

GALEN'S RECOGNITION OF THREE SOULS AND THEIR ORIGIN

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ABSTRACT: *Galen's three souls incorporate previously existing ideas of soul. Soul is matter – cum – energy. As matter it is airlike, the finest by nature and as movement, like sound, the form of energy most subtle of its kind. Creator is depicted with Creation as the Cosmic egg and snake as Cosmic soul and the syllable Om, as the word incorporating creative energy. Om as humming sound is symbolized by Bees which produce such sound.*

Galen (130 – 299 A.D) has been the final authority on Greek medicine and he recognizes three souls in the human system. These have also entered Unani or Islamic system of medicine thereby indicating their importance. As rendered into English Galen's souls would be 1. Vital spirits, 2. Natural spirits, and 3. Animal spirits – In Unani medicine they would respectively be named 1. Ruhe – Haiwani, 2 – Ruhe – Nafsani, and 3. Ruhe – Tabai. Now to know anything properly is to know it as whole, which implies its three aspects: What it is by its make-up, or constitution; What it is by its function; and What it is by its origin, how it came to be what it is. So far the existence of soul has been looked upon as axiomatic and more so of the three souls. Then the original idea of soul as also of the three souls, requires a separate communication while here the subject can only be discussed briefly.

In Greek literature the existence of three souls can be taken to Plato. Charles Singer (1956) writes that “Plato thought the Pharenes or Dispharma to be merely partition between two parts of the soul, the Appetitive and the Irascible (or Spirited)” – P. 133. He finally reproduces “a passage in Plato's Timaeus: - The Immortal – soul was situated in the head, but the Mortal – soul was divided into two parts by the diaphragm, an upper where is seated the Irascible Soul *Which assists reason*, against, desire, and a lower where the Appetitive soul, the *Soul that desires*, is chained below the diaphragm far from the council chamber of the Immortal Soul”. Thus the three souls would be 1. Immortal Soul, in the Head. 2. A. Mortal, as *Appetitive soul* below the diaphragm.



Fig. 1. Symbol of Diaphragm, Heart and Lungs, design of Guldenmundt, dated 1586.
From Jacobi (1951).

We can easily see that Plato attached much importance to the diaphragm, with one soul above, in the chest, and another, below in the abdomen. It is to be noted that when we breathe the most obvious sign is the movement induced by the diaphragm when the abdomen expands and contracts. I was on the look out for an illustration showing the diaphragm as Plato would have depicted it. I came across one in Jacobi's (1951 : 82) edition of "the Writings of Paracelsus" where, fig. 47 is the design of Guldenmundt, dated 1556. This would be after paracelsus, for he lived between 1493 – 1541. The above figure is offered here as fig.1. The most impressive item depicted is the diaphragm, above is the heart and on the top of the lungs. Lungs are concerned with inhaling air which exist outside in the world and can be looked upon as the universal or even as a celestial entity. In fact air has been recognized as a cosmic element. Then lungs become the agency of assimilating air

and this exists for all times. Hence when it enters the human system, according to Plato, it appears there as soul – immortal, and its main seat becomes the Head, the top – most part of the body, corresponding to Heaven above. While the original of Plato's Immortal – soul can be admitted, according to common sense, how the mortal soul, with its two subsouls, came into being requires specialized reason. Meanwhile we have to recognize that the three souls according to Plato are the same as mentioned by Galen. Galen's three souls have been depicted by several writers but the best illustration to my knowledge appears in the work of Green (1968, Fig.15). It is reproduced here as fig. 2: In fig. 2 brain or head, contains the Animal – spirits. This would easily be soul – immortal of Plato. Briefly the souls according to Plato and Galen, with their seats in the human system, would be the following :-

Plato's	Galen's	Seats
1. Immortal soul	Animal Spirits	Head
2. Irascible soul	Vital Spirits	Heart
3. Appetitive soul	Natural Spirits	Liver

Trying to go further back into the past it appears that the Hebrews also recognized three souls. These are briefly mentioned by the great Jewish Philosopher of Spain, Avicenna whose main work has been published by Myer (in 1888). On p. 390 we learn of "Neshamah, the intellectual soul. It inhabits the Brain". This would be easily identified with Plato's Immortal – soul, and Galen's Animal Spirits. On p. 391 there is "Nephesh, which inhabits the liver". Nephesh is the Hebrew form of the Arabic name Nafs or "the" soul. It would then be the Appetitive – soul of Plato and Natural

Spirits of Galen, which has liver for its main seat. Finally there is Ruah the same as Ruah in Arabic or Spirit, which becomes the Irascible – soul of Plato and the vital Spirits of Galen, with Heart circulating blood this is responsible for body-heat, the most essential condition of life in the human body. It would thus appear that Plato himself got the idea of his three souls from some earlier source perhaps Hebrew. Briefly the order of the three souls would be as given, on p.393, that "Neshamah rules over Ruah and Ruah rules over Nephesh" or in the order of the seats they occupy, Head, Heart and Liver, easily seen in fig-2.

Now what is to be carried over is the idea that the diaphragm is the organ responsible for the movement of breathing when, to breathe means to live. In fact we do not so easily recognize the beating of the heart or the expansion of the chest as we do the expansion and contraction of the abdomen. This is due to the function of the diaphragm. And within the abdomen the largest compact organ is the liver, neither the stomach nor the intestines. Moreover as seat of soul liver has been exploited in divination. An animal was slaughtered and examining the liver experts in divination was able to interpret what it signified. This art arose in Mesopotamia and has survived to this day in Indonesia. Thus there is no doubt that liver was looked upon as a seat of the soul.

We may now turn to consider how man came to conceive a soul at all – Human civilization began with man as hunter. But earlier he was a food – gatherer. But even he could not have avoided differentiating between the living and the dead and had to recognize a sign as indicating the dead. In those days man lived almost naked using animal skins which sparsely covered his body. He was thus able to see that when man is at rest or asleep there is breathing with his abdomen expanding and contracting. This phenomenon was absent in some cases and they represented the dead. Hence he came to believe that to breathe is to live and breath is life – essence or soul. In as much as soul is a motile entity and breathing is most obvious by the movement of the abdomen this was conceived as the seat of the soul. Hence Jung (1945; 212) observed that “certain Negro tribes locate their psychic functioning neither in the head nor in the heart but in the belly”, for there resides a soul.

The best idea of breath as soul is found in Chinese. Here Chhi means Breath but then

also Cosmic Soul when, as the original matter – cum – energy, it could create all forms of matter and also all forms of energy. Jung further differentiates between Air, as breath, with its slow movement and Air, as wind, which moves vigorously. Later on from each of these two concepts, Breath and Wind, have arisen two kinds of soul, the Soul and Spirit. Above all there has been the idea that if soul is Breath and Breath is Air, this being a substance, soul itself cannot be otherwise. According Jung writes that “in the Middle Ages as well as in Graeco – Roman world soul is a substance”. Moreover interpreters of Chhi likewise recognize it as a subtle form of matter, in fact as Prime Matter, the source of all creation.

We now come to words for soul based upon the idea of Breath. In Greek the word “Psyche (meaning Soul) is related to Psycho, to breathe” – Jung, p. 210. Likewise in Arabic Nafas = Breath while Nafs = Soul. In Sanskrit An = To breathe which, with the prefix Pra = Forward, as Forward – Breath, gave the word Prana = Soul. Then based upon the idea of fast moving air, as Wind, in Arabic Rih = wind, while Ruh = Spirit. In Latin the words, “Animus, Spirit, and Anima, Soul, are the same as the Greek Anemos, wind” – Jung p. 209. And he rightly concludes that “these affinities show that the names given to the soul are related to the notion of Moving Air”. Thus the idea of soul as essentially motile is embedded in the very word soul. Hence Jung writes (p. 209) that the German word “Seele (soul), like the English Soul, is (essentially) connected with the Greek, Aiolos, Mobile”, to which suffixes were added to give the different derivative words for soul. In as much as soul is Breath and Breath is Air this is something indestructible.

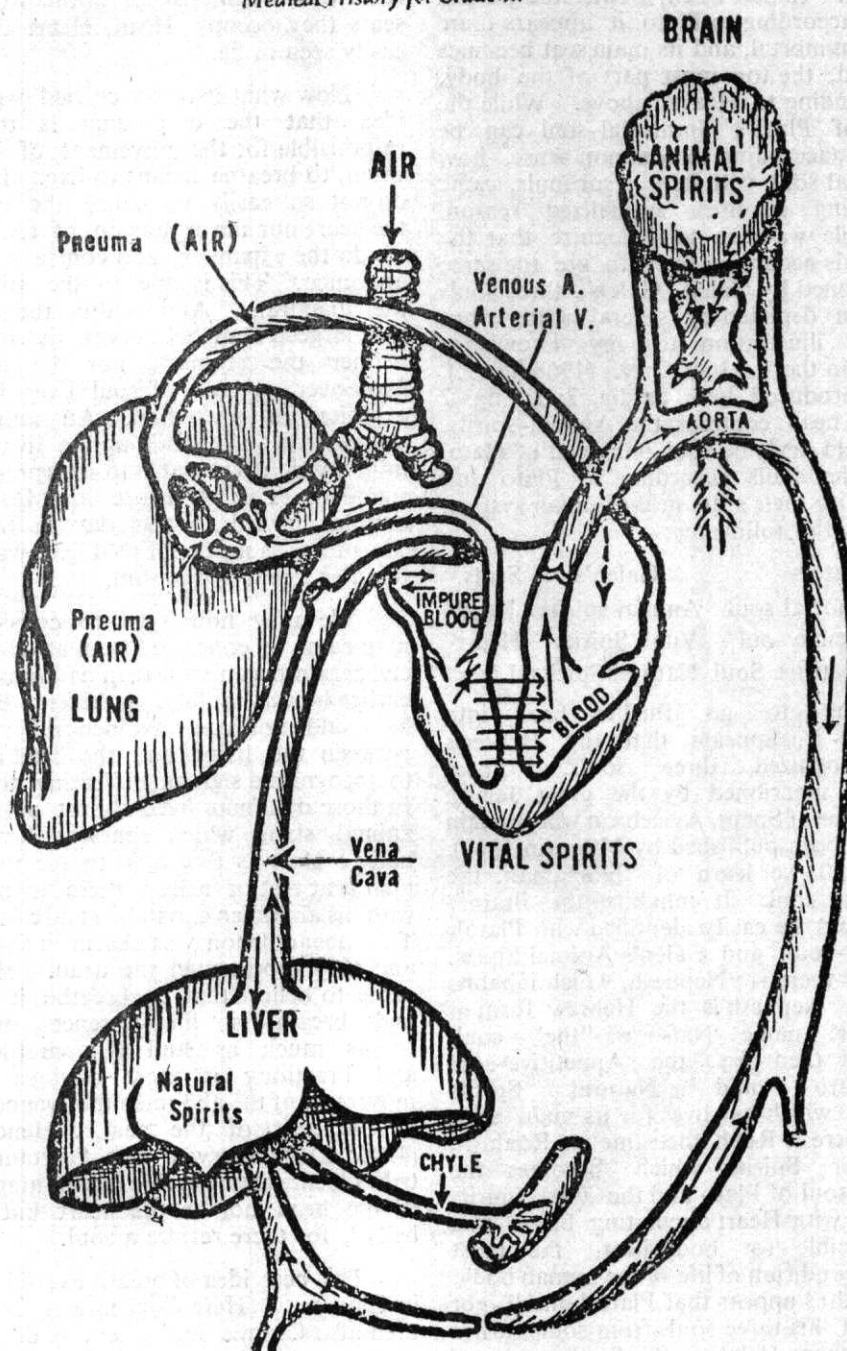


FIGURE 15. Physiologic concepts of Galen.

Fig. 2. Diagram showing three souls according to Galen. From Green (1968).

Accordingly Soul also was everlasting. Where then does the soul go when it leaves man as dead. Remembering that soul is “moving air” and “Mobile”, to quote Jung again, it can take incarnation as a live – form, which is movement – incorporate. The Greeks believed soul became a Butterfly which keeps on fluttering while others imagined it became a Bird which lives by flying and even a Snake which is fast moving. In any case it was a life – form capable of fast movement and as such an emblem of mobility. In another work Jung (1953; fig. 139), reproduces a picture painted on a Greek vase where souls, as butterflies, are living an urn. This picture appears here as fig.3.



139. Hermes conjuring the winged soul out of an urn.—Attic funeral lekythos

Fig. 3. Souls as butterflies, a Greek painting on an urn. From Jung (1953).

We now turn to the idea of bird as the emblem of soul, when bird would be more energetic on its wings than a flimsy butterfly Haddon (1895) devotes a whole chapter, with figures 24 to 42, showing how some “designs of primitive people can easily be recognized as bird – derivatives” – p.53. We are further interested in seeing how the bird itself has been depicted as signifying soul. Now Buddha was born as prince which means he was a mortal. He continued to be such until his enlightenment. Then came the turning point when he became immortal. And the immortalizing agency is depicted by the figure of Buddha being

surrounded by a halo of birds when each bird means a quantum of soul. Here birds as soul come to saturate Buddha’s system with soul when he becomes immortal. Such a scene occurs in a Japanese painting of the 13th cent offered in the work of Rosenfield (1970) and Shimada, reproduced here as fig.4. We have seen that bird was looked upon as the incarnation of soul because it was the fastest moving creative that man could observe. It really means soul is energy far more than matter. Then to represent such an energetic entity there was even a better idea than conceiving it as bird.



Fig. 4. Buddha before illumination with a halo of birds as emblems of soul, now becoming immortal. From Rosenfield and Shimada (1970).

The most subtle form of energy would be that of light and next that of sound and there are cases where people believe Light = Soul as also Sound = Soul. Moreover the form of energy that is best transmitted through air is sound and not light and we have considered soul as breath and breath as air. Thus the form of energy best associated with air would be Sound whence sound would be soul. What is now required would be to select a syllable as sound and find an emblem to represent it. The Hindu thinkers found the syllable "OM" as the simplest sound which, above all, is resonant, implying vibrations extending to infinity. Then "Om" produces a humming soul with vibrations as no other syllable does. According to Semitic religions the Creator pronounced a Word of command whence arose the universe. It can now be imagined that Hindu philosophy identifies that "Word: with the syllable "Om". But sound would be something perceptible to the ear. We have to find its counterpart which would be perceptible to the eye, when alone it becomes a visualizable entity to be depicted as an item of art. Here comes a symbol of Existence designed by a Hindu thinker

reproduced by Myer (1888) as fig. 31, and presented here as fig. 5. Down below is the cosmic egg. It is decorated with the picture of Zodiacs so that it signifies the celestial globe, the macrocosm, which automatically includes all creation. Then if there is the Cosmic Egg there must be the Cosmic Soul which comes as the snake Cobra, to represent it. Moreover Cosmic Egg would be Brahma Anda or Creator's Egg of Hindu Cosmology. This implies that the human figure is Purusha of Vedic literature or Brahma of Indian mythology. This makes him microcosm or in effect the Creator.

He is depicted with wings on each of the four limbs. Wings, as parts of bird's body, symbolize soul. Thus depicted the figure becomes "all - soul" and the Creator can only be conceived as Soul - of - souls. Then topmost there are three birds as storks, two seen in profile, the third, which faces us, is indistinct. Birds represent souls and three - souls here would be Tri - Murthi, the Hindu Trinity, or the creator. Below the storks is the sun, the emblem of celestial power, which thus duplicates Tri - Murthi. The human figure would be Purusha of

Rigveda same as Brahma of Hindu mythology the Creator, which is the later conception. His eyes are closed and from them are emanating rays, representing Creative energy. Closed eyes indicated mind in deep concentrations, implying thoughts are producing Creative energy. We have to remember Chhi, in Chinese, is literally Breath but signify Soul and even Cosmic soul, the source of all Creation. Hence we read in Needham (1956; 2 : 449) that according to a Chinese thinker “Chhi (creative energy) *Emanates from the mind*, and such a mind, full of concentration, will require the eyes to be closed. It is obvious that eyes best represent the mind as visualizable emblem so that Creative Energy, originating from the mind, is depicted as rays emanating from the eyes. Above all Purusha, or Brahma pronounces the Word of Command which functions as Creative Energy. It is the syllable Om.

Now this has to be depicted as some visualizable entity. In the first instance Om is a nasal sound, a humming and vibrating one, which means it is extendable to infinity. Here I can recall a German lad who was listening to two French visitors visiting a laboratory in Munich when I was also there and remarked that they were talking through the nose implying they were producing nasal sounds. We have now to

look for a suitable source of humming sound in nature as the nearest approach to that of Om. This would be the sound of bees when they keep flying in numbers near a bee – hive. Then we can maintain Om = Humming sound of bees = Bees as emblem. Thus in fig.5, Purusha has pronounced the word of command as Om and this is depicted by bees as the symbol. Then as he has pronounced the syllable of command he could not but listen to the same. Accordingly the creative sound also enters his ears which thus are also depicted with rays. Professors Ranade (1985 ; 41) and Sathaye, as authorities on Ayurveda maintain” that the total process of expansion (enabling the created world to grow) proceeded by the production of a *subtle prime sound*. Unless the primal sound was produced arrangement for newer (later) generation was not possible. Production of this prime sound is considered as the initiation of fraction of rareness or Akash required for that entity”. What is meant here is that Creation, which is progressive, stands with sound energy of the most subtle nature which, due to its fineness, is most powerful and its seat in the universe is Akasha and as Divanji (1948) has explained Akasha = Brahma which means Creative Power. Then the content of Akasha would be Om, the Creative Sound Energy.



Fig. 5. Symbol of Existence. Purusha as creator, Cosmic egg, as creation, and the Word of command as the syllable Om, depicted as Bees, which produce a humming sound nearest to that of Om. From (Myer).



Fig. 6. The Triangle symbolizes the procreative organ, here as Creative power, which emanates Creative energy seen as flame above. Enlargement from fig. 5.

There is yet another item of importance in fig.5. This has been noticed by Myers who writes that “the Lingam is also shown with the life – Spirit as a flame united with the crescent moon, the symbol of purity and chastity”. P. 322. In Fig – 5, Just below the abdomen, there is a large cresence and almost touching it below is another smaller one. Between these two cresents is a triangle with its apex upwards. This symbolizes the Lingam. On the top of this triangle there is a flame of which Myers has

spoken. This is offered here as fig.6. Lingam, as organ, with reproductive power has been projected as emblem of creative power so that it has a proper place in the idealized figure of the Creator and in the Symbol of Existence. All other decorative elements are of minor significance while Purusha is the Creator, producing Creator’s Egg as Creation and the Creator’s Word of command, as the syllable Om, vibrating sound like that of the humming Bees, which become its symbol.

Summary:

Galen recognizes three souls also mentioned by Plato and known even to the Hebrews. The trunk of the human body has three divisions, the head, the chest and the abdomen. The brain in the head harbours Animal Spirits, the heart in the chest Vital Spirits and the liver in the abdomen Natural Spirits. The latter two souls are separated by the diaphragm. This is not soul in itself but by importing movement to the chest and to the abdomen makes them souls though as mortal souls, while the content of the brain is Soul – immortal. The primary idea of soul arose as Breath and then as “Moving Air”, or matter – cum – energy. In Chinese

Chhi would be Breath, but by nature matter – cum – energy and connotes Cosmic soul, the source of all creation. Movement then is the most impressive quality of the soul which has given corresponding emblems. The Greek conceived soul as butterfly which keeps on fluttering, while some believe soul incarnates as bird, and others as snake, each as a fast moving creature. Two illustrations are offered representing soul as butterfly and as bird. Finally as symbol of Existence there is the Creator, as soul – of – souls, decorated with four wings, each as soul? His creation appears as the Creator’s Egg with the snake, Cobra as Cosmic Soul

symbolized. Finally there is the Word – of command, the syllable Om, which as humming sound is symbolized as Bees, which best produce a humming sound. Thus

there is Creator, Creation and Creator's Word of command as depicted as Bees its Visulaizable emblem.

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