasp, but in experience it amounts to the ability to watch ourselves think from a removed perspective and to judge the value of our many thoughts. "Morality, virtue, is indigenous to human personality." (*192:9)

The zygote, the fertilized seed from which the material body grows, is a living organism which is animated by the pre-adjutant mind circuits of the Master Physical Controllers. (cf. 480:5) Whether or not personality could create an identity in this pre-adjutant mind at this early stage of development is a question. We are told that, "The material self is truly and unqualifiedly personal." (*71:1) Experientially, there is no doubt that the physical body is a personal identity even as the ego is a personal identity. Not only do we think with intention, we also act with intention, which is the proof that we have a personal identity on subconscious levels of mind which is capable of directing certain physical actions.

As this seed of the body grows, it becomes increasingly capable of tuning into progressively higher levels of mind until finally the intellectual identity appears with the evidence of language. Prior to the appearance of language, the personality is wholly identified with the body. The appearance of language enables the personality to see itself in the reality of the intellectual identity. The moral identity, the soul, appears with the personality's identity of the Mystery Monitor. The path of personality progression consists of the transcendence of personal identity from material to spiritual levels of reality. And just as in biological evolution the old is not lost but rather transcended and dominated by the new, so it is in the personal spiritual evolution of the identity.

And throughout all of these transformations in the focal point of personal experience, these inner journeys of the identity, the personality never changes. When we are finaliters at last, we will still be just who we are today. We truly are the children of God in the most profound, precise, and eternal way. Regardless of any deficiencies of character, any limitations of intellect, any handicaps in body, and every other consideration, the actuality of the eternal personality of each individual identifies that individual as a true child of the Universal Father.

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