

# THE APPLIED PHILOSOPHY OF THE EDGAR CAYCE READINGS



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Version 2.2

July 20, 2026

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## CONTENTS

### Introduction

### 1. Epistemology

#### 1.1 Edgar Cayce's Psychic Process

##### 1.1.1 Sources of Information

##### 1.1.2 Types of Readings

#### 1.2 Justification

#### 1.3 Know Thyself

### 2. Metaphysics

#### 2.1 Ontology

##### 2.1.1 God—The Prime Category

##### 2.1.2 Created Entities

#### 2.2 Free Will and Determinism

##### 2.2.1 Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

##### 2.2.2 Natural Law

##### 2.2.3 Heredity and Environment

##### 2.2.4 Omniscience of God

##### 2.2.5 Neuroscience and Free Will—or Free Won't

##### 2.2.6 Opposition of Mind and Will

#### 2.3 Space and Time

##### 2.3.1 Dimensions of Space and Time

##### 2.3.2 Akashic Records

##### 2.3.3 Time, Space, and Patience

##### 2.3.4 The Eternal Now

#### 2.4 Philosophy of Mind

##### 2.4.1 The Nature of Mind

##### 2.4.2 Mind-Body Interaction

2.4.3 Mind and Consciousness

2.4.4 Mind of the Atom

2.4.5 Mind the Builder

2.4.6 Memory

## 2.5 Philosophy of Religion

2.5.1 Concept of God

2.5.2 The Soul's Journey

2.5.3 Mysteries

2.5.4 The Essenes and Jesus

2.5.5 Teleology

2.5.6 The Problem of Evil

## 2.6 Philosophy of Science

2.6.1 General Considerations in the Philosophy of Science

2.6.2 Special Sciences

2.6.3 Paradigm Shift?

# 3. Ethics

## 3.1 Metaethics

3.1.1 Oneness of Good and Evil

## 3.2 Normative Ethics

3.2.1 Teleological Aspects

3.2.2 Deontological Ethics

3.2.3 Virtue Ethics

## 3.3 Applied Ethics

## 3.4 Ideals

3.4.1 The Spiritual Ideal

3.4.2 The Mental Ideal

3.4.3 The Physical Ideal

3.4.4 Application

## 4. Aesthetics

4.1 Artistic Expression

4.2 The Sublime

4.3 The Aesthetics of Truth

## 5. Logic

5.1 Logic of Personal Reasoning from Premises

5.2 Logic in Special Readings

## 6. References

## 7. Appendix A: The Pineal Gland and System

Part 1 – The Pineal Gland: A Literature Review

Part 2 – The Pineal System

## 8. Appendix B: William James and Edgar Cayce – Exploring the Connections

## 9. Appendix C: Planetary Sojourns as Symbolic and Metaphysical Realities

# Introduction

This manuscript presents a systematic survey of the information provided by Edgar Cayce (1877–1945) in his trance “readings,” interpreted within the framework of traditional philosophical disciplines: epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, and logic. The Cayce readings span approximately forty-five years and comprise over 14,000 documented sessions addressing a wide range of human concerns. Of these, roughly 9,600 are devoted to issues of health and healing (commonly referred to as “physical readings”), while the remainder focus primarily on metaphysical topics such as the purpose of creation, the origin and evolution of the universe, and practical guidance for living a meaningful life.

Practicing as a medical clairvoyant, Cayce is reported to have voluntarily entered an altered state of consciousness from which he delivered detailed discourses intended to facilitate healing for those who sought his assistance (Bro, 1990; Kirkpatrick, 2000). Over time, he became a significant figure in the early development of the holistic health movement in America. The association between Cayce and the concept of “holism” has been widely acknowledged, as reflected in the following editorial statement from the *Journal of the American Medical Association*:

The roots of present-day holism probably go back 100 years to the birth of Edgar Cayce in Hopkinsville, Ky. By the time he died in 1944 [sic], Cayce was well recognized as a mystic who entered sleep trances and dictated a philosophy of life and healing called “readings.” His base was established at Virginia Beach, Va., now the headquarters of the Cayce Foundation. Closely associated with that foundation is the Association for

Research and Enlightenment, Inc. [A.R.E.], which also runs a medical clinic under physician direction in Arizona. (Callan, 1979, p. 1156)

A substantial portion of the Cayce readings is therefore health-oriented, often providing detailed anatomical, physiological, and pathological descriptions concerning the etiology and progression of disease. Within this context, the term *holistic* refers to an integrated approach that emphasizes the interdependence of physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of the individual.

The collected readings of Edgar Cayce are publicly accessible in print at the A.R.E. headquarters library (215 67th Street, Virginia Beach, VA), and a comprehensive digital database—comprising approximately 24 million words—is available to members of the organization online. To preserve confidentiality, each reading is assigned a numerical identifier corresponding to the individual or group requesting the session, followed by a sequence number indicating its order within that series. For example, a citation such as 182-6 designates the sixth reading given for the subject identified as 182. In this manuscript, references to the readings are cited using this numerical format.

For illustrative purposes, when asked to provide the “reason for creation,” the entranced Cayce responded: “God's desire for companionship and expression” (5749-14). Similarly, in a mental-spiritual reading given on January 11, 1938, for a 36-year-old lawyer seeking guidance, Cayce offered the following reflection on the purpose of being:

That it, the entity, may KNOW itself to BE itself and part of the Whole; not the Whole but one WITH the whole; and thus retaining its individuality, knowing itself to be itself yet one with the purposes of the First Cause that called it, the entity, into BEING, into the awareness, into the consciousness of itself. That is the purpose, that is the cause of BEING. (826-11)

From a philosophical standpoint, these excerpts provide concise yet profound insights into themes that will be explored throughout this work. These include the nature of the divine, the role of expression in reality, the development of identity, the relationship between part and whole, the nature of knowledge through direct experience, and the primacy of consciousness as a fundamental aspect of existence.

The chapters that follow expand upon these themes through extensive engagement with the Cayce readings, addressing the full spectrum of philosophical inquiry. Two recurring motifs—relationship and expression—function as organizing principles throughout the text. In this sense, they may be likened to the *basso continuo* of a Baroque musical composition: a persistent structural foundation that supports and unifies the diverse elements of the philosophical analysis.

The body of material contained in the Cayce readings is distinctive within the history of human inquiry. Although each session involved interaction with a conductor and was directed toward specific individuals, the recorded content—captured verbatim by stenographers—originated from a single source operating in an altered state of consciousness. At the same time, the readings collectively reflect the lived concerns of thousands of individuals, each presenting unique circumstances requiring practical guidance.

Consequently, the resulting philosophy is largely inductive in character, emerging from particular cases rather than abstract speculation. This individualized and experiential orientation can at times appear unsystematic; however, a broader coherence becomes evident when the material is considered as a whole. Within this framework, truth is not merely theoretical but is evaluated in terms of its practical efficacy. In this sense, the Cayce readings advance a form of applied epistemology grounded in lived experience.

Accordingly, the philosophical perspective developed in this manuscript is fundamentally pragmatic: its value lies in application. The ideas presented must be enacted in order to be understood and validated. Each section therefore emphasizes not only conceptual analysis but also practical relevance, offering a framework through which the insights of the readings may be integrated into daily life. In this sense, the work may be understood as an exercise in applied philosophy, where metaphysical and epistemological claims are evaluated in terms of their practical consequences in lived experience.

This study prioritizes the verbatim Cayce readings as primary source material, supplemented by secondary scholarly sources where appropriate for comparative analysis. It does not assume the infallibility of the readings but approaches them as a body of data warranting systematic philosophical examination.

Throughout the text, frequent quotations from the readings are included to allow the primary material to speak as directly as possible. This approach is intended to minimize interpretive distortion while preserving the distinctive language and tone of the original sources. The readings often display a degree of clarity and rhetorical force that invites not only intellectual consideration but also personal verification through experience.

# 1. Epistemology

We live in a world of doubt, culturally immersed in conspiracy theories, falsehoods large and small, and contested or fabricated media narratives—amid claims and counterclaims about what is real and true by politicians and social leaders (Beauvais, 2022). Traditional religious institutions claiming divine knowledge about the nature of reality and the human condition struggle with declining membership and internal disputes (Pew Research Center, 2019). Even science is not immune from doubts about the big bang, traditional evolutionary theory, and the foundations of quantum theory—leading to the proclamation: *The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Scientific Age* (Horgan, 2015).

Can we even know what is real and true? If so, how? Or is it simply more practical to trust our beliefs and gut instincts and make the best of it as we go along? Such are the questions at the heart of epistemology—the philosophical pursuit of knowledge.

One of the earliest (and most influential) expositions of epistemic knowledge is found in Plato's *Theaetetus*, in which Plato contends that knowledge is *justified true belief* (Martinich & Stroll, 2023). Although there has been much disagreement about the nature of justification (as noted below), Plato's framework remained the dominant model for epistemological inquiry well into the twentieth century, when Edgar Cayce was giving readings.

In a reading given in 1929 addressing a young woman's dental problem, Cayce diagnosed pathology related to an upper wisdom tooth. In a follow-up reading (after the woman had consulted a dentist), the issue of

knowledge, truth, and justification arose. Note the following question and response with regard to Plato's criteria for knowledge.

*(Q) The dentist says [140] has no wisdom tooth. Is this true?*

*(A) True in the sense of the dentist's knowledge. Not true in the sense of the conditions as exist. The cause of the troubles as have arisen, as has been outlined, is from that process as forms, as is called or known as wisdom tooth – when it presents itself through the gum, or portion of the mouth itself. (137-124)*

Fully impacted wisdom teeth are not visible. They are completely hidden underneath the gums (Cleveland Clinic, 2024)—as was apparently the case in this instance. The statement by the dentist is true based on the dentist's knowledge of wisdom teeth once they have protruded through the gums. One might even say that, as a health professional, the dentist's opinion also carried a degree of justification. This particular reading appears to be approaching the problem using propositional knowledge as advocated by Plato—knowledge as justified true belief. And yet, from the perspective of the readings (produced by Edgar Cayce while in trance), the dentist's statement falls short of a complete account of the situation. So the matter of justification can be challenging. What is the standard for justification? Can information obtained through an altered state of consciousness—as in the readings—constitute a valid basis for justification?

This example could be viewed as representing two forms of knowledge (**propositional** and **perspectival**) based on cognitive neuroscience research (Vervaeke & Ferraro, 2013). This model recognizes four ways of knowing that are relevant to understanding the applied epistemology of the Cayce readings:

- **Propositional knowledge** relates to abstracted facts, ideas, and concepts—"knowing that" something is true, which is usually

closely tied to language and justification as noted in the dentist example above. Numerous readings engage in logical reasoning based on propositional statements, which the readings simply called premises. However, the readings' use of logical propositions was not so much to concern oneself with argument or attempts to prove a concept, or to convince or convert anyone. Rather, it was simply to provide a grounding in knowledge sufficient to motivate practical application—letting the fruits produced serve as the standard by which to evaluate the truthfulness of the knowledge. Thus the epistemic value was always based on application rather than intellectual process. Section 5 on Logic focuses on the use of propositional knowledge in the readings.

- **Perspectival knowledge** refers to “knowing from” a specific point of view. The Cayce readings provide a unique perspective from an altered state of consciousness that also involves a cosmic viewpoint on the human condition and broader philosophical issues pertaining especially to metaphysics.
- **Participatory knowledge** involves “being known and knowing” through dynamic relationships. The readings list one of the reasons for creation as “companionship” and insist that the cause or purpose of being is to know oneself as a unique individual and yet be one with the Whole (called God). The entire Cayce philosophy rests on a foundation of dynamic relationships. There is also an extremely strong emphasis on interpersonal relations and the knowledge (of others, of self, and the Divine) that can result from such participatory interaction.
- **Procedural knowledge** is “knowing how” to do something. The readings strongly endorse applied knowledge while providing extensive explanations and encouragement on how to engage in

the full range of human activity—e.g., meditation, exercise, human relations, diet, dream interpretation, memory enhancement, parenting, and psychic development. Hundreds of practical books have been published on implementing the diverse knowledge in the Cayce readings in daily life and professional settings.

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## 1.1 Edgar Cayce's Psychic Process

Traditionally the practice of philosophy has been a conscious activity on the part of individuals pondering questions pertaining to wisdom and the nature of reality. Philosophers share and participate in the exchange of ideas through personal dialogue, writings, and increasingly diverse forms of social media outlets—all at a conscious level.

The psychic process by which the knowledge in the Cayce readings was obtained is radically different—and yet similar in some respects—to traditional philosophical epistemology. For example, although Socrates is said to have communicated regularly with a *daemon* or “prophetic voice of my guardian deity” (Plato, 2004, Apology), such is not the standard process for gaining philosophical knowledge. Interestingly, a Cayce reading actually provides commentary on Socrates’ (and other noteworthy historical figures’) use of altered states of consciousness to access information from within. In reply to a question from a man who had experienced a strong physical sensation (vibration) in response to the activity of “Spirit Forces” during meditation, the reading noted that this type of reaction has happened repeatedly during the various ages of human development, as illustrated in the experiences of:

Swedenborg, as he studied. Socrates, as he meditated. Paul, the Apostle, as he meditated ... Buddha, in that position when meditation in the forest brought to the consciousness of the entity the At-Oneness of ALL FORCE manifested through physical aspects, or physical, in a material world. (900-187)

The anatomy and physiology of such altered states are discussed in detail in numerous Cayce readings in relation to trance states, particularly in the case of Cayce's own psychic process. Application of such information provides the foundation for implementing practical, **procedural knowledge** of how to enter altered states of consciousness and develop psychic ability.

This section will briefly explain the basics of Edgar Cayce's psychic process as it relates to epistemology. To begin, here is a brief description of the proceedings in a typical reading, provided in a report attached to reading 294-131:

In giving a reading Mr. Cayce lies on his back, crosses his hands over the solar-plexus, right hand below the left, and after breathing deeply several times passes into a trance-like condition from which he cannot be awakened except through the suggestions of the conductor of the reading. As he passes into unconsciousness the suggestions for the reading are given to him (name, location of individual seeking information). These he repeats over in low tone and then after a second begins to speak in a clear, moderate voice. Generally it takes him some three minutes to become unconscious, thirty to fifty minutes in giving the reading, and a few seconds to wake. A conductor who gives the suggestions must also ask the necessary questions when he has completed the body of the information. A stenographer writes word for word the information received. (294-131, report)

Harmon Bro completed a doctoral dissertation on Edgar Cayce, living in Virginia Beach for eight months, attending trance sessions, and working with Cayce and his staff. Here are two of Bro's scholarly impressions of Cayce's psychic process:

We were watching a consciousness instantly form itself into the person being counseled. Comparing the tone of voice and the choice of words given in readings at the same session show

that we were not dealing with a grand Western Union of the mind, hunting up psychic data to drop on listeners. This counsel was far more personal, more individual. It was bent on engaging each seeker in terms appropriate for just that person's growth. To one the counsel might be demanding, brusque, and businesslike, to another supportive, gentle, or even tender. The factual information was firmly knit to the effort to reach and quicken the person. Caring formed, paced, and sharpened each reading, both in content and style. (Bro, 1990, p. 83)

Each day's readings did in fact vary in small ways, suggesting multiple contributing forces. A given day's counsel, and even an individual reading within a morning or afternoon session, had its own clarity, precision, poetic force, and depth of development. Some were so sharply crafted in form that they could be scanned as unrhymed verse, paced in phrases by Cayce's regular breathing. Others rambled, leaving thoughts unfinished and references unclear, with run-on sentences and changes of voice, as well as sudden shifts of focus by association of ideas. Construction of even the poorer readings rarely damaged the content, for it seemed that the trance counsel had a kind of governor at work, checking to make sure that essential thoughts came across. It might even pause to tell us when we thought we understood something just spoken but in fact did not. Yet that same governor could leave the clarity and force of discourse at a minimum, provided the factual information were adequate. One might wonder whether the priests at the oracle of Delphi struggled as we did when her reportedly cryptic counsel became even less clear on a bad day. (Bro, 1990, p. 186)

The comparison of Cayce's process to the oracle at Delphi is important for historical and conceptual context. As a scholar completing a dissertation, Bro observed several similar associations, ultimately concluding that Cayce's process could best be described as that of a seer—in Bro's phrase,

“a stunted prophet” (1990, p. 129). The category of seer indicates authentic visions and a genuine relation to the divine. Whereas tribal shamans or magicians specialized in direct healing, Cayce’s gift was essentially cognitive, requiring others to apply the information he verbalized from a trance state (Bro, 1990, p. 129). Bro’s biography of Cayce, *A Seer Out of Season*, is highly recommended for anyone seeking to understand Cayce’s life and psychic process.

With regard to epistemology, Bro also noted that the readings typically described Cayce’s trance counsel as a kind of collaboration in a high order of creativity (Bro, 1990, p. 186). Thus the process was based on the premise of **participatory knowledge**, which becomes much more obvious when considering the factors that could influence the information provided in each reading. The collaboration involved:

- The attitude, desire, and type of information sought by the one asking for a reading.
- Edgar Cayce’s physical and mental condition, supported by a passive mental state in the conductor and a strong desire among those present to be of assistance.
- The hypnotic suggestion given by the conductor to commence the reading.

Thus the cooperation of multiple individuals was required to produce an optimal reading. Bro notes that this did not always happen due to physical illness (particularly Cayce’s chronic digestive problems), interpersonal friction, or exhaustion (common in his later years when he was deluged with thousands of requests for readings and altered his normal twice-daily trance routine). On the whole, Bro’s personal account is largely affirmative with regard to the entirety of Cayce’s life and work, ultimately concluding that Cayce was neither a fraud nor self-deluded.

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### 1.1.1 Sources of Information

Most noteworthy philosophical contributions derive from the minds of individuals who either think their own original thoughts or stand on the shoulders of those who came before them. In either instance the source of the knowledge produced is usually readily apparent or can be identified via inquiry (assuming the philosopher in question is not lacking in self-awareness). With the Cayce readings, identifying the source of the information is much more complex and indicative of an inherent participatory collaboration (as noted by Bro). Based on the readings themselves, the sources of information provided by Cayce in trance include:

- The subconscious mind of Edgar Cayce;
- The subconscious minds of individuals in the earth plane, including the subconscious of the one for whom the reading is given;
- The subconscious minds of disincarnate entities in the spirit plane in any of the various spheres of development;
- The soul minds of higher masters;
- The akashic records;
- The Universal or Pure cosmic consciousness (294-131, report).

In numerous readings, questions were posed as to the source of information and the process for acquiring it. Here is a sample reply from a reading given for Cayce himself (Mr. 294), the first of 213 such readings:

Edgar Cayce's mind is amenable to suggestion, the same as all other subconscious minds, but in addition thereto it has the power to interpret to the objective mind of others what it acquires from the subconscious mind of other individuals of the same kind. The subconscious mind forgets nothing. The

conscious mind receives the impression from without and transfers all thought to the subconscious, where it remains even though the conscious be destroyed. The subconscious mind of Edgar Cayce is in direct communication with all other subconscious minds, and is capable of interpreting through his objective mind and imparting impressions received to other objective minds, gathering in this way all knowledge possessed by millions of other subconscious minds. (294-1)

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### 1.1.2 Types of Readings

The Edgar Cayce readings date from 1901, when we know that he gave the first information on himself from an unconscious state. A variety of stenographers, including court reporters, were brought in to record the first readings. Unfortunately, copies of those early readings were not preserved. At the present time, there are a total of 14,246 individual copies of different readings in the files of the Association. The earliest dated reading on file was given in 1909. There are 523 readings dating between 1909 and 1923. From 1923 through January 1945, when Edgar Cayce died in Virginia Beach, every psychic reading that he gave was stenographically recorded. (Cayce & Cayce, 1971, p. 13)

The above comes from a book written by Edgar Cayce's sons (Hugh Lynn and Edgar Evans) to document their father's life and work as well as point out some of the limitations of his psychic process. They also provide an excellent overview and explanation of the various types of readings that their father gave.

The most common type are the *physical readings* (of which there are over 9,000). The physical readings were always the primary focus of Cayce's efforts. This indicates the emphasis on application in a very material sense—not hypothetical philosophizing or theoretical imaginings. However, these readings do include a substantial amount of information

relevant to understanding the philosophical orientation put forth in a practical sense.

The second largest category are called *life readings*, which focus more on the soul, its journey, and how past lives influence the current life in practical ways. These readings address questions about vocational guidance, marriage problems, and human relations of every nature. The format for a typical life reading is to first provide what might be called astrological information (based on planetary sojourns between physical incarnations) and past lives on earth (i.e., reincarnation), consistent with the various traditions that have espoused models of continuity of consciousness after physical death.

The life readings began as an incidental excursion when the entranced Cayce was apparently directed to provide astrological information for a businessman on October 11, 1923. The reading happened to mention a past life: “Third appearance on this plane. He was once a monk.” (5717-1) Eventually, based on input from Cayce in a reading, a specific hypnotic suggestion was created that has some important implications for epistemology in the readings:

*(Q) Give the words that should be given to this body to obtain a reading of this kind, a life reading, with the former appearances and their effect in the present life on an individual.*

*(A) “You will have before you—the body, giving name and place of the individual at birth, the name at birth as given—and you will give the relation of this entity and the Universe, and the Universal Forces, giving the conditions that are as personalities latent, and exhibited, in the present life. Also the former appearances in the earth’s plane, giving time, place, name and that in that life which built or retarded the development for the entity, giving the abilities of the present entity and to that which it may attain, and how.” (254-21; 2/21/25)*

Notice the universal context of the information being sought. With regard to **perspectival knowledge**, this universal context is the broadest possible viewpoint. Traditionally, philosophy deals with knowledge of humans on planet earth during single lifetimes (whether individually or in groups). Certainly some philosophers (especially in ancient times, e.g., Plato) did allow for reincarnation in their thinking. But this goes much further in scope to include sojourns throughout the universe. Thus the life readings have important implications for the philosophy of religion (Section 2.5).

Continuing the survey of reading types, about 750 readings focus on *business dealings* (including stock market investing). Although many of these readings do contain specific stock-picking (buying and selling) advice, there is also a strong emphasis on the individuals developing their own psychic abilities along these lines. Thus there is both **participatory** and **procedural knowledge** imparted and encouraged on the part of those receiving the readings.

Over 600 readings deal with *dream interpretation*, many of them for the same businessmen (involving investment opportunities). Yet even for these individuals, dreams involving interpersonal relations with family and friends, and broader spiritual and creative activities were common. Thus again, an emphasis on **participatory** and **procedural knowledge** is inherent in Cayce's psychic process as it engaged those receiving the readings.

About 450 readings are designated *mental-spiritual readings* and are more explicitly psychologically oriented toward spiritual application. These readings' focus was on "The purpose of the soul's entrance into the earth. As it turned out, the purposes that he described were frequently not quite in alignment with the conscious purposes that motivated the individual after his entrance here." (Cayce & Cayce, 1971, p. 15) The mental-spiritual

readings tend to emphasize identifying and applying ideals in daily life (Section 3.4).

The remaining readings address *special topics* (e.g., prehistory, technological innovation, world affairs, etc.), the operation of the organization founded to support the Cayce work (now the A.R.E.), and some specific group activities as described below. With regard to the epistemology of Cayce's psychic process, the readings given for a group of individuals seeking information on how to become more psychic are of particular interest. Instead of providing explicit instructions for psychic development, the reading insisted that each individual in the group pursue spiritual development. Based on experience from application, they collectively created a book called *A Search for God*. Over a period of 11 years, 130 readings (the 262 series) provided guidance for the group's assignment of writing the book. Typically a reading or two was provided to give some basic ideas for each lesson. However, the individuals in the group had to apply the information in their daily lives and write about their own experience. Thus the process was naturally disposed to produce **participatory** and **procedural knowledge** on the part of the original group members. Subsequently many others have used the book as it was distributed for use within study groups around the world.

Simultaneously, a second group focusing on spiritual healing was organized (the Glad Helpers). Over a period of 13 years, 66 readings were given with emphasis on hands-on healing. Thus the information centered on the practice of prayer, meditation, and "laying on of hands." Again, the outcome was to impart **participatory** and **procedural knowledge** through practical application by those receiving the readings. In the process, these individuals themselves were also healed and transformed.

With all the various types of readings, one of the intended outcomes is to engage the individual so as to encourage a change in attitude and

viewpoint (i.e., **perspectival knowledge**), regardless of whether the individual was dealing with health issues, interpersonal problems, personal development, spiritual seeking, or creative expression. Naturally the opportunity for participatory and procedural knowledge is built into the process. The Cayce approach is an applied philosophy based on applied knowledge—application by each individual seeking the information in any form.

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## 1.2 Justification

Trusting information received from a psychic source is an epistemic concern for many. It simply goes against the current of the modern materialistic paradigm. Bro condensed this problem into two negative options—was Cayce a fraud or self-deluded? After several months of close daily observation he concluded that Edgar Cayce was genuine and provided a valuable service to those seeking his help. Yet Bro does not hold back in pointing out Cayce's personal flaws and the limitations of the information provided in the readings (Bro, 1990, p. 129).

Edgar Cayce's sons (Hugh Lynn and Edgar Evans) wrote a book documenting the achievements of their father's work while also listing some of its limitations. *The Outer Limits of Edgar Cayce's Power* (Cayce & Cayce, 1971) is an important resource for appreciating the full scope of the readings' potential contribution to human understanding and development. Chapter 4 of the book (*Was Edgar Cayce's Story a Hoax*) directly addresses the fraud concern from the perspective of family members who witnessed their father's behavior for decades.

Is the whole Edgar Cayce story a mammoth hoax? This question must arise from time to time in the mind of a total skeptic. Admitting that he lay down and appeared to lose consciousness twice a day for years, how does one know that

he wasn't conscious and just made all the readings up? Before giving serious consideration to such an idea, the recorded data should be examined. Anyone who checks some of the details of the stories will soon realize that too many people (over 5,000) were involved in very personal ways for too long a period of time (43 years) for a blanket charge of fraud to apply... (p. 19)

The brothers note that through the years their father worked with numerous doctors, lawyers, shrewd businessmen, psychologists, psychic investigators, members of his family, and hundreds of persons from all walks of life. He would have to have carefully masked his conscious language so as not to reveal the information that appeared in the readings. They also point out that many of those who did witness readings were looking for mistakes. They find it implausible that their father could have continued such fabrication for 43 years. The brothers also reviewed statistical evidence suggesting that (with regard to the physical readings), accuracy rates compared favorably to those of modern physicians (Cayce & Cayce, 1971, p. 24).

Obviously, this doesn't prove anything, especially for those who are predisposed to reject the possibility of such psychic activity. The readings tended to take a different approach to justification—evaluate results from application of the information provided in the readings—applied knowledge.

In considering individuals' approach, again there must be CREDENCE given to the acts and activities OF the information as it contacts individuals' lives. Does the information not make of individuals better husbands, better wives, better sons, better daughters, better citizens, [if not] then there is some fault with same. (254-55)

MANY an individual, many a personage has given his all for the demonstrating of a truth. As it has been indicated from the first through THIS channel, there should ever be that ideal, “What does such information as may come through such a channel produce in the experience of individuals, as to not their thoughts, not their relations other than does such make them better parents, better children, better husbands, better wives, better neighbors, better friends, better citizens?” And if and when it does NOT, LEAVE IT ALONE! (1135-6)

The readings’ approach to knowledge is process-oriented. Cayce’s trance process was interactive. The information produced by that process was to be applied to produce practical outcomes in daily life. The value of the applied results is measured by whether individuals experience soul development. It is an educational process in which the value of applied knowledge is relative to the needs of the individuals involved—even to this day. The truth of belief is relative:

That that is Truth is growth! For what is truth today may be tomorrow only partially so, to a developing soul! (1297-1)

Thus the primary criterion for knowledge based on justified true belief is founded on outcomes in the lives of those who are willing to apply the information provided in the readings—beginning with know thyself.

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## 1.3 Know Thyself

Knowledge not applied may become rather the STUMBLINGBLOCK. (370-3)

The Greek philosopher Socrates is famous for arguing that “the unexamined life is not worth living” and that each individual should strive to “know thyself”—an idea inscribed on the temple at Delphi, or perhaps

derived from the works of Heraclitus (Gaudio, 2020). To achieve this lofty goal, Socrates encouraged an interpersonal process of dialectic—Socratic dialogue. In other words, we learn about ourselves and what we believe by interacting with others in relationship. The basic premise pursued consistently throughout this text is that the reason for creation is God’s desire for companionship and expression. The relational part of that premise is based on self-knowledge as well as unity with the Divine:

That it, the entity, may KNOW itself to BE itself and part of the Whole; not the Whole but one WITH the whole; and thus retaining its individuality, knowing itself to be itself yet one with the purposes of the First Cause that called it, the entity, into BEING, into the awareness, into the consciousness of itself. That is the purpose, that is the cause of BEING. (826-11)

The readings endorse a triune model of the self: physical, mental, and spiritual. The study group that wrote *A Search for God* (ASFG) included a lesson on “Know Thyself” that emphasized applied self-knowledge:

To know ourselves is not only to be cognizant of the acts of our physical bodies, but to know ourselves as entities, complete factors, capable of knowing all that goes on within and without ... As entities, we are miniature copies of the universe, possessing physical, mental, and spiritual bodies. (ASFG, pp. 27–28)

The readings noted that the triune concept (whether of human or divine being) is a human construct produced by the three-dimensional experience in a physical body on planet earth. Humans tend to think in threes. As such it is propositional and can be argued and debated as one wishes.

Our physical bodies are composite units of Creative Force manifesting in the material world... The senses make us conscious of the magnified desires or natures of our physical bodies ... For not only do the impressions received through the senses show forth that which is magnified in a single

appearance or experience, but also all impressions that have been received through all of our experiences, the registering being in our souls... In the same manner the desires of our mental and spiritual bodies build our individualities. This process of building has been going on for ages. The great factors of heredity, environment, karma, thought vibration, and the action of universal laws in the planes beyond the physical all have their influences, just as the desires and vibrations of the physical organs attract and build the composition of the physical body. (ASFG, p. 28)

Thus sensation, whether from without or within, can engage individuality and lead to knowledge of heredity and environment writ large (i.e., involving karma built into the physical body). Sensory awareness of the physical environment is the basis for empiricism. The readings are consistent with mainstream neuropsychology and the epistemic validity of knowledge based on sensory data at the physical level. Yet the readings also insist on the validity of the “inner senses” as a source of knowledge via subconscious activity (e.g., from dreams and psychic activity). Sensation is essential for self-knowledge at all levels.

Likewise, mental activity associated with rationality is recognized in the readings as a means of attaining knowledge—particularly for deduction and decision making at the personal level. However, there is an insistence that the premise of the soul (mind and spirit, in the transpersonal sense) be considered within a holistic framework that includes soul development. Know thyself is a developmental process, for the purpose of becoming a fit companion to the Creator. It is an educative process of self-knowledge in the largest possible context—the soul making its way through eternity, finding its way back to its Source. The earth experience is a classroom in the school of life; the lessons of life are opportunities to gain knowledge.

Let us dare to see ourselves as others see us. It is well to stand aside and see ourselves go by. Let us think back over the

words and acts of the day, asking ourselves these questions: Why did we do this or that? Would we have acted before our God in the manner we acted before our neighbor? Are we expressing our concepts of God in our lives to those we contact? ...While we are seeking to know ourselves through meditation or by taking an inventory, we are passing, as it were, signposts. We see a little light day by day, or catch a word here, an idea there, from those we contact, who help us to realize that all are traveling along the same road. Truly, the better we know ourselves, the better we understand others. Does it not make us more tolerant of our neighbors if we see them as we are, or as we have been? (ASFG, p. 30)

The knowledge of soul patterns, sometimes involving karma, can also be experienced in human relations through practices of mindfulness, deep meditation, and self-inventory (particularly reflection on ideals). Through such applied knowledge one can gain conscious awareness of oneself as a soul—to know oneself to be oneself. With self-knowledge through application of spiritual principles in daily life, one is better able to attune to the Divine within—to gain knowledge of the Whole and the experience of oneness with the Divine in mystical union as a matter of daily life.

We are the sum total of all our experiences in every state of consciousness...The soul will seek that which it has builded, not only in the material plane but in the universal, for “as a tree falls, so will it lie.” This is well understood if we know and study ourselves, for we will realize that each experience is a lesson to help bring the knowledge of the Whole, that “I and my Father are one.” (ASFG, p. 29)

Self-knowledge leading to oneness with God is the purpose of being. The text of ASFG demonstrates various forms of applied knowledge as noted above in the discussion of Cayce’s psychic process. Individuals participated in that process with each reading, with application of the information provided for each lesson in a small group, each in their daily

lives—with the writing and publication of a manuscript that in turn was made available for practice over many decades to the present time. Epistemically this involves **participatory** and **procedural knowledge** applied in the midst of life—which is the foundation of the Cayce approach throughout all five branches of philosophy addressed in this text.

Just as Edgar Cayce utilized an altered state of consciousness to access information, the readings encouraged others to follow that example in their own lives. The most common recommendation was to learn to meditate, for soul development but also to gain practical knowledge for daily life:

*(Q) Is it possible to meditate and obtain needed information?*

*(A) On any subject! whether you are going digging for fishing worms or playing a concerto! (1861-12)*

The readings recommended various types of meditation, ranging from deep meditation (that use the same anatomical and physiological processes utilized by Cayce in trance) to less intense forms of psychological dissociation (sometimes called mindfulness meditation) which can assist in gaining self knowledge:

*(Q) How may I learn to know self as I am known?*

*(A) Being able to, as it were, LITERALLY, stand aside and watch self pass by! Take the time to occasionally be sufficiently introspective of that, that may happen in self's relation to others, to SEE the reactions of others as to that as was done by self; for true – as it has been said – no man lives to himself, no man dies to himself; for as the currents run to bring about the forces that are so necessary to man's own in these material things, so are those forces in self active upon those whom we act upon. Being able, then, to see self as others see you ... Stand aside and watch self pass by! (262-9)*

The deeper forms of meditation described in the readings were sometimes associated with psychic experiences and psychic development:

For as we find this entity has more than once been among those who were gifted with what is sometimes called second sight, or the super-activity of the third eye. Whenever there is the opening, then, of the lyden (Leydig) center and the kundaline [kundalini] forces from along the pineal, we find that there are visions of things to come, of things that are happening. (4087-1)

The *pineal system* is discussed elsewhere in this text (Section 2.2.2.1). With regard to epistemology, the readings are adamant that with proper attunement, meditation (in all its varied forms and techniques) can provide valid, practical knowledge for application in daily life. Such *applied knowledge* is part of the more expansive meaning of know thyself.

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## Summary

The epistemology of the Cayce readings is fundamentally grounded in application. Knowledge is not treated as an abstract construct but as a dynamic process involving multiple modes of knowing—**propositional, perspectival, participatory, and procedural**. The validity of knowledge is evaluated through its effects in lived experience, emphasizing transformation, development, and practical engagement with life.

## 2. Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that explores the fundamental nature of reality. Historically, going back to Aristotle and through the Middle Ages, metaphysics involved the study of being, first causes, and unchanging first principles. In postmedieval philosophy, however, the scope of metaphysics expanded to include diverse subjects such as the problem of free will, the mind–matter debate, cause and effect, consciousness, space and time, and even questions concerning the existence and conceptualization of God (Van Inwagen et al., 2024).

All of these topics (and more) are addressed in this chapter from the perspective of the Edgar Cayce readings. With regard to the definition of metaphysics, it is important to keep in mind that there are diverse meanings for the term. That cited above is the traditional philosophical meaning. At the time of the Cayce readings (and carried forward to the present in some circles) another common meaning for metaphysics is “above” or “beyond” physics (which is definitely not what Aristotle meant in his writings, which were later labeled using that term). The expansive meaning of metaphysics in the Cayce readings is mostly due to the influence of 19th-century spiritualism and early 20th-century theosophy that tilted toward what we now might call the paranormal, psychic, and esoteric. Some of the individuals who came to Cayce for readings were entrenched in that perspective, which eventually evolved into what is now known as new age metaphysics. Because the readings were given for individuals seeking guidance, the conceptual framework and terminology of each reading tended to address the views of the recipients. For example:

There is an interest in metaphysics; no shortcuts in metaphysics ... Life is lived within self. Ye live it; ye don't profess it – ye live it. (5392-1)

There is much to be commended, though, in the experiences and the application of the tenets of the entity itself. But know, as should each soul, that all that may be interpreted in thy mind, in thy body, as to truth or metaphysics is only that ye do apply in thy daily life. One can only know by experience. We only hear of others and their application of principles and tenets in their dealings with an application to things pertaining to the activities in the earth. (5733-1)

Notice the strong emphasis on application—applied metaphysics—the practice of philosophy in daily life through application of principles and tenets. This has a strong resonance with another movement leading up to and including the lifespan of Edgar Cayce: pragmatism, and in particular the pragmatic approach advocated by William James. The readings even recommended *The Varieties of Religious Experience* authored by James (1917).

There is also some overlap between the readings' approach and modern philosophy's interest in "applied philosophy." However, applied philosophy as it is currently favored tends to downplay metaphysics in favor of a focus on ethics and morality (which is addressed in Section 3). Modern applied philosophy also tends to emphasize collective activity through social movements and institutions, whereas the readings tend to focus on individual application (that certainly can be expressed in collective action based on the ideals of each person). Finally, modern applied philosophy is humanistic, leaving little or no room for the spiritual or religious. In contrast, the Cayce readings emphasize practical, applied spirituality based on an ontological framework with God as the prime

category of being. The ontology of God and created entities within a hierarchy of being is the topic of the next section.

Of course, there are abundant metaphysical mysteries that remain elusive, regardless of the nature of our inquiry. Van Inwagen provides a helpful meditation on the mystery of metaphysics, recognizing the limitations of human rationality in solving such mysteries:

The mysteries that metaphysics uncovers are, of course, mysteries relative to ourselves and to our ability to understand things ... if metaphysics does indeed present us with mysteries that we are incapable of penetrating, this fact is not itself mysterious. It is just what we should expect ... (Van Inwagen, 2015, pp. 288–289)

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## 2.1 Ontology

Ontology is the branch of metaphysics that studies questions of being or existence. Broadly speaking, ontology consists of two parts: “first, say what there is, what exists, what the stuff of reality is made out of, secondly, say what the most general features and relations of these things are” (Hofweber, 2023).

Using the lens of ontology, we begin our examination with these important excerpts from the Cayce readings. The **reason for creation** is stated as: “God’s desire for companionship and expression” (5749-14). The existence of a fundamental being (God) is declared with an attribute (desire). Two essential activities associated with this being (with regard to the reason for creation) are listed (companionship and expression). This excerpt also explicitly addresses the fundamental ontological question posed by Leibniz (1714/1989), among others, as to why something exists rather than nothing—because God desires it so.

Here is the other reading excerpt with important ontological implications for the “purpose or cause of being”:

That it, the entity, may KNOW itself to BE itself and part of the Whole; not the Whole but one WITH the whole; and thus retaining its individuality, knowing itself to be itself yet one with the purposes of the First Cause that called it, the entity, into BEING, into the awareness, into the consciousness of itself. That is the purpose, that is the cause of BEING. (826-11)

Thus the concept of “companionship” in the previous excerpt is explained as a form of relationship between a part and the Whole (mereology), while simultaneously expanding on the nature of the being of God (as First Cause). Numerous other terms and concepts that explore the nature of God’s being are discussed below—as are the various relationships of God to created entities within the hierarchy of being.

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### 2.1.1 God—The Prime Category

Then to the entity we would counsel thus: Learn the lesson of the interpreting of the dimensions of the earth, or that the three-dimensions, in the mind may be seven, and in spirit eleven and twelve and twenty-two. These, then, are encompassed in the knowledge and the understanding: “The Lord thy God is one Lord.” (5149-1)

In this excerpt, the ontology of God has a strong multidimensional quality, based primarily on a physically oriented earth consciousness (of three spatial dimensions), but potentially extending much further in mind (up to seven dimensions), and unimaginably expansive in spirit (as many as twenty-two dimensions). Many metaphysical traditions speak of numerous higher planes of consciousness and exalted spiritual realms. For

the most part the readings (ever practical and applied) focus primarily on the three-dimensional earthly experience of humans, which is reflected in a three-dimensional concept of God: the traditional Christian Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Many of the individuals who sought Cayce's counsel were familiar and comfortable with that version of divine ontology, with its emphasis on the oneness (unity) of God, in spite of the apparent conceptual multiplicity. One can draw upon that concept in daily living as the foundation of applied Christian spirituality. Certainly, the readings encourage that approach for individuals dedicated to that belief system. However, the readings go much further to explain the metaphysical reasoning underlying the triune model of God—based on dimensions of consciousness:

Each soul, – as it manifests in the earth, – is body, mind and spirit; just as there is in the Godhead the God the father, God the mind, God the holy spirit. These, – as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, – are one. These terms of expression are used in this three-dimensional world. For, the earth-consciousness rarely conceives of that which may not be of a three-dimensional nature. The fourth and fifth dimensions may be spoken of, but as to their proofs – to most, and even to this entity at times – these are hazy. (2771-1)

In other words, the tendency to think in terms of threes (as in the traditional Christian trinitarian concept of God) is an intellectual artifact of three-dimensional experience as lived by humans on planet earth. With expansion of the mind and consciousness, higher dimensions may be experienced—even more so with the higher spiritual dimensions. Presumably, one's concept of God would need to expand to make sense of such experiences (typically framed as mystical or transpersonal states of consciousness). Theologian Richard Drummond, commenting on the

readings' insistence that soul experience, even within this solar system, involves eight dimensions, observed:

Thus, it is asserted that since man – the soul of man – “may think in an eight dimensional consciousness ... the universal consciousness manifested or expressed in the three-dimensional as Father, Son, Holy Spirit ... might be manifested or indicated in many more” dimensions in other realms than earth ... This is, of course, to say no more than sensitive theologians have long been saying, viz., God is more than our human theologies are able adequately to state ... (Drummond, 1978, p. 195)

Thus far, the foregoing discussion has carefully laid a foundation for considering the oneness (unity) of God within an expanded dimensional framework—one that may help to allay any instinctive resistance, not only to the consideration of God as a primary ontological category, but also to the triune framework of spiritual, mental, and physical aspects (or facets, or dimensions) as the basis for the existence of entities, particularly the physical entities described below. Before those elaborations (which tend to emphasize the diversity and multiplicity associated with a triune concept of God), it is important to reflect on the unity of the Divine.

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#### 2.1.1.1 Unity

Listening not to me but to the Logos it is wise to agree that all things are one. (Heraclitus, Frag. 50)

Each soul was, is, and is to be a companion with that creative influence or force called God. Thus each entity is a child of God, or is a part of that whole. (2533-1)

The first lesson for SIX MONTHS should be ONE – One – One – ONE; Oneness of God, oneness of man's relation,

oneness of force, oneness of time, oneness of purpose,  
ONENESS in every effort – Oneness – Oneness! (900-429)

The *unity* of God, often expressed simply as “oneness” in the readings, is evident in the use of the term “whole” when referring to the divine—God is the Whole of which all else are parts. The phrase “God is one” is echoed in many readings, not so much to affirm monotheism over polytheism, but rather to insist upon the unity of the divine. And yet it is such a difficult reality to grasp in the midst of earthly life with all of its diversity and pluralities. “Unity is perhaps the most difficult truth that we have to realize and manifest, although evinced all about us” (A Search for God, Book I, p. 113).

As noted above, the readings often discuss this aspect of God within the context of relationship—of parts to the Whole. The philosophical study of the relationship between the whole and its parts, or parts with other parts within a whole, is called mereology. The roots of informal mereology can be traced back to ancient Greece, beginning with the Presocratics; continuing with Plato and Aristotle; and echoing in the work of later ontologists and scholastic philosophers including Aquinas, William of Ockham, Leibniz, and Kant. Formal mereology (grounded firmly in the application of mathematical logic) is currently applied by linguists, engineers, and computer scientists, especially those working in artificial intelligence (Varzi, 2019; Daniels, 2016).

In the Cayce readings that discuss part-whole relations, the focus is primarily on the relationship of the divine Whole (called God) with its parts (individual souls)—whether *incarnate* (in flesh bodies on planet earth) or *discarnate* (in mental/spiritual realms, usually between earthly lives as discussed in certain readings). The dynamic of the relationship is for the soul to maintain its separate identity while also being one with the Whole. Because all souls are inherently part of the Whole (God), relations

between souls (as parts) are also emphasized within the context of human relations. The same basic dynamic prevails: even as individual humans maintain boundaries and a healthy separate sense of self, oneness with all others is essential for oneness with God. Thus as we treat others, we treat God. As applied spirituality, this is the primary message of the readings. However, the readings also speak of oneness with God within a broader context of other created entities, with implications for environmental ethics and related topics:

God seeks all to be one with Him. And as all things were made by Him, that which is the creative influence in every herb, mineral, vegetable or individual activity IS that same force ye call God, – and SEEKS expression! (294-202)

Regardless of how the parts are defined in relation to the Whole, unity is emphasized: “There may be divisions, as there may be many drops of water in the ocean yet they are all of the ocean” (262-87). The dynamics of relationship between the Creator and created souls are one with the potential for unity that allows a degree of separation—a relationship that the readings call companionship:

The companionship in God is being one with Him; and the gift of God is being conscious of being one with Him, yet apart from Him – or one with, yet apart from, the Whole. (5753-1)

Thus when the readings speak of division or separation while maintaining unity, it is essential to recognize that separation is not severance—the One remains Whole, even as it expresses plurality in the many. The relations of the parts to the whole—of the one to the many—are explored below in the discussions of the varied entities within the hierarchy of being.

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### 2.1.1.2 Spirit

Spirit is life and movement. The Latin *spiritus* means breath, signifying the invisible, vital force of the body that maintains life and activity. Similarly, the wind has been used as a symbol for spirit—like the breath of the planet, an invisible energy that circulates and drives weather systems. One can only see its effects; thus the hallmark of spirit is movement. In common speech we may say that we will do something when the spirit moves us. In a religious context, being moved by spirit carries the connotation of being motivated by the divine, usually manifesting within the realm of purpose, meaning, and value—spiritual ideals.

When we speak of a spirited horse, it is vitality and movement that come to mind. When we speak of the spirit of a sports team, it is the quality of energy and motivation, unity of purpose, and unselfishness that puts the team first. We may speak of the spirit of the times or the spirit of the age. When focusing on spirit as an ontological aspect of God, we encounter language such as First Cause, indicating the creative expression of God (as Creator): “Spirit is the First Cause, the primary beginning, the motivative influence, – as God is Spirit” (262-123)—“that Universal Spirit Energy, that Creative Energy called God” (4185-1).

The creation story expounded in the Cayce readings begins in the realm of spirit—before the creation of the material universe. The spirit of God moved and brought souls into being in the spiritual realm.

In the beginning, all souls that were as portions of the thought of God were given the opportunity for expression, as to be companions for that Creative Force – or God. (2420-1)

When there was the need for a material environment for the development of the souls, the spirit of God moved and brought the physical universe into being in the “mind of God” (262-78). The Creative Force or Creative

Energy called God is that aspect of spirit that moves and motivates. Thus Spirit is the First Cause, the Prime Mover, the motivative influence in creation as an ongoing process.

The traditions of the indigenous peoples of the Americas speak of the Great Spirit, or creator of the world. In Hinduism, Brahman is the one supreme, universal Spirit manifesting as prana, the cosmic breath or vital air that is the source of life. In traditional Chinese culture, qì (chi) is the life force or active principle of any living thing. The scriptures of the ancient Hebrews speak of the holy spirit of God, which has carried through into the other monotheistic religions of the Abrahamic tradition. A striking number of world traditions have recognized the manifestation of spiritual energy as a creative force that is the source of all that is (Gerber, 1988).

Even modern materialistic science acknowledges the equivalence of matter and energy, as physics has demonstrated (Fernflores, 2019). All the various and diverse material manifestations that we witness around us in the cosmos are an organization of energy into the forms that we recognize as stars, planets, and the wonders of nature. The Cayce readings even speak of God as the fundamental form of electrical vibration that is the basis of all life—the spirit of God as the vital energy that animates the world.

Know then that the force in nature that is called electrical or electricity is that same force ye worship as Creative or God in action! (1299-1)

The readings recognize attributes of spirit: “There are the spiritual attributes, desire, hope, will ...” (2114-1). We have noted the philosophical implications of God’s spiritual desire as a reason for creation of the universe. The ontological echoes of desire manifest in all of creation, including souls that incarnate on earth as human beings, as emphasized in many readings:

Desire brought the earth and the heavens into being from an All-Wise Creator. So man, by his heritage to that creation, may bring through desire, whether of earthly, heavenly, spiritually, those things that they, the individual, the entity, must meet, by creating, making, BEING that desire! (276-3)

Thus desire is the spiritual force that makes possible creative expression (by God and souls created in the image of God). Creativity is inherent in “the creative forces or energies called God” (556-1).

Another important attribute of spirit is will. Commonly referred to as “free will,” this ontological topic is explored in detail in sections that follow (Section 2.2). In this section focusing on God and attributes of spirit, divine will is conceptualized as a directing force in companionship and expression. Thus the attitude of “God’s will be done” is an ideal for the soul (Section 3.4). Utilizing a triune model of the soul, Puryear (1985, pp. 67–68) regards will as a “special attribute of the spirit, which makes us free and thus more truly heirs of the Divine nature and capable of cocreating.” Although will is here listed as an attribute of spirit, it has also been regarded as deserving of its own fundamental ontological category based on the Cayce material (Thurston, 1987, p. 4).

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#### 2.1.1.3 Mind

Mind is another essential aspect of God. Mind is the builder—“for the spirit is life; the mind is the builder; the physical is the result” (394-1). This pattern of causation is exemplified in God’s role as creator, expressing spirit through mind resulting in the cosmos—an ability inherited by souls for the purpose of reality creation (or co-creation) in diverse environments. For now the focus is on the relationship between spirit and mind. Mind builds by shaping and forming the energy of spirit. Thus mind creates and organizes patterns—it is a “pattern generator.”

By working with patterns, mind is the builder. It shapes energy into particular patterns and thus has an effect on how energy is expressed. (Reed, 1989, p. 81)

An obvious question arises as to the ontological status of such patterns. Do they qualify as *mental entities*—as having existence in their own right? If so, do they fit with Plato's concept of forms—eternal, universal patterns that can be instantiated (or participated in) by various created entities (as discussed below)?

The strongest case (in this direction) can be made for *thoughts*, for “Thoughts are things and may be miracles or crimes. Mind and thought are the builder ...” (5756-8). But just what kind of things are thoughts? What might it mean to label them mental entities? To follow through on the builder analogy in which mind is a pattern generator, thoughts are the mental patterns that are generated. In construction terms they could be considered as blueprints that define what is being built or created.

Obviously thought patterns can be associated with behaviors with ethical and moral consequences. Yet even if the thoughts are not acted upon behaviorally, perhaps they have import within the ontological domain as entities in their own right. The teachings of Jesus concerning thinking about immoral acts as being equivalent to actual physical behavior illustrate this point (Matthew 5:27–28). Can thinking within the mind itself constitute “miracles or crimes” at that level of being?

Can mental activity be classified within the realm of substance? That is the contention of materialistic monism, wherein mind is classified as a property of matter. Or alternatively, perhaps mind has a reality within its own realm of substance? Consider this excerpt that, at least, raises that possibility:

For thoughts are things; just as the Mind is as concrete as a post or tree or that which has been molded into things of any form. And with their working abilities they [thoughts] may give to each of these purpose and activity that becomes constructive in the experience of all. (1581-1)

This reading is not claiming that mind is matter (i.e., materialistic monism). Rather the intent is simply to indicate that mind (and thoughts) are just as real, just as substantial in a broader ontological sense as common physical objects. To provide a sample of what this involves in practice, consider these excerpts that seek to explain how thoughts create records that can be read by those attuned in consciousness (i.e., Edgar Cayce) to that level of reality.

Conditions, thoughts, activities of men in EVERY clime are things; as thoughts are things. They make their impressions upon the skein of time and space. Thus, as they make for their activity, they become as records that may be read by those in accord or ATTUNED to such a condition. This may be illustrated in the wave length of the radio or of such an activity. They (the activities, etc.) go upon the waves of light, upon that of space. And those instruments that are ATTUNED to same may hear, may experience, that which is being transmitted. (3976-16)

In giving the interpretations of the records as we find them, some little explanation as to how they may be read or interpreted might be well for this entity; as innately and manifestedly the entity has an interest in occult things and conditions. The records of an entity are written upon time and space, as the skein of things. They may be called as images. For thoughts are things, and as they run, so are the impressions made upon what we call time and space. Hence often there is confusion in the experiences of those interpreting for individuals their activities through any given period, in

differentiating between that which was the thought of an individual and that which was the actual activity. (1562-1)

The possibility that the realm of thoughts and mind interact with space and time to create recordings that can be accessed (whether purely through consciousness or aided by technology) is explored under the title of “Space and Time” (Section 2.3.2). The akashic records as mental entities created by thoughts and stored as memories within the structure of the universe raise additional questions about the nature of such potential mental entities, much as one might wonder about digital data stored on a computer hard drive. Might that constitute a mental entity? What about words printed on a page? Obviously the paper and ink are physical entities. Yet what about the meaning or content of the words (which is the real value of the printed material)?

Another avenue for exploring potential mental entities is the realm of *ideals*. In this context, ideals would be mental entities that serve as standards by which to measure thoughts and actions. Thus “ideals are principles acted upon by the mind” (2533-1). Just as a thought is a pattern, an ideal is a pattern with a difference—it provides spiritual guidance and direction to thoughts and ideas, leading to behaviors and actions worthy of life or death:

Watch this, being sure that there is not too enthusiastic reception of any idea without considering its necessity of being ideal; not idealistic, but ideal – or a pattern, and a pattern which ye may not only live by but die by and for. (3245-1)

The highest ideal endorsed in many readings is “Christ consciousness,” which can be defined as the “awareness within each soul, imprinted in pattern on the mind and waiting to be awakened by the will, of the soul’s oneness with God” (5749-14). As a pattern on the mind, a standard to live by, this ideal exemplifies a mental entity with spiritual purpose that can be

put into practice in daily life. In this sense, ideals bear a close resemblance to Platonic forms—as standards for the creation of entities at all levels (spiritual, mental, and physical).

Plato's Theory of Forms is a foundational metaphysical concept suggesting that true reality is comprised of abstract, ideal entities (Forms) which differ from how things appear. Plato's cave analogy is a famous depiction of his Theory of Forms: people initially see mere shadows (appearances) but eventually can perceive real objects illuminated by the sun (true Forms). (Dunne, 2023)

The readings use terms and concepts that resonate with Plato's insights:

... that we see manifested in the material plane is but a shadow of that in the spiritual plane. (5749-3)

First, – analyze self and self's purposes. Know thy ideals, and know the difference between ideals and ideas. Few individuals have ideals that are based upon spiritual things, of which the mental and material ideals are merely the shadow. (2953-1)

Although this brief discussion addresses some of the ontological aspects of ideals, practical application is addressed with greater depth in the Ethics chapter (Section 3.4).

A third potential candidate for mental entities is *mathematics* in the broad sense of abstract thought. Tradition has it that the phrase "Let no one ignorant of geometry enter" was engraved over the entrance to Plato's Academy in Athens (Anglin, 1994). Having been influenced by Pythagoras, it makes sense that numbers (and mathematics in general) are associated with Platonic forms that are the basis for physical reality. Over the centuries, sacred geometry and the practice of numerology were commonplace until the advent of modern science with its materialistic emphasis became the dominant paradigm—with mathematics as an

essential tool in its methodology. All of this suggests that mathematical entities have ontological significance. Whether they are mental entities (strictly speaking) or have some form of existence within their own realm is not entirely clear.

The Cayce readings have little to say on the matter, and yet do seem to endorse the reality of mathematics within the broad context of mental activities in building physical reality. Usually this is found in readings provided for individuals with an interest in numerology, seeking suggestions on how to apply it and what it means with regard to gaining self-knowledge. The readings affirm the validity of such approaches, while cautioning against taking them as absolute or anything other than as a sign that can be altered by the use of will (e.g., 261-15). Similarly, reading 137-119 for a stockbroker seeking guidance for intuitive stock picking discusses how numbers have a quality of vibration as they emanate from the mind:

Remembering, however, that these numbers – and numbers as a whole – only give that as is the RELATIVE activity of the MIND of man concerning same, and it is NOT infallible! for MAN may change his MIND as respecting ANY condition, and may therefore upset ANY factor as would be the criterion of the dates, month, or year, as taken as respecting any individual stock. But each number, then, has its OWN vibration. All emanating from one, even as is shown in that only those of integral numbers are considered ... (137-119)

Thus mathematics is a mental activity that can be put to use in various ways. The existence of mathematical entities with ontological status does appear plausible, if only in the sense that thoughts are things. At a universal level, mathematical entities may be a form of thoughts in the mind of God.

A much more extensive metaphysical treatment of mind is provided under the topic of Philosophy of Mind (Section 2.4). That section focuses on

human entities on planet earth as a counterpoint to modern mainstream philosophy of mind dedicated to a purely material monism explanation of mind. Continuing with the ontology of the Cayce readings, we now consider created entities.

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### 2.1.2 Created Entities

Because the readings commonly use the term entity for a variety of ontological niches in thousands of instances (e.g., spiritual entity, mental entity, physical entity, soul entity, etc.), its usage here is consistent with the language and conceptualization of the readings. Broadly speaking, the designation of created entities applies to:

- Soul entities created in the realm of spirit apart from the creation of the physical universe;
  - Angelic entities, likewise created apart from physical creation of the cosmos;
  - Physical entities ranging from stars and galaxies to atoms and subatomic particles, individually or as composites (spiritual, mental, physical), including nonhuman lifeforms (on earth and potentially elsewhere in the cosmos, e.g., plants, animals, and other life forms);
  - Human entities on planet earth (as a special case of soul entity manifestation in a composite spiritual, mental, physical body).
- 

#### 2.1.2.1 Soul Entities

Soul entities (usually simply called souls) were created in the image of the Creator, as companions to the Creator, with aspects of spirit and mind (and associated spiritual and mental attributes). Soul entities are discarnate (also spelled disincarnate), i.e., not incarnate in a physical body. For soul

entities, the spiritual attribute of will is emphasized in many readings as the source of individuality with all the possibilities that such expression entails. One of the questions that arose in various contexts in the readings involves the relationship of soul and spirit—a complex but important ontological distinction:

*(Q) Explain the law of the line of demarcation between soul and spirit.*

(A) This is one, yet distinct – even as the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit is one, yet is the manifestation of a force that is capable of manifestation in the varied planes of development. The soul is an individual, individuality, that may grow to be one with, or separate from, the whole. The spirit is the impelling influence of infinity, or the one creative source, force, that is manifest. Hence we find that in the physical plane we seek soul manifestation as the spirit moves same in activity. (5749-3)

Clearly, the distinction between soul and spirit can be confusing. Essentially it is about the relationship of a part to the whole. Spirit is the universal (whole) aspect of soul. Soul is the individual created manifestation of spirit. They are one and yet distinct.

In the beginning, or “before the beginning” (Allen, 1963), there was only Spirit—the spirit of God that desired companionship. Spirit moved and from within itself created individual souls in its own image. Souls exist within God—within the one Spirit: “For, each soul is a portion of the whole, or as a corpuscle in the body of God” (2400-1). By analogy, a blood cell is its own distinct entity with a permeable boundary or membrane that separates it from other blood cells and the rest of the body—and yet allows for exchange and interaction as part of the whole body. Similarly, the soul has its own unique identity and yet is part of the whole—part of the spiritual oneness called God. Thus all soul is spirit but not all spirit is soul. At the risk of oversimplifying this association, consider that all apples are

fruit, but not all fruit are apples. So it is with soul and spirit as described in the readings:

The soul is a portion of the whole, with that companionship of the subconscious or unconscious forces (the mind of the soul), with its spiritual companion that makes the individual entity as a portion OF the Whole, with the will that makes it so, and knowing itself to be a portion of the whole yet NOT the whole, yet retaining its identity in the whole, even as the body is made up of many members ... for the soul body must be that to which the entity may attain a consciousness that it may make itself one with the whole, that creative energy called nature, God, Allah, Abba, Baali ... (1924-1)

Notice the language and concepts in these excerpts—the explicit relation of spirit and soul (as part and whole) and the use of the word “companion.” The soul is created to be a companion to Spirit or God—by various designations (whether Whole, creative energy, nature, Allah, etc.). The distinction between spirit and soul makes companionable relations possible—*separate but one*.

For the Lord thy God is One; and the soul, the entity, is that portion that may be – with the application of self – made one with the Creative Forces or God. Yet it is capable, with that gift of eternal force within self, to KNOW itself separate but one WITH the Creative Forces. (873-1)

Finally, a simple analogy used in the readings to explain the relationship of soul and spirit is the shape of a star with its body and individual points. Each point could be regarded as a soul that has pushed itself away from the center and yet is still connected to the whole. The push that creates the sense of apparent separation derives from will—the gift of the Creator to each individual soul—the gift that allows the unique expression and identity of each individual. The spirit of God permeates the entire cosmos and is the source of all that is, including all the diverse and varied life-

forms around us. Souls find expression within this greater spiritual context that is God. Thus we have the opportunity for self-knowledge—as unique individual souls, and yet part of the spiritual whole that is God.

The distinction between soul and spirit takes on additional dimensions when soul becomes incarnate within a physical body on planet earth. This is a human entity, which is considered below with its own ontological status. Apart from earthly physical embodiment, soul entities exist within the physical cosmos in forms sometimes referred to as cosmic bodies, celestial bodies, astral bodies, etc., with several readings using the designation of “cosmic entity.” Such expansive expressions of soul experience will be discussed in detail below within a broader metaphysical context of the Philosophy of Religion (Section 2.5.2).

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#### 2.1.2.2 Angelic Entities

Within the Cayce readings, the term angel refers to disincarnate entities that provide assistance at a variety of levels. “Messenger” and “guardian” are terms commonly used in the readings when describing the distinctive activity of angels. With regard to metaphysics, this could be an example of “ontological roles” in which “it is possible to assign to the same entity multiple ontological roles” or “very different entities might end up playing the same ontological roles equally well ...” (Perovic, 2024, p. 46). Therefore, it is helpful to think of angelic entities in terms of the “roles” that they play:

The Cayce readings indicate that of all the souls that had been created in the beginning, only one-third entered the material world. Many of those who did not enter earthly existence play the roles of guardians, messengers, and bearers of divine decrees for humanity. (Grant, 2005, p. 108)

Thus, angelic entities may be soul entities (1) that have never incarnated in a flesh body on earth; (2) that have incarnated in the regular cycles of

earthly reincarnation, but happen to be between earthly lives in other realms of consciousness; or (3) that are souls currently incarnate and functioning as angels due to their high level of spiritual attunement.

However, there is one other form of entity to consider with regard to the angelic realm—*archangels*. These entities are not incarnate. They are not soul entities. They are distinct and deserving of their own consideration—perhaps as a subclass within the general designation of angelic entities.

Before considering archangels, it is worth noting a point about the nature and source of Cayce's psychic process that has implications for any discussion of angelic entities. The readings were given for a variety of individuals. The information provided was attuned to the consciousness of each individual using terms and concepts that are easily understood and feel familiar. For example, if a reading recipient's concept of God was anthropomorphic, as often portrayed in the Bible, the readings typically used such terms as "He" or "Him" when speaking of God. "Cayce's source was interested in helping individuals, not in revising their concept of God..." (McArther, 1993, p. 128). Likewise familiar images and symbols used in the Bible were often repurposed for explanatory effect in readings involving deeply spiritual or mystical content. In the case of angels, here are some common reading excerpts with associated Bible citations:

For he, man, has been made just a little lower than the angels  
... (2172-1 – Hebrews 2:7)

He hath given his angels charge concerning thee ... (2533-7 –  
Psalm 91:11)

For many have entertained angels unaware. (2131-1 –  
Hebrews 13:2)

So just who or what are the angels mentioned in these readings? For an eleven-year-old girl who was given a reading in September 1933, her

guardian angel was said to be “Aruel, who stood with Marcellus at the Cross” (405-1)—an apparent reference to an individual (Aruel) who was present at the crucifixion with Marcellus Gallio (the commander of the detachment that crucified Jesus). Thus in this case the guardian angel was a disincarnate entity (a soul between earthly incarnations). In the life reading given for this girl, after discussing past lives in colonial America and before that in France, a past life in Rome was described in which the “entity then was the companion of, the wife of, that soldier that stood by the Cross ... in the name Marcellus” (405-1). Despite the awkward syntax of the reading text, it is clear that the *guardian angel* cited in her 20th-century life reading was identified as a former Roman companion, Aruel. Here is the relevant section of that life reading that explains angelic influences in her current life:

*(Q) Do I have a guide, or guides, in the spirit world or plane?*

(A) There are ever, for every soul, those that may be termed the guides or guardian angels that stand before the throne of grace and mercy. The guardian angel for this entity (as may be termed) is that one, Aruel, who stood with Marcellus at the Cross. (Q) Will I be able to have protection and guidance from the spirit plane to help me carry out my ideals for my best development in this life? (A) If there is the finding of self in its relationships to the spiritual life, and the guiding of self therein; as given. Then do the angels and the guards in the spiritual life protect those in their activities. (405-1)

These extended quotations provide specific information regarding the nature and function of angelic entities—as well as a glimpse into the source and process of the information in the readings. They are not (for the most part) abstract philosophical dissertations or arguments. Rather they are very specific attempts to be of assistance, to serve fellow human beings with unique personal insights that are practical and can be applied in the midst of life. Of course the challenge in seeking to draw upon such

information as the basis for a philosophical system is to find the common threads within literally thousands of such psychic productions that can be woven together into a formal structure—in this case, the ontological basis for angelic entities.

As ontological entities, *archangels* are portrayed as attributes of the spirit realm—“spiritual manifestations in the spirit world” (5749-3). During several Cayce readings, the immediacy of archangels (and particularly Michael) was made dramatically apparent. One reading in particular stands out, not only because of its content but the setting and persons involved. Reading 294-208, given on March 14, 1944 near the end of Cayce’s career (only months before his death), was solemn. Cayce’s health was in decline. There were deep disappointments with his church affiliation, difficulties within his office staff, and personality conflicts with close associates. Cayce had a lifelong tendency for throat problems hampering his speech at times. Harmon Bro, a graduate student working on a doctoral dissertation on Cayce at the time, was present and observed that Cayce’s voice was so low he had to strain to hear it. But then:

Suddenly and without warning there came from Cayce a tremendous ringing voice, his own, yet full of stern authority. It was the loudest speaking I had ever heard, bouncing from the walls. (Bro, 1990, p. 422)

Bro reports that everyone present bowed their heads obediently (except for Gladys Davis, the stenographer who kept on writing by habit). The voice thundered:

BOW THINE HEADS, YE CHILDREN OF MEN! FOR I,  
MICHAEL, LORD OF THE WAY, WOULD SPEAK WITH  
THEE! YE GENERATION OF VIPERS, YE ADULTEROUS  
GENERATION, BE WARNED! THERE IS TODAY BEFORE  
THEE GOOD AND EVIL! CHOOSE THOU WHOM YE  
WILL SERVE! WALK IN THE WAY OF THE LORD! OR

ELSE THERE WILL COME THAT SUDDEN RECKONING,  
AS YE HAVE SEEN! BOW THINE HEADS, YE WHO ARE  
UNGRACIOUS, UNREPENTANT! FOR THE GLORY OF  
THE LORD IS AT HAND! THE OPPORTUNITY IS  
BEFORE THEE! ACCEPT OR REJECT! But don't be PIGS!  
(294-208)

Then Cayce's voice dropped back down to a near whisper. Bro recounts that when the reading ended, all were weeping and remained silent as they exited the room. In retrospect, Bro processed the powerful experience with the skill of a trained academic and the heart of a dedicated minister:

It did not matter to me exactly who the voice had been that called itself Michael. Whether a creation of Cayce's biblically formed mind, a discarnate being dismayed at our behavior, an archetype of wisdom and purity from the collective unconscious that was briefly given form, or a genuine angelic presence, it had come into our midst not to bring blessing or honor on us, but to express burning rebuke. If this really were an archangel, I never wanted to deal with one again. No special claims were needed to connect that awesome voice with our consciences, wounding us to our souls. We were known. We were seen. We were found wanting. (Bro, 1990, p. 422)

Ontological exploration can be dry and brittle—and yet not necessarily so from the real-life perspective of the readings' applied philosophy. Bro's account is a reminder that the Cayce readings address key philosophical questions from the perspective of individuals who received and interacted with the information provided by the readings, often in dramatic fashion.

For those who wish to explore further the topic of angels and archangels based on the Cayce readings, three books are recommended: *Edgar Cayce on Angels and the Angelic Forces* (Todeschi, 2019), *Edgar Cayce on Angels, Archangels, and the Unseen Forces* (Grant, 2005), and *Edgar Cayce and the Kabbalah* (Van Auken, 2010, pp. 131-153).

### 2.1.2.3 Physical Entities

#### 2.1.2.3.1 Matter of the Cosmos

For, know, all things material have first their inception in the spiritual. Then they give or take form in the mental, finding expression in the material. (2647-1)

With regard to the readings' ontology of the physical universe, the entities of matter are essentially the same as those recognized by modern mainstream scientific physicalism (i.e., materialistic monism). The difference lies in the source and creative process that results in material entities. Rather than random activity of particle physics somehow self-organizing into complex entities such as planets, stars, and galaxies—the Cayce readings affirm that the whole of the physical cosmos is purposeful and full of meaning. Furthermore, the source of all matter is Spirit manifesting as electrical units of energy:

For materiality IS – or matter IS – that demonstration and manifestation of the units of positive and negative energy, or electricity, or God. (412-9)

While not necessarily inconsistent with modern atomic physics, the readings affirm that electric polarity is a manifestation of God—the First Cause as it *emanates* from Spirit into atomic structures in the various forms known to science:

What is the First Cause? That from which all emanates, the SPIRIT of the force or influence itself; breaking itself upon the atomic structures about same, bringing those influences as it associates itself one with another in its varied forms of atomic structure. (2012-1)

Thus spirit and mind permeate all matter, even at the atomic scale, as does will and consciousness (i.e., awareness). The readings speak of the “mind of each atom” (137-81), the “consciousness of each atomic force” (2097-1), and “the awareness of the divine that lies within each atom, each cell of the body” (3384-2). The readings even call attention to “the will of that atomic force” (136-63), noting that “each atom is made up of urges” (262-78), perhaps suggesting some level of agency. Physical entities exist at the atomic scale, consistent with the concept of God being the Whole—truly all that is, regardless of scale. For if the very small express spirit, mind, will, and consciousness, one can only assume that larger (even astronomically larger) entities comprised of atoms may also exist in some comparable manner.

Our local star, the sun, is a physical entity that *emanates* light and (according to the readings) is affected by human activity—to the point of influencing solar activity (5757-1). Planets are entities associated with at least archetypal symbolic status, as reflected in the classic Greek names and profiles assigned to each, reflecting the gods of that culture—and perhaps indicating status as a mental entity. The status of planets as physical entities is uncontested. And so it goes throughout the created material cosmos.

Furthermore, the cascade of energy from spirit through mind fulfills the reason for creation: **companionship and expression**. The creation of matter is one form of *expression*—an expression of spirit in motion. Spirit moved (and continues to move); mind formed and shaped (and continues to construct and deconstruct) the energy of spirit; and all the diverse entities of matter throughout the cosmos are the result. The One becomes many, available for human use and study. “Matter is the expression of spirit MOVING in the material world” (520-4)—dynamic movement expressed through emanation:

For remember, MIND is the Builder between the things spiritual (from which all emanate) and that which is material (which is the manifestation that Mind seeks to bring ever into the experience of all). (1999-1)

In ALL NATURE the Spirit of Creation is EMANATING! and one that attunes self in MIND or mental forces towards these BEINGS of emanation, gains knowledge in an INESTIMABLE manner that becomes the soul, the personality, the BEING of the individual. (345-2)

The “BEINGS of emanation” include all the entities of the cosmos, all the things, all the stuff, all the substance studied by science and analyzed by philosophers. The term *emanation* (as used in the readings) also resonates strongly with the metaphysics of Plotinus, who conceived of cosmic origins as emanating from the ONE, through Intellect (mind), through Soul (spirit), and finally manifesting as the material universe. The One is the ultimate source of all, including this universe, “which is then prefigured in Intellect and transmitted through Soul to become manifest as our physical universe” (Dillon & Smith, 2015, p. 7).

Another important parallel between the Cayce readings and the metaphysics of Plotinus is the concept of the great chain of being. The idea of the chain of being was first systematized by Plotinus, though the component concepts were derived from Plato and Aristotle (Britannica, 2021). Essentially the great chain of being is a classical metaphysical order in which all beings (from the most basic up to the very highest and most perfect being) are hierarchically linked to form one interconnected whole (New World Encyclopedia, 2024). The readings portray the hierarchy of the great chain of being within the context of evolution, at all levels:

... there you have evolution, there you have the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, each developing towards its own source, yet all belonging and

becoming one in that force as it develops itself to become one with the Creative Energy, and one with the God.... surviving in the earth, through mineral, through plant kingdom, through the vegetable kingdom, through the animal kingdom, each as the geological survey shows, held its sway in the earth, pass from one into the other ... (900-340)

Within the great chain of being the readings acknowledge "... group mind – or that of the plant kingdom, the mineral kingdom and the animal kingdom or ... of a group soul or consciousness" (262-80). Thus from the smallest atomic entities, through the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms we find group mind and group soul—leading us to that ontological "dividing point between man and animal and plant, and mineral kingdom – GIVEN then the will, and the soul, that it might make itself One with that Creation" (900-340).

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#### 2.1.2.3.2 Human Entities

The ontological distinction between nonhuman lifeforms and humans is based on the presence of individual souls in humans. "In the Cayce readings the elevated view of man, as a soul or entity created in the beginning as a part of divine consciousness, give a dimension of ontological appropriateness or fitness ..." (Drummond, 1978, p. 83). Thus the soul (with its spiritual attribute of will) has the potential to be companionable with God as an equal. That is what sets it apart from the rest of the cosmos. For will "make[s] for the dividing line between the finite and the infinite, the divine and the wholly human, the carnal and the spiritual" (262-81). It is helpful to distinguish between "will" in a general sense (as discussed above with regard to group mind and group soul—i.e., group will, for example in the case of atoms) and "free will" as used when speaking of soul entities (Section 2.2.5.2).

For, if free will or the desire (which is an attribute or an expression of will) were taken from man, or from the human soul, it would then become rather the automaton, rather the animal, or rather the spirit of animal activity in a material world; hence not of itself. (349-17)

Human entities are afforded unique opportunities for companionship and expression with the Creative Forces called God. As a soul incarnating in a physical body on planet earth, the possibility of self-knowledge while in unity with the Whole—separate (to the extreme) and yet one with the Whole—exemplifies purposeful being. Incarnation in a physical flesh body has ontological consequences with broader metaphysical implications. So at this point, we resume the discussion of the distinction between soul and spirit, which now becomes more evident and practical with physical incarnation.

Within the physical body of humans, the spirit and soul forces have their own unique expression. Spirit is the life—the life force of the body that energizes and maintains the vitality of the system. It is impersonal, as it is in all life forms. The soul entity is personal with its own unique identity and agenda. It seeks its own expression through will and choice. Thus the readings make a distinction between soul forces and spiritual forces within the physical body of humans. In the following excerpt a lengthy question was posed that explores the details of the spirit/soul distinction—extending even to the anatomy and physiology of the body-spirit-soul connection:

*(Q) It has been given that the soul is the spiritual force that animates or gives life to the body. What is spirit? What is spiritual force? Is it corporeal or incorporeal? Where may we find the soul force in the body – in the brain, nerve centers or where?*

*(A) There is a vast deal of difference between spiritual and soul forces, for, as given, each force there has been set guards*

or bounds. Spirit forces are the animation of ALL LIFE giving life-producing forces in animate or inanimate forces. Spiritual elements become corporeal when we speak of the spiritual body in a spiritual entity; then composed of spirit, soul and the superconsciousness. In the soul forces, and its dwelling in man, we find the animation, the spiritual element, the soul that developing element, and contained in the brain, in the nerve, in the centers of the whole system... Then, we have as this: Spiritual element, the vitality, produces the motive forces of the entity, whether physical or spiritual. Spiritual forces being the life, the reproductive principle; the soul the development principle. As we have manifested, or illustrated, in the physical body in nerve tissue: There becomes that principle of the nerve action and the nerve in action. That is, with the expression of some condition bringing distress in the body, the active principle is the spirit. The nerve is the soul, for development. (900-17)

In the human body, life-giving activity of spirit is expressed through glands, for “glands are associated with reproduction, degeneration, regeneration” (281-38). The readings affirm the role of glands as spiritual centers (281-29). In contrast, soul activity is about development, which is anatomically related to the nervous systems. Thus soul development is the process by which souls become “fit companions” to their Source.

Another area of distinction between soul and spirit relates to the processes associated with physical incarnation—particularly birth and death. As embryo and fetus develop within the womb of a female human, spirit forces are active in creating the unborn physical entity. The soul entity is not present or active during this phase. At about the time of physical birth, the soul entity may enter and take possession of the body. In the readings, this is called “soul birth” but does not infer that the soul is newly formed or created—it is pre-existent. The soul entity takes flight from other realms of experience and connects into the body, usually within a few hours

before or after physical birth. Persons seeking astrological information from Cayce wanted their charts to be as accurate as possible; hence the distinctions were made between physical and soul birth:

In entering the present experience we find there is a difference between the physical and the soul birth of the entity. (790-1)

Here we have a variation in the physical birth and the soul birth, of some hours. (826-2)

We will explore in detail the soul's educational development apart from earthly incarnation in Section 2.5.2. Here is a sample to provide a hint at what is involved in the soul's journey through various realms of consciousness as it transitions to earthly incarnation:

Now, we find the spirit and soul took possession and completed this [human] entity, as we have at present, late in the evening – 11:29 [11:29 P.M.]. We find the soul and spirit entity took its flight, or its force being present and bringing this present [human] entity's completeness, from that of Venus' forces ... (428-1)

At the other end of the life cycle of physical incarnation, the departure of the soul is discussed in numerous readings. This excerpt illustrates the soul/spirit distinction in a case involving premature departure of the soul (that is, prior to physical death):

There has already been departure of the soul, which only waits by here [in the borderland]. We have the physical being but the control of same only needs the care, the attention, the greater love which may be shown in and under the circumstances, which will give the best conditions for this body. For already there are those weakenings so of the centers of the cerebrospinal [nervous] system that no physical help, as we find, may be administered, only the mental or soul help as will be a part of the mental or superconscious self. (5344-1)

In this instance, with the departure of the soul, spirit forces continue to function for a while, keeping the physical body alive. However, the kindness shown by those attending this individual is helpful to the soul entity (superconscious self), which maintains awareness although divorced from the physical body. Perhaps a similar process of soul/spirit separation is present in cases of near-death experience, where the soul is out of body, leaving spirit forces to carry on in its temporary absence. Out-of-body experiences are common for souls incarnating in flesh bodies on planet earth: “Each and every soul leaves the body as it rests in sleep” (853-8). With regard to the physicality of the body/soul connection, the readings indicate a close affinity to specific glands:

In the body we find that which connects the pineal, the pituitary, the lyden, may be truly called the silver cord, or the golden cup that may be filled with a closer walk with that which is the creative essence in physical, mental and spiritual life; for the destruction wholly of either will make for the disintegration of the soul from its house of clay. (262-20)

Of course all of this is reminiscent of Cartesian dualism with its emphasis on a categorical distinction between soul (or mind) and body. Section 2.4.2.1 delves into this specific topic. More broadly, there is extensive information on the connection of body, soul, and mind in the readings (see Appendix A – The Pineal System). This is pointed out simply because of the long philosophical debates about such matters. The readings do provide a monistic model that may be helpful in resolving ontological issues associated with such interactions. In short: “... the physical, the mental, the spiritual are one. They manifest in the combination of an entity – a body, mind and soul ...” (1539-1). This is the human entity.

The soul entity (whether incarnate or not) is complex with multiple aspects of selfhood. The readings speak of the “selves of an entity” and use about twenty terms when speaking of such multiplicity. Some of the

designations relate to layers of reincarnational selves or to selves associated with astral realms of the universe (i.e., astral sojourns, Section 2.5.2.1). Most of the selves within a soul entity resemble psychological traits revealing aspects that might be explored in depth psychotherapy or within certain religious traditions. Some philosophical traditions speak of imaginal levels of being that could include Socrates' daemon as an aspect of the greater self. Perhaps multiple personality disorder could be viewed as a pathological expression of such multiplicity. Thus the ontological status of the soul entity is complex and mysterious, as will be elaborated further in many of the sections that follow.

### Summary

As the branch of metaphysics that studies questions of being and existence, ontology in the Cayce readings focuses on God as the source of being expressed through the activity of spirit and mind as one unified category of being. Initially, in the realm of spirit, soul entities were created for companionship. Some souls assist as helpers and messengers in the role of angels. Other angelic entities (archangels) fulfill that same role in a more universal context. Creation of the physical cosmos, as an act of creative expression, provides an abundance of physical entities including diverse forms of matter that emanate from a divine source, manifesting a great chain of being. Human entities are a relatively late entry into the ontological landscape of beings on planet earth—unique as soul entities encased in flesh bodies.

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## 2.2 Free Will and Determinism

The debate about *free will*—do we have it, and if so, to what degree—has continued for at least two millennia. Hanging in the balance are questions about rightness and wrongness, good and evil, virtue and vice, blame and

praise, reward and punishment (O'Connor & Franklin, 2022). The increasing acceptance of modern materialistic science, with attendant beliefs about the pervasiveness of cause and effect and determinism, has intensified the discussion.

Overall, the Cayce readings take a relatively traditional philosophical position on the subject. Yes, *free will* exists, but it is counterbalanced by cause and effect from environmental and hereditary factors. One of the distinctive twists in this position is the inclusion of reincarnation and sojourns in the astral environs (particularly planetary sojourns) of this solar system—i.e., *transpersonal* environment and heredity. There is also the story of the soul and its will, gifted by the Creator. But first, a little background on the free will vs. determinism debate provides a context for the Cayce perspective.

Free will pertains to the belief in autonomy—the subjective experience that we, as individuals, have the power to make our own choices and decisions, that we control the path of our own lives. Free will is also closely linked to concepts such as moral responsibility, implying that we have control over our behaviors and can therefore be held accountable for any harm we may do—to others, to ourselves, and to our earthly environment. For some this also pertains to ultimate concerns, such as religious ideas related to where souls spend eternity.

In contrast, *determinism* insists that our choices and behaviors are invariably dictated (or at least strongly influenced) by previous events or natural laws—in other words, predestination in some degree or manner. The deterministic view postulates that the feeling or subjective experience of free will is only an illusion. The decisions that we appear to make and the actions we take all have a physical reason—a chain of causation stretching back to the beginning of existence (whether the formation of this

planet or the big bang hypothesized as the origin of the universe by modern science).

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## 2.2.1 Compatibilism and Incompatibilism

The brief descriptions of free will and determinism above are extremely simplified. A review of the literature reveals painstaking philosophical distinctions with gradients between the two extreme positions. We will now undertake a slightly more sophisticated exploration of this controversy beginning with compatibilism and incompatibilism.

Accepting the simple and extreme duality presented above, favoring either position as ultimately true to the exclusion of the other, is called incompatibilism. This view positing free will as incompatible with determinism comes in two basic forms: libertarianism (i.e., determinism is false and free will is at least possible) and hard determinism (determinism is true and free will is not possible). There are further variations on this theme, including theological determinism, which suggests that God has pre-determined the outcome of the universe, so that humans are simply acting out a grand plan, fulfilling fate or destiny. The Cayce readings have much to say about this particular aspect of the debate.

In contrast, compatibilism accepts that free will is congruent with determinism in varying degrees. Determinism may even be necessary for free will to function efficiently, providing stability and predictability for making good choices. Compatibilism also comes with numerous variations on its theme.

Despite taking an extremely adamant position on the reality of free will for the soul, the Cayce readings' approach on the whole is probably best described as compatibilism (or perhaps soft determinism), in which

determinism is true but we can still act as free, morally responsible agents. It is a complex and surprisingly sophisticated philosophical position. As discussed in the ontology section, the readings insist that souls were created as companions to God. To fulfill that role, free will was granted to allow that relationship to be optimal. The spiritual attributes of will and desire are closely related and inherent in the human soul as an individual entity capable of such intimate relations:

For, if free will or the desire (which is an attribute or an expression of will) were taken from man, or from the human soul, it would then become rather the automaton, rather the animal, or rather the spirit of animal activity in a material world; hence not of itself. (349-17)

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### 2.2.2 Natural Law

Humans live in a lawful universe. The earth is a causal realm based on natural law. Science studies the laws of nature as they pertain to diverse manifestations, whether biological evolution and survival, psychological expression of the self and its concept of life, or simply the need to be noticed as a unique individual in social relations. All of this entails the use of free will to fulfill the needs of material existence:

Hence we find there are in the experience of man three desired purposes, or three natural laws pertaining to his material existence: survival of his species, or the preservation of life; to give expression of his own concept of life; and (third) to be heard, to be noticed in his activity. (3976-22)

And yet, there is a broader context to the human experience that goes beyond mere random chance or blind causation, even in a world subject to the cause and effect of natural law as studied by science:

For the entity came not merely by chance. For, the earth is a causation world, for in the earth, cause and effect are as the natural law. And as each soul enters this material plane, it is to meet or to give those lessons or truths that others, too, may gain the more knowledge of the purpose for which each soul enters. (3645-1)

The natural law of *cause and effect* provides a stable environment in which to learn and grow as souls. Souls must obey the laws in the realm in which they find themselves—or pay a price. This certainly has a quality of determinism, especially if souls neglect or refuse to learn the lessons of life. Like other spiritual traditions, the readings call this particular form of cause and effect karma. Thus while life may not seem fair in a single lifetime, from the perspective of the soul (which grows and develops over many lifetimes), fairness is assured.

For ever does one constantly meet self. That which is thought and done and hoped as constructive forces GROWS. That which is selfish, aggrandizing, with the motive for self-glory or fame, does not grow but becomes as the dead weight that must be carried or must be met – and one is CONSTANTLY meeting self. (1432-1)

Freedom of will has a central role to play in the drama of life, where the soul is enmeshed in natural laws that constrain and compel, and yes, at times determine outcomes based on cause and effect. One concern about determinism is the possibility of randomness or “accidents” that apparently fall outside the scope of the laws of nature (so-called indeterminism), thus negating the possibility of free will. The readings insist that the law of cause and effect is reliable even with apparent accidents:

For, it is never by chance but, as with all things in this material world, there are causes, there are effects. To be sure, at times

there may be what might be called accidents. But these, too, in a causation world, have their cause and effect. (2927-1)

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### 2.2.3 Heredity and Environment

Discussions of determinism in the human context are typically grounded in the twin factors of *heredity and environment*. From this perspective, heredity is based upon the science of genetics—we are who we are and behave as we do because of genetic programming. Likewise, environmental influences usually involve childhood upbringing in a family or community group where shared beliefs, values, and behaviors are internalized and become the motivating factors for the rest of one's life. Without doubt, heredity and environment strongly influence or even determine much of human life in all of its manifestations. Even so, the readings affirm that will is the governing factor over heredity and environment, even at the atomic level of material existence:

As to what an entity does concerning its environs or hereditary influence from the MATERIAL viewpoint, this is governed by the action of the will (that active principle making for the INDIVIDUALITY of an entity, from those atomic forces that may manifest in a material plane or in ANY sphere of material or matter existence). Thus is MAN endowed with the individual soul. (274-1)

*(Q) Are hereditary, environment and will equal factors in aiding or retarding the entity's development?*

*(A) Will is the greater factor, for it may overcome any or all of the others; provided that will is made one with the pattern, see? For, no influence of heredity, environment or what not, surpasses the will ... (5749-14)*

We will be considering the role of will, mind, and consciousness at the atomic level in the context of Philosophy of Mind (Section 2.4.4). For now,

the focus is on the practical matter and application of will at the level of daily life for human entities. One of the best resources for understanding and applying the Cayce approach to will in daily life is Mark Thurston's book, *Paradox of Power: Balancing Personal and Higher Will* (1987). The *paradox of power* described by Thurston involves a "cooperative relationship with influences bigger than ourselves" (p. 13). Self-determination and personal choice must be counterbalanced by "higher will" inherent in **companionship with the Divine**. This is the "transpersonal" aspect of will requiring attunement of the personal will to a higher power.

The transpersonal level of will comes into play spectacularly in the life readings that provide information on past lives (reincarnation) and astral sojourns (in other planes and spheres of consciousness between earthly lives). In this expansive context of soul experience, the transpersonal dimensions of heredity and environment come into play.

Reincarnation on earth is fairly easy to envision—picture historic or prehistoric settings with ourselves as the actors. Astral sojourns are another matter. Consider them as reincarnation in a celestial environment (typically another planet in this solar system) but not in a physical body—rather a mental body (commonly called an astral body) suitable for the multidimensional context of each environ. That should be enough for the present discussion, as later sections will cover this in exhaustive detail. With regard to hereditary and environmental influences associated with reincarnational karma:

(Q) *From which side of my family do I inherit most?*  
(A) You have inherited most from yourself, not from family!  
The family is only a river through which it (the entity, soul)  
flows! (1233-1)

For, as has been indicated oft, causes may be karma. Karma is cause oft of hereditary conditions so called. Then indeed does the soul inherit that it has builded in its experience with its fellow man in material relationships. (3313-1)

In Saturn we find also that lending for sudden changes in the experience ... For urges come by the influences not only of heredity and environment, as we know from the psychological effect in the human experience, but of heredity and environment of the soul's experience in its sojourn through materiality or the consciousness within the various [planetary] spheres of activity. Hence we have these as manifestations in the mental – or urges of the entity ... (877-1)

Thus, in addition to the traditionally accepted deterministic factors of biological genetics and psychosocial programming in a single earthly life, the readings expand into the domain of transpersonal influences. Even so, the role of the will is emphasized:

Yet no influence of any nature – astrologically, hereditary or environmental – surpasses the will of the entity, the birthright of each and every soul. (2505-1)

It bears remembering that will is influential during past sojourns (whether earthly or astral). Thus specific transpersonal deterministic factors are created or influenced by the use of will in past experiences. The role of cause and effect (when dealing with past life influences as karma) is active. The principle is that the use of will in the present surpasses how the will was used in the past (during past earthly lives or astral sojourns).

Thus misuse of will results in adverse astrological influences; constructive choices in the astral realms of consciousness make for benevolent tendencies—as with earthly past lives. But they are only tendencies, urges that can be overridden by the use of will in a present life. The will is supreme in any case, and how we use will in the present takes precedence

over how it was used in a past life—on earth or in the astral realm of planetary sojourns. However, will must be active and applied; otherwise past patterns prevail—then will is ineffective, asleep, and we stay stuck in past patterns.

This is not to say that karmic influences can simply or easily be banished or dismissed in the present. Such patterns must be met as lessons in life—as growth opportunities for all involved. That is the proper use of will for healing of any sort. When will is attuned and cooperative with a high spiritual ideal, healing (whether physical, mental, or spiritual) can be expected.

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#### 2.2.4 Omniscience of God

In the history of the free will vs. determinism debate, the theological aspects have sometimes become paramount, particularly in the philosophy of religion. Typically questions that arise center around beliefs about destiny and predestination with regard to the nature of God—if God is omniscient, how can humans have free will?

In seeking a reading for information to include in the philosophy chapter of the biography of Edgar Cayce, Tom Sugrue asked a question intended to reconcile the omniscience of God and His knowledge of all things with the free will of the soul and the soul's "fall from grace." The reply was startling in its implications:

He [God] did not prevent ["the fall"], once having given free will. For, He made the individual entities or souls in the beginning.... Having given free will, then, – though having the foreknowledge, though being omnipotent and omnipresent, – it is only when the soul that is a portion of God CHOOSES that God knows the end thereof. (5749-14)

The question of the omniscience of God is also crucial for addressing the metaphysical problem of evil, all of which is explored in Philosophy of Religion (Section 2.5). The relevance here is simply to set aside the concern as a decisive issue in the free will vs. determinism debate. If even God does not know the future (due to human free will), then the future is not set in stone, not pre-determined—despite definite tendencies and influences based on cause and effect related to factors such as heredity and environment.

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### 2.2.5 Neuroscience and Free Will—or Free Won't

Increasingly in recent decades the influence of cognitive neuroscience has expanded, supporting the materialistic monism that emphasizes the brain as the source of mind—whether considered simply a property of brain matter or an epiphenomenon of brain activity without any real power. From this perspective free will either does not exist or is simply just another function of the cerebral cortex strictly following the laws of cause and effect (determinism).

This trend was bolstered by seminal research conducted by Benjamin Libet (Libet et al., 1983), in which he asked subjects to choose a random moment to flick their wrist while he measured the associated activity in their brain. The results of this research were interpreted as proving that the brain begins initiating an action before the person has conscious awareness of having made the choice to act. Libet found that the unconscious brain activity leading up to subjects' movements began approximately half a second before the subject was aware of a conscious intention to move.

The results of Libet's work have been portrayed by some (within a deterministic and reductionist framework) as an indication that human free will does not exist (e.g., Van Inwagen, 1989; Wegner, 2002; Gazzaniga, 2011). As Susan Blackmore has noted:

Then there are Libet's experiments suggesting that conscious experience takes some time to build up and is much too slow to be responsible for making things happen ... Though these experiments are controversial ... they add to the growing impression that actions and decisions are made rapidly and only later does the brain weave a story about a self who is in charge and is conscious. In other words consciousness comes after the action. It does not cause it. (Blackmore, 1996, para. 4)

Despite the negative interpretation of his findings by many, Libet himself did not regard the results of his experiments as evidence of the lack of conscious free will. He noted that although the tendency to press a button may be building up for 500 milliseconds, the conscious will retains a right to veto any action at the last moment—an option sometimes referred to as “free won't” (Libet et al., 2003). Others have opted for a purely philosophical approach to such matters:

...if the very same experiment had been undertaken from an entirely different conceptual vantage, the results might just as easily have been taken as triumphant proof of the reality of free will ... could there be a better illustration of the power of a final cause to bring about physical effects: the movement of the subject's wrist occurred within a continuous activity directed toward a rational end consciously sought, apart from which it would not have happened at all; the whole structure of the act was teleological, which is precisely how a mechanistic view of reality says physical reality cannot behave. How even more amazing, then, that a future purpose could dictate material results at the most fundamental and pre-conscious level of an organism's operations. Perhaps nature is something of an Aristotelian at heart. (Hart, 2013, p. 166)

The bearing of these findings on the free will vs. determinism debate is complex. Pallares-Domínguez (2016) has provided an excellent review of this literature and its aftermath from a philosophical perspective of

applied ethics. Here are some key points in this discussion that are relevant to the information in the Cayce readings.

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### 2.2.5.1 Levels of Consciousness

One of the central themes surrounding Libet's research is the role of various levels of consciousness in relation to free will. The assumption is that free will is inherently associated with conscious intent—unconscious activity is not related to the use of will. The readings are much more nuanced with regard to the interaction of will (as an inherent attribute of the soul) and the subconscious level of mind: "the subconscious forces, the mind of the soul" (106-8). Here are a few excerpts that illustrate the interaction of will with conscious and subconscious levels of awareness.

Knowledge comes through the senses in the physical body to the conscious mind. The subconscious has the storing of the knowledge of given conditions; when the consciousness receives through the sense that knowledge, the will [is] the action against the incentives set forth. (900-21)

We (individuals) find in the earth's plane those mental conditions wherein the conscious and subconscious would manifest by some given suggestion. The entity, through will, reasons with the condition. (900-25)

The soul is a portion of the whole, with that companionship of the subconscious or unconscious forces (the mind of the soul), with its spiritual companion that makes the individual entity as a portion OF the Whole, with the will that makes it so ... (1924-1)

Research in this field needs to recognize that free will operates at the level of the subconscious ("mind of the soul") and may (or may not) be reflected in conscious mental activity. Libet's research may have tapped into that level, but became muddled in misunderstandings about the multiple levels

of consciousness as they relate to the activity of will and mind—for will and mind are not the same.

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### 2.2.5.2 The Soul and Free Will

Ontologically, will is an attribute of spirit (Section 2.1.1.2) provided to the soul to allow the possibility for a special kind of relationship called “companionship.” In this context, will is often simply called “free will” — although its range of freedom can be challenged, as noted above. As souls are created in the image of God, they also possess the ability of expression. None of which necessarily equates to the level of consciously (or unconsciously) twitching a finger in a lab experiment. If the finger twitch had a real consequence relevant to soul development and/or interpersonal relations (such as flipping a switch delivering electric shock to another human being), then that might rise to the level of free will as an activity of the soul. In other words, does the timing of a trivial hand movement rise to the level of free will (as an activity of the soul), or simply represent the conscious mind on autopilot with the will asleep?

Simply measuring unconscious neurological activity without appreciating its significance as a reflection of will in this larger context is inadequate. The deeper, more meaningful aspect of will as an attribute of the soul must be taken into consideration.

The will has a kind of evolutionary wisdom. It is not the kind of repressive will that we would use to keep from eating an extra dessert, but a deeper will that is usually sleeping within us — a will toward enlightenment. This sleeping unconscious will provides an impetus from deep within us toward wholeness. But what about the other, more familiar side of the coin — the conscious will? We cannot ignore the significance of conscious will and its proper use. But it can be understood, trained, and properly developed only if we see a bigger

picture. The conscious will must come to reflect the deeper, wiser will. (Thurston, 1987, pp. 16–17)

That is the paradox of power that is the thesis of Thurston's position—bringing personal will into alignment with the “deeper, wiser will.” That is the key to knowing oneself to be oneself, and yet one with the Whole called God—the essence of companionship at any level. That is the measure of free will in human life. What might research at that level look like and how would it be conducted? Thurston has provided a conceptual model of mind and will that can be applied in research settings, “based on the principle that mind and will are in direct opposition to each other” (Thurston, 1987, p. 133).

One other important distinction regarding will concerns the sense of will (as agency) having degrees of freedom. “Free will” as a spiritual attribute of the soul has maximum freedom. The extent of such freedom allows the possibility for souls to reject the offer of companionship with the divine. No other created entity possesses “free will” to that extent. However, the readings do speak of will in a more generic sense (i.e., as simple agency), even at the atomic level. The readings call attention to “the will of that atomic force” (136-63), noting that “each atom is made up of urges” (262-78), suggesting some level of agency with minimal degrees of freedom—certainly not the capacity to rebel against its purpose for existence (as is the case for soul entities).

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### 2.2.6 Opposition of Mind and Will

Libet's concept of “free won't” as a positive interpretation of his controversial findings preserves some validity for free will, albeit adding a layer of complexity. Perhaps recognition of the difference between will and mind (for they are often mistakenly regarded as synonymous in scientific research) can help clarify the situation.

The human mind operates in the past: "... for before ANY condition exists in the finite mind, it has become a past condition" (900-24). Considering that the Libet-related research uses timing to establish the fact of conscious willful activity, delayed conscious awareness of intent should not be surprising. That is how the mind operates—temporally oriented to the past—in contrast to the will, which is:

... like a seed – it is of your future. The will draws you toward that which you are to become. The will is the principal agent of spiritual evolution. (Thurston, 1987, p. 16)

Thus will is different and distinct from mind. In fact, the readings insist that "Mind is the factor that is in direct opposition of will" (3744-2). Mind (as the builder) uses thoughts and ideas that are rooted in the past. Total reliance on the mind can be a trap of getting stuck in past mental patterns. Will can act in opposition to the repetitious activity of the conscious mind by rejecting a useless thought. As a practical matter, the Cayce readings essentially describe the equivalent of Libet's "free won't" in terms of discarding an unhelpful thought (which by its nature is already in the past):

A thought enters the mind. You either entertain it or you discard it. If you discard it, it has little or no effect ... (4083-1)

To entertain or discard a thought illustrates the opposition of mind and will, with will in control. However, in daily life the will can be asleep, allowing past patterns of mental activity (in combination with influences of cause and effect, heredity, and environment) to determine one's present thoughts and behaviors. So the question of free will vs. determinism is complex, requiring a more comprehensive perspective (philosophically as well as scientifically). The information in the Cayce readings may contribute to a more holistic approach to addressing these issues.

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## Summary

The free will vs. determinism debate involves both traditional philosophy and modern neuroscience in issues that straddle the domains of each discipline. Whether the forces of free will and determinism are compatible or not; the role of natural law and the factors of heredity and environment in that conceptual tug of war; and questions about the involvement (or even existence) of God in all of this come into play. The Cayce readings are compatible with a dynamic, interactive approach involving the use of free will in conjunction with the forces of heredity and environment to provide an opportunity for soul development, especially in relationship to God (i.e., companionship).

Of crucial importance is the distinction between mind and will—soul forces that can act in opposition to each other, utilizing multiple levels of consciousness. Will is an attribute of spirit deserving its own attention, which has been initiated in this section. A later section on Philosophy of Mind (Section 2.4) is dedicated to exploring mental activity, especially its role as builder.

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## 2.3 Space and Time

From a mundane human perspective, space and time are usually regarded as simply the structure of the universe. Yet Einstein argued that “space and time” are modes of thinking and not the actual conditions in which we live. Philosophers Kant and Heidegger considered space and time as the framework of thought, not the world (Khan, 2021). The readings also acknowledge the central role of mind and physical consciousness in the experience of space and time for humans in physical bodies:

... in the interpretation of the universe, we find that time and space are concepts of the mental mind, as to an interpretation of or a study into the relationships with man and to the universal or God-consciousness. (1747-5)

(Q) Are time and space concepts that exist outside of physical consciousness? (A) No. For the physical consciousness is an activity that uses such, as the divisions of space and time. (262-123)

For time and space are the elements of man's own concept of the infinite and are not realities as would be any bodily element in the earth – as a tree, a rose, a bird, an animal, as even a fellow being. (533-8)

For with the subconscious forces [that are active during altered states such as dreams and visions], we find that called the measure of space and time disappears, and the necessity is for a material life to divide such into units called space and time. (137-8)

Thus the experience of space and time by humans is highly subjective and may not necessarily require that space and time are independent of human awareness. Kant came to a similar conclusion, stating that space and time are a priori forms of mental intuition rather than properties of objects as they are in themselves (Guyer, 1998). In his *Inaugural Dissertation of 1770*, Kant made explicit the subjective, mental source of spatial experience (which applies equally to temporality):

Space is not something objective and real, neither substance, nor accident, nor relation; but subjective and ideal, arising by fixed law from the nature of the mind like an outline for the mutual co-ordination of all external sensations whatsoever. (Kant, 1770)

The intrinsic mental aspects of space and time—especially with regard to experiences in consciousness of higher (and lower) dimensions—are

extremely important in the readings, especially those dealing with sojourns in other planes or spheres of consciousness discussed in the life readings.

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### 2.3.1 Dimensions of Space and Time

One of Einstein's important contributions to physics was the popularization of the concept of space-time (Einstein, 2016). Whereas space has traditionally been understood to encompass three dimensions (width, height, length), Einstein insisted that time is inherently linked to space, hence the concept of four-dimensional space-time with time as the fourth dimension.

The readings do contain references to the oneness of space and time, such as: "time and space are but one" (5757-1) and "in a finite force of activity, that time and space are one" (440-4). It is not clear from the context of such readings that Einstein's space-time is being endorsed. However, with regard to multiple dimensions (beyond the three dimensions of space), the readings are adamant that such concepts are not only reasonable but applicable in soul development. Such is the realm of planetary sojourns—interim experiences between earthly lives described in the life readings:

Earth, in this solar system, merely represents three dimensions.  
Then, how many dimensions are in this solar system? Eight!  
What position does the earth occupy? Third! What position do  
others occupy? That relative relationship one to another. (5755-2)

In entering it [the soul] takes on those forms that may be known in the dimensions of that plane which it occupies, there being not only three dimensions – as of the earth – but there may be as seven, in Mercury – or four, in Venus – or five, as in Jupiter. There may be only one as Mars. There may be many more as in those of Neptune, or they may become even as nil – until purified in Saturn's fires. (311-2)

Various theories in physics include the possibility of multiple dimensions of space (well beyond the standard three dimensions of daily life on earth). String theory posits a total of nine dimensions. As Greene (2024) explains, the name string theory comes from the modeling of subatomic particles as tiny one-dimensional “stringlike” entities; the theory envisions that a string undergoing a particular mode of vibration corresponds to a particle with definite properties such as mass and charge, while the six extra dimensions are crumpled so small they have so far evaded detection.

In 1995 Edward Witten proposed a new set of techniques that refined the approximate equations on which all work in string theory had so far been based. This new approach (called M-theory) led to the realization that the theory has not six but seven extra spatial dimensions. This breakthrough also revealed ingredients in string theory besides strings—membrane-like objects of various dimensions, collectively called branes (Duff, 2012).

Additional variations on the string theory model continue to be developed. The work of Bernard Carr is particularly fascinating as it has a resonance with the multidimensional concepts in the Cayce readings that associate mental activity with the extra dimensions. Carr notes:

Since the only nonphysical entities which we experience are mental ones, and since it has been argued that all mental experiences have to exist in some sort of space, it seems natural to associate this with “bulk.” The fact that I adopt the phrases “bulk” and “braine” need not imply commitment to M-theory itself.... However, I do require some form of higher-dimensional model, and the term “hyperphysical” is generally used in this context. (Carr, 2015, p. 253)

Thus Carr suggests hyperspatial models of mind and matter in which extra dimensions, beyond the ones commonly regarded as space and time, are the basis for mental experiences associated with higher-dimensional space. The extra dimensions are amalgamated into a “Universal Structure” which

can be interpreted as a “higher-dimensional psychophysical information space” offering the possibility of a paradigm in which matter and mind are merged at a very fundamental level. With this approach one might argue that subtle matter associated with many time-like extra dimensions operates in a different frequency range—a notion found in various esoteric traditions.

By analogy with the physical body, I assume that a subtle body is a form of subtle matter possessing subtle sensors through which consciousness can experience part of the Universal Structure... If one can extend this concept to higher actuality planes, there should be a hierarchy of subtle bodies with a hierarchy of specious presents. (Carr, 2015, p. 259)

Carr’s hyperspatial model suggests “survival space”—the space in which the “soul” could (theoretically) reside after death. “For example, if reincarnation occurs, the soul is presumably located somewhere between incarnations” (Carr, 2015, p. 267). In traditional religious texts this would require some form of nonphysical space such as the Buddhist bardo (intermediate state), perhaps related to dream space and mental activity. The readings call this the “borderland” or “inter-between,” which echoes the Christian conception of purgatory—a transitional in-between phase in the soul’s journey.

The concept of hyperspatial dimensions certainly expands the conversation of space beyond traditional metaphysical bounds. The role of time in such discussions is even more speculative. The readings do make references to the experience of time (or lack thereof) in relation to mental activity during interim sojourns (such as planetary sojourns between earthly lives):

As an entity passes on, as has been given, from this present – or THIS solar system, THIS sun, THESE forces, it passes through the various spheres – leading first into that central

force, through which – known as Arcturus – nearer the Pleiades, in this passage about the various spheres – on and ON – through the EONS of time, as called – or space – which is ONE in the various spheres of its activity; even passing into the inner forces, INNER sense, may they again – after a period of nearly ten THOUSAND years – may an entity enter into the earth to make manifest those forces gained in ITS passage. (311-2)

Hence an entity, a soul, has within itself the motivative forces that make for weal or woe through the urges from sojourns, visitations, activities in ANY environment whether astrological or earthy, for they are one and the same. That space or time which exists between earth and Jupiter, of what is it made up? That which is the composition of Mind AND Matter that compositeth thy entity! They are ONE, in their relative relationships to THY activity in same. WONDERFUL! (849-11)

The readings speak of “finer matter” (5756-14) when describing the composition of the soul entity. Thus the concept of subtle bodies (whether etheric, astral, celestial, cosmic, etc.) is invoked in the readings to describe soul activity in the higher dimensions of space and time, and especially during planetary sojourns.

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### 2.3.1.1 The Unified Field of Planetary Sojourns

A significant challenge in reconciling the Cayce readings with modern science is the description of “planetary sojourns” as including both physical (i.e., earthly sojourns) and mental experiences (e.g., in the environs of other planets in this solar system). From the perspective of applied philosophy, this is not a contradiction but a demonstration of ontological unity. The readings suggest that the solar system functions as a unified field where physical astronomy and mental symbolism are two sides of the same coin. A “sojourn” in the environment of Mars or Venus is

a movement of the soul through a specific dimension of consciousness that corresponds to those physical coordinates in space-time.

In this framework, the planets are not merely distant balls of gas and rock, nor are they just abstract metaphors for personality traits. Rather, they are “planes of expectation” or “stations” of development. Just as the various centers in the human body (the endocrine system) serve as physical anchors for spiritual energies, the planets serve as macrocosmic anchors for the “urges” and “tendencies” of the soul. Thus, the dimensions of space and time provide the necessary “room” for the soul to experience these varied states of being, whether in a physical body on earth or in a mental-spiritual state associated with another planetary environment.

By viewing these sojourns through the lens of perspectival knowledge, we see that the physical and the symbolic are one. The “astronomical” reality is the objective view of the environment, while the “astrological” or “symbolic” reality is the internal, subjective experience of the soul interacting with that environment’s unique vibrations. This unified view preserves the integrity of the readings’ metaphysical claims while providing a logical bridge for the modern reader to understand how mind and matter interact across the vastness of the solar system. The metaphysical implications are addressed in Appendix C—Planetary Sojourns as Symbolic and Metaphysical Realities. Section 2.5.2.1 (Astral Sojourns) provides an exhaustive discussion of this topic from the perspective of Philosophy of Religion.

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### 2.3.2 Akashic Records

Mental activity (whether during earthly sojourns or elsewhere in the cosmos) affects the “skein between time and space” called the akashic record:

As thoughts are deeds in the mental world, as are the activities of a physical being as related to the associations, the relations, the words, the activity in a material world, so do they leave their impressions and the titles and the activities of each entity are thus written upon the skein between time and space, that may be indeed a record ever for the entity to meet, to experience throughout its activity in whatever consciousness the entity may be. (752-2)

Astrophysicists sometimes speak of the fabric of the spacetime continuum (Francis, 1999). Numerous Cayce readings discuss the skein of space and time. Skein refers to a loosely coiled length of yarn or thread wound on a reel. Almost invariably, the use of the term is in relation to the akashic records that Cayce accessed when giving certain of his psychic readings.

*(Q) Are there any records of my [past life] appearances? If so, where may they be found? (A) These as we find are not as material records, but are upon the skein of time and space – or the akashic records. (1223-4)*

The concept of akasha is an old idea that can be traced back to ancient Hindu writings. Akasha is a Sanskrit word referring to the primary or primordial substance out of which everything is formed. The relevant point is that akashic records are contained in a multi-dimensional library wherein all the information and wisdom pertaining to each and every soul ever incarnated is encoded in light (Gaur, 2017). The Cayce readings assert that every thought and deed is recorded in the akashic record, which has also been called “God’s Book of Remembrance” and the “Book of Life” in the Judeo-Christian Bible. Presumably much of the information in the readings about creation and evolution of the universe was gleaned from this source. However, most often information from the akashic records was obtained for personal application in daily life via life readings (i.e., soul development).

As an analogy, the akashic record was said to function like a phonograph record in which a needle records information on a revolving disk. Rather than a literal physical needle, the energy of light is focused by “that stylus the mind” (1895-1) that makes an impression between time and space. These references to the use of light to store information are not strange to anyone familiar with modern information storage and retrieval systems.

For each soul is the real life of the entity, and the records of the life are made much as the emanation of light from any source. For the light moves on in time, in space, and upon that skein between same are the records written by each soul in its activity through eternity ... (815-2)

These records are written upon time and space. Just as light goes out from a candle influencing the universe, the light that goes out from a life influences all with whom it comes in contact – and grows, dependent upon the spirit with which it is tempered. (2787-1)

That the universe would be constructed with an inherent memory system capable of tracking the thoughts and deeds of each soul should not be surprising if the purpose of the universe (in part) is to assist each soul in its development. When asked about the possibility of a device that could read the akashic record, Cayce responded in the affirmative, noting that this was not only possible but would eventually be done (443-5).

The akashic records provide a means for tracking karma in the scheme of reincarnation. Thus the universe functions as a feedback system so that each soul entity (whether incarnate or not) is constantly meeting itself:

Remember that God is not mocked and whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Time and space are only relative. Know that ye must meet thine own self, and in the manner that ye treat thy fellow man, thy fellow woman, ye are treating thy Maker. (3689-1)

### 2.3.3 Time, Space, and Patience

The Cayce readings insist that space and time provide an educational setting for soul development—a training ground for learning to be co-creators and fit companions to their Source. The earth provides a three-dimensional classroom in the school of life with a comprehensive curriculum of life lessons. In keeping with a three-dimensional model corresponding to the three-dimensional consciousness of earthly experience, the readings insist that time and space include another dimension—patience, in which the soul becomes aware of itself and its relation to its Creator:

Time, space, and Patience, then, are those channels through which man as a finite mind may become aware of the infinite. For each phase of time, each phase of space, is dependent as one atom upon another. And there is no vacuum, for this, as may be indicated in the universe, is an impossibility with God. Then there is no time, there is no space, when Patience becomes manifested in love. For he, too, is a part in time, in space, of that influence you worship as the God-self, as the Creator, as the Maker of heaven and earth. (3161-1)

Thus all in the environ and in the activity are meeting themselves; that each may gain a lesson of Patience in time and in space; that they each may be more aware of their souls and their relationships to their Maker. (2155-5)

Time allows for lessons in soul development to be taken in small increments—one at a time, so to speak. Otherwise one can be overwhelmed by the immensity of the process. Understanding comes gradually—line upon line; here a little, there a little; small steps in the flow of time. And yet time urges action. Life on earth is time-limited. If progress

is to be made, there must be continuous forward movement to avoid stagnation.

Space is a measure of distance—ranging from the minuscule gap between subatomic particles to the gulf between galaxies. As souls need space to grow and develop, the universe provides the space required to experience the awareness of separation. It is like a giant sandbox or playground for fledgling gods to try out their wings. Souls are separate beings—at least, so it would appear. Space as a measure of distance provides the experience of separation: separation from other souls, separation from the Creator, space to be oneself and yet be one with the Whole.

Patience is a measure of soul development. Patience provides an assessment of progress in spiritual awareness and application. In patience the soul becomes aware of itself as an individual entity while recognizing the purpose of existence and the adequacy of space and time to meet the needs of evolutionary development. Yet there must be activity, for movement is the essence of spirit. So patience is active yet assured. In soul development, one makes haste slowly. Philosophically, patience is the mechanism by which a soul navigates the limitations of linear time to achieve growth.

Thus the universe is configured to provide feedback for soul development. Souls are constantly meeting themselves, confronted with the image of their own making reflected in the mirror of life (made possible by space and time). How the feedback is applied is a matter of choice, for will is a gift of the Creator. Patience is the application of will in the midst of life.

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#### 2.3.4 The Eternal Now

To those of us who believe in physics, this separation between past, present, and future is only an illusion, if a stubborn one.  
(Einstein, 1955)

Remember, in spirit there is no time but now. (2560-1)

Throughout the ages both mystics and scientists have pointed out that the common experience of sequential time is an illusion:

Einstein, through his theory of relativity, furnished a scientific justification for a philosophical view of time that goes back to Spinoza, to St. Augustine, even to Parmenides – one that has been dubbed “eternalism.” Time, according to this view, belongs to the realm of appearance, not reality. The only objective way to see the universe is as God sees it: *sub specie aeternitatis*. We should all be like William Blake and say, “I see the past, present, and future, existing all at once/Before me.” (Holt, 2014)

Numerous Cayce readings (and especially those that discuss states of consciousness related to oneness with God) also use the language of “now” or the “eternal now”:

For life in its real sense is ever the NOW! For TODAY is set before thee, TODAY if ye will hear His voice! Today, the eternal now, is ever before each entity, each soul; whether in that commonly called materiality or in spirit. (1293-1)

Much that would be of interest might be gained by some, as to why the entity entered this present sojourn; partly by choice of self. For, viewed from the spirit, much of time and space in a material concept loses its relationship – and becomes NOW. (2981-1)

This becomes hard to conceive in the finite mind; as does the finite mind fail to grasp the lack of or NO time. Yet out of time, space, Patience, is it possible for the consciousness of the finite to KNOW the infinite. (262-115)

In a reading seeking an explanation of the experience of a man who had seemingly envisioned his father's death, the entranced Cayce noted that the man had been pressed "to that point where time and space are obliterated" in a superconscious state. The man had been pursuing psychic development and the reading simply observed that he had "aid gained in those things necessary for the fuller, greater, development of that entity" (137-43). Such mystical experiences sometimes do involve the obliteration of normal sensory experience of time and space, which can be disorienting. Such experiences may even provide a foretaste of the ultimate transition in consciousness (for an earthly soul)—that of death:

For, in the comprehension of no time, no space, no beginning, no end, there may be the glimpse of what simple transition or birth into the material is; as passing through the other door into another consciousness. Death in the material plane is passing through the outer door into a consciousness in the material activities that partakes of what the entity, or soul, has done with its spiritual truth in its manifestations in the other sphere. (5749-3)

Death is a transition that is experienced many times in the soul's journey back to its source—a developmental process into that called eternity:

(Q) Explain the various planes of eternity, in their order of development, or rather explain to us the steps through which the soul must pass to climb back into the arms of beloved God.  
(A) Then, in the many stages of development, throughout the universal, or in the great system of the universal forces, and each stage of development made manifest through flesh, which is the testing portion of the universal vibration. In this manner then, and for this reason, all made manifest in flesh, and development, through the eons of time, space, and CALLED eternity. (900-16)

Pre-birth and after-death interim soul experiences are discussed in greater depth within the context of Philosophy of Religion (Section 2.5.2.2).

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### **Summary**

Although discussions of space and time often take place within a scientific framework, the Cayce readings (while acknowledging the validity of such considerations as a practical matter) expand the conversation to include soul experience in all of its aspects (spiritual, mental, physical). With regard to the mind of the soul, space and time are essentially mental constructs that allow the soul to learn and grow by practicing patience. A cosmic memory system is built into space and time (akashic records) that encodes every thought, feeling, and action of the soul in multiple dimensions of consciousness (while sojourning on planet earth and other realms of consciousness) throughout the universe. In particular, the relativity of space and time can be experienced as no time, no space—the eternal now of mystical oneness recognized in almost all spiritual and metaphysical traditions.

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## **2.4 Philosophy of Mind**

This section is a continuation and expansion from the ontological consideration of mind in Section 2.1.1.3. In that section the ontological status of mind was explored at a larger scale including the creation of the cosmos in the mind of God. The relation of mind to matter at that cosmic scale was considered in general terms. Usually modern philosophy of mind does not indulge in explorations of mind on such a grand, cosmic scale. The field is typically defined as the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of the mind and its relation to the body and the external world (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020). If that definition were

expanded to the scale of the universe, and inclusive of mind across the entire ontological hierarchy (including God), it would be more suitable for the philosophy of mind portrayed in the Cayce readings. This section will focus on some key topics typically included within the philosophy of mind, particularly the nature of mind, mental function, mind-body interaction, and consciousness. There will be consideration of the various aspects of mind and mental functioning at the human scale of life on this planet as well as the larger arena of divine and soul activity throughout the cosmos. The applied aspects of the varied topics are emphasized throughout.

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#### 2.4.1 The Nature of Mind

Ontologically, mind is an essential aspect of God. Mind is the builder—"for the spirit is life; the mind is the builder; the physical is the result" (394-1). This pattern of downward causation is exemplified in God's role as creator, expressing spirit through mind resulting in the cosmos—an ability inherited by souls for the purpose of reality creation (co-creation). Mind builds by shaping and forming the energy of spirit, essentially consistent with Aristotelian formal causation. Thus mind creates and organizes patterns—it is a "pattern generator."

By working with patterns, mind is the builder. It shapes energy into particular patterns and thus has an effect on how energy is expressed. (Reed, 1989, p. 81)

At the level of human mind, mental activity may be experienced as a stream of consciousness that carries the individual along effortlessly.

Mind, then, becomes as a stream, with its upper and lower stratum, with that which moves swiftly or that which is resting upon either spirit or physical being. (2533-8)

Various terms and concepts may be applied to such states of consciousness and associated mental activity—conscious mind, unconscious mind, subconscious mind, superconscious mind, and so forth. Transitions between these states of awareness are typically smooth and hardly noticed—taken for granted except when there is a problem. Sleep disturbances can be a nuisance, or much worse if prolonged. A physician may prescribe a medication for such problems, indicating that mental states of consciousness are inherently associated with chemical and biological factors affecting physiology as well as mental status. The interaction of mind and body is evident at such times—a complex relationship sometimes called the mind-body problem.

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#### 2.4.2 Mind-Body Interaction

Currently the predominant scientific view of mind-body interaction is that of material monism.

‘Monism’ is a very broad term, applicable to any doctrine which maintains either that there is ultimately only one thing, or only one kind of thing ... there is material monism, steadily more popular with the rise of the natural sciences, which views everything as material, and reduces the supposedly mental to facts about matter ... (Craig, 1998)

One popular version of material monism (with regard to mind-body interaction) is identity theory. This theory of mind holds that states and processes of the mind are identical to states and processes of the brain (Smart, 2022). Alternatively, *functionalists* say that the mind is what the brain does. What makes something a thought, desire, pain (or any type of mental state) depends not on its internal constitution, but solely on its function—the role it plays in the cognitive system of which it is a part (Levin, 2023). With either of these models of material monism, mind is just brain or brain activity, nothing more.

In contrast, the readings are clear about the relationship of mind to the brain. “Thy BRAIN is not thy mind, it is that which is used by thy mind!” (826-11) The relation of mind and brain, in the human context as portrayed in this excerpt, can probably best be understood as reflecting the brain as a transmitter of consciousness rather than a generator of it. This view of mind-brain interaction was present historically preceding and during the era of the Cayce readings in the works of Myers, Emerson, Bergson, and James—to name a few prominent advocates of this idea. The writings of James in particular resonate strongly with key concepts in the readings (Appendix B). So much so that the readings recommended *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (James, 1917) on multiple occasions.

With regard to the mind-brain interaction question (as summarized by Grosso, 2015, p. 84), James’s position is that the brain does not produce consciousness; rather, it transmits it. This is the “transmission theory” of consciousness (the brain as a filter or prism rather than a producer of mind). Consciousness does not emerge from the brain; it preexists the brain. There is a transpersonal level of mind—mind at large, cosmic consciousness, “mother-sea” of consciousness—in the guise of various religious metaphors: God, Brahman, etc. The question of multiple levels of consciousness (including higher levels as noted by James) is also discussed later in this section.

An important philosophical question raised by James’s view of mind and brain interaction is that of ontology: Is this view best represented by monism, dualism, or pluralism? James seemed to favor pluralism while recognizing the limitations of philosophy in general (James, 1909). This is an important point of departure with the Cayce readings, which clearly favor a monistic approach. Yet the readings repeatedly insisted on a triune model of human incarnation in which body, mind, and spirit are one:

... the body – physically, mentally, spiritually – is one BODY;  
yet, in the varied conditions as arise within a physical body,  
these must often be treated as a unit – that is, each element  
treated as a unit – yet in the fullest application they are one. (2263-1)

One might posit a form of “dual-aspect monism” – the idea that the mental and physical are two aspects of one underlying reality such as spirit or God. Thus there can be diversity in the expression and application of that unifying oneness. This is consistent with the nature of God as a primary ontological category with various aspects, attributes, or manifestations – the one and many; many parts of the Whole. Yet the problem of mind-body interaction persists: how do the many parts relate to the whole, and specifically, how does the mind interact with the body in human experience? The readings provide an explanation that, in certain respects, resembles Cartesian dualism yet maintains the foundational unity of oneness.

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#### 2.4.2.1 Descartes' Pineal Gland

In the history of philosophical thought on mind-body interaction, the dualistic theory of René Descartes is noteworthy. In its modern conceptual incarnation, often simply called Cartesian dualism, this approach argues that there are two kinds of substance: mind and matter. Mind is closely identified with consciousness and the soul, as distinguished from brain matter and its physical activities. Descartes answered the interaction question by positing the pineal gland as the mediator between mind and the material body. He opted for the pineal gland mainly because it is not duplicated on both sides of the brain, thus providing it a unique, unifying function (Robinson, 2023).

Descartes was neither the first nor the last philosopher who wrote about the pineal gland, but he attached more importance

to it than any other philosopher did. Descartes tried to explain most of our mental life in terms of processes involving the pineal gland, but the details remained unclear ... Even so, the pineal gland remains intriguing in its own right and is still intensely studied today, with even a whole journal dedicated to it, the *Journal of Pineal Research*. (Lokhorst, 2021)

As an organ, the pineal gland is distinctive with its unique topographic location, singular individual character compared to other paired brain structures, and unique morphological appearance. These peculiarities have made the pineal a subject of many physiological and philosophical theories associated with spirituality.

In fact, this function as a spiritual link was already present since ancient times in Hindu philosophy and Vedic literature. According to these, humans have a “third eye” or mystic body (the pineal gland), corresponding to the sixth chakra (ajna), which provides a “window” into the spiritual life of each individual. (López-Muñoz et al., 2012, p. 162)

Insofar as the relevance to this text, the interest is less in the dualism of Descartes’ thesis than in the curious fascination with the pineal gland as the seat of the soul mediating mind/body interaction. For that is one of the roles assigned to the pineal in the Cayce readings. But with this caveat: the readings’ perspective strongly portrays the “pineal” as a system, rather than a discrete glandular entity. For example, the seat of the soul is explicitly described as more than just the pineal gland:

Hence these may literally be termed, that the pineal and the Leydig are the SEAT of the soul of an entity. (294-142)

While the pineal gland is located in the center of the head, the Leydig gland (discovered in 1892 by Franz Leydig—not the cells of Leydig discovered in 1850) is located in the region of the false pelvis (just below the abdomen as noted in reading 4138-1). How can the seat of the soul be in two widely

separated areas of the body? Because the readings portrayed the “pineal” as part of an extensive body-wide network designated as the pineal system (McMillin, 1991, p. 300; see Appendix A). The specific term “pineal system” is never actually used in the readings. Anatomically, the pineal system extends from head to toe, including glands and nerves (and portions of the intestinal lymphatics called the lacteal system).

Pineal centers in the main branch of the pineal are located in the lower cerebellum, along the spine, and in the abdomen. The pineal system includes a cord or thread and nerve. The pineal system coordinates and integrates the spiritual and mental with the physical body through definite anatomy and physiology that can be studied and influenced by various means. The pineal system is the basis for the connection of spirit and mind with the body. This is the basis for psychological experience.

Extensive detailed anatomical and physiological descriptions of the pineal system are provided in two scholarly texts, one focusing on schizophrenia (McMillin, 1991) and the other on epilepsy (McMillin, 2022). The readings strongly implicate the pineal system in both disorders, as well as linking pineal system involvement to nonpathological activities such as deep (kundalini) meditation, mystical and psychic phenomena, and common mundane processes of normal brain functioning.

Unlike Descartes’ imagined role of the pineal as a metaphysical solution to the mind-body problem, the designation of the pineal (as a system) draws upon information from over 240 readings that discuss the pineal (in all of its aspects) in real-life cases of individuals who sought Cayce’s help (whether for treatment of disease or for spiritual development). That does not mean that the information should be accepted without question. Rather, as part of a larger explanatory system of thought, it is deserving of consideration. Here are a few brief excerpts that portray pineal system

activity in various conditions and situations related to mind-body interactions:

For as we find this entity has more than once been among those who were gifted with what is sometimes called second sight, or the super-activity of the third eye. Whenever there is the opening, then, of the lyden (leydig) center and the kundaline forces from along the pineal, we find that there are visions of things to come, of things that are happening. (4087-1)

The cord that is eventually known or classified as the pineal is the first movement that takes place of a physical nature through the act of conception; determining eventually – as we shall see – not only the physical stature of the individual entity but the MENTAL capacity also, and the spiritual attributes. (281-46)

Rather is it, as we have indicated, a constitutional condition [epilepsy], you see, which affects the glands of the body, as related to the pineal – which runs all the way through the system and is the GOVERNING body to the coordinating of the mental and physical. (567-1)

... the pituitaries – for these are two [i.e., bilateral]. While the pineal CENTER is one, acting THROUGH the system and through the brain itself ... the pineal – the governing point of the brain impulses. (5498-1)

The energy utilized by the pineal system is described as vibratory, although probably not exclusively synaptic neurotransmission (a cardinal feature of the nervous system in which communication between nerve cells is mainly chemically mediated). Other forms of electrical communication that may be utilized include ephaptic coupling (via extracellular electrical fields) or possibly even neuronal or nonneuronal gap junctions between the interior of adjacent cells. These are all well-established physiological

processes (Faber & Pereda, 2018). Alternatively, various forms of subtle energetic activity are cited in some readings that discuss pineal activity.

The Glad Helpers healing group received 66 readings over a period of 13 years. Many of these readings discuss the role of energy within the body for health and healing. Within that group of readings, five focus on endocrine gland activity in prenatal development—particularly the role of the pineal:

The very first thing that occurs in conception is that the sperm and the egg join forces. A globular nucleus is formed, which is the beginning of the pineal gland. From that beginning, there is a kind of a force field created, or – as Cayce called it – an aerial, which extends from the nucleus and creates the central area from which the rest of the body gradually develops.  
(McGarey, 2002, p. 17)

In addition to the morphogenic role noted by McGarey, the developing pineal system is said to be attuned to the mind of the mother during embryonic and fetal development. These readings describe the mental connection between mother and developing baby by comparing it to the activity of a radio with an antenna. Thus the concept of “aerial” activity is used to designate the movement of energy upward, along the pineal (system) of the embryo and fetus, influencing development depending upon the mental status of the mother:

By the term aerial we mean that impulse or activity that flows in an upward, lifting, raising or rising movement. It is an activity in itself, you see; not as a gland but as an activity UPON glands as it flows in, through, from or to the various centers of activity in the system itself. It is a function. Let's illustrate – possibly this will give an interpretation such that you may understand: In your radio you have what you call an aerial for communications that are without any visible connection.... So in the physical body the aerial activity is the

flow through the pineal, to and through all the centers... As the process begins in the physical body, it is along the pineal; or it is the same movement that is the controlling or attuning influence from the mother with the developing forces of the body through the period of gestation. Understand the processes of activity through which there are the needs of the aerial in reception. For, of course, it is a matter of vibration in the body, as well as that illustrated in the physical condition. (281-53)

Furthermore, the aerial activity is operational at later stages of life through what the readings call "thought waves." For example, in a reading given for an individual in the Glad Helpers, an explanation of how a form of deep meditation can be used to send positive energy to those needing healing is provided:

Each must remember that the vibrations which are emanations of the Life from WITHIN are a material expression of a spiritual influence, or of a FORCE that may EMANATE from Life itself.... When an emanation or a vibration arises, it may only act upon centers within the human body that are sensitive to those vibrations WITHIN the body ...These, SPIRITUALIZED, are the emanations that may be sent out as thought waves, as a force in the activity of universal or cosmic influence, and thus have their effect upon those to whom by suggestive force they are directed toward. (281-14)

Notice that healing thought waves that may be sent out are a vibratory emanation from centers within the human body directed to the person who receives the healing. Perhaps thought waves may be involved in evolution as discussed in this reading requested to explain the relation of thought transference and evolution:

Just as has been described, when related to many individuals, we find that when thought of many individuals are directed to one focusing point, the condition becomes accentuated by force – see? – of thought manifested. In evolution, we find the

development as has been just given, in the correlation of the human mind and soul, toward perfection. Just so the evolution of the soul came in the attributes of God Mind, and given in Man. As thoughts are directed, the transmission of thought waves gradually becomes the reality, just as light and heat waves in material world are now used by man. (900-23)

These examples are provided to give a sense of how mind can interact with the body, even apart from any specific connections with the brain (as portrayed in philosophical Cartesian dualism). Rather, the concept of mind as a transmitter of consciousness rather than a generator of it (as described by James and others above) expands beyond brain activity to include the entire body-mind-spirit entity of the incarnated human. Thus the way is opened for considering the role of mind in various states of consciousness in human experience.

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### 2.4.3 Mind and Consciousness

Mind as a stream, not mind as purely physical or as wholly spiritual, but it is that which shapes, which forms, which controls, which directs, which builds, which acts upon. (4083-1)

As noted above, one of the common ways of explaining the mind is the poetic analogy of flowing water. The various levels and speed of the current are analogous to mental consciousness with its varied levels and intensities of activity. The scientific version of this analogy relies on concepts such as state and content of consciousness to analyze mental functioning.

One fundamental feature of consciousness is that the contents of consciousness depend on the state of consciousness.... the state of consciousness can never be dissociated from the contents of consciousness. (Aru et al., 2019)

Scientists tend to focus primarily on the waking state of consciousness (the conscious mind) and sensory-related content. Psychologists may explore the unconscious mind, which the readings portray as simply a variation on the conscious mind wherein access to the content is consciously available, but just not in the current focus of attention. Sleep and dream states may be associated with unconsciousness. The readings tend to make a distinction in this area, particularly with regard to dreams as entering the realm of the subconscious mind (the mind of the soul). The subconscious mind may also be accessed during other types of altered consciousness such as psychic experiences and deep meditation, often with amazingly distinctive contents. Finally, the superconscious mind is the highest level of consciousness, seldom experienced except in profound mystical states of cosmic or universal consciousness where the content is often transcendent and beyond words or thoughts—ineffable as described by William James (1917, p. 380).

Furthermore, with alterations of each state of consciousness there is a shifting sense of identity—a different experience of selfhood. When discussing the conscious mind state the Cayce readings often refer to the physical self or conscious self. Likewise, when the subconscious level of mind is engaged, the subconscious self (also called the subliminal self, inner self, or other self) is aware. The superconscious state of mind is associated with the higher self.

Another phrase used in the readings in this context is phases of consciousness, suggesting that distinctions in levels of consciousness can be subtle, and at times perhaps even blurred (as in lucid dreaming). In practice, applied in daily life, the phases of consciousness may blend together so seamlessly as to be unnoticed. Hypnotherapist Milton Erickson referred to the “common everyday trance” that everyone slips into and out of regularly in daily life (in Rossi et al., 2008, p. 193). Such phases of

consciousness may seem little more than imaginings or briefly feeling lost in thought or memory.

There also seem to be distinctive energy levels associated with the different states of consciousness and levels of self. The readings sometimes simply describe this as an increased or higher vibration in the case of the superconscious mind, which is probably relevant to all changes in states of consciousness.

For Life is continuous, and only changes in its phases and in its application, owing to the state of consciousness or that produced by change in the vibratory rate of experience or existence. (1378-1)

Even at a purely physical level, this is evident in changes in the frequencies of brain activity. This may be measured in labs by neuroscientists using EEG technology, typically during waking and sleeping states, but occasionally in paranormal states and mental illness (e.g., Roohi-Azizi et al., 2017). The conscious mind is the easiest place to begin a deeper exploration of mind and consciousness as described in the Cayce readings, particularly with regard to the awareness of mind as the builder.

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#### 2.4.3.1 Conscious Mind

Definition of the words “conscious mind”: The conscious means THAT that is able to be manifested in the physical plane through one of the senses. (3744-2)

This discussion focuses on conscious mind activity in humans, which is the context for most of the Cayce readings on the subject. Considering the priority of application, the readings typically address questions and concerns of individuals seeking to learn and apply the information in daily life. With that in mind, the emphasis is:

... within the conscious mind that begins with the lessons that must be answered by the attributes of the physical consciousness, that seek for a demonstration through those senses of the body that makes for an awareness to the physical being ... (262-15)

The earth experience for humans is that of a school or classroom of consciousness where individuals work on the lessons of life. Thus the emphasis of the conscious mind is embodied through the physical senses and awareness of the body in space and time. This is entirely consistent with mainstream neuroscience that also emphasizes the centrality of sensory awareness through conscious mind activity in the body through the central and peripheral nervous systems.

Thus the activity of conscious mental processes is essentially synonymous with the waking state, wherein the conscious mind converts sensory data (sensations) into perceptions in the brain. The conscious mind relies heavily on deductive reasoning to make sense of such information by making comparisons. For example, in contrast to the inductive reasoning used by the subconscious mind during dreaming (137-60), the conscious mind tends to reason by deduction in order to interpret the meaning of a dream:

The conditions, then, as are presented to this body, Edgar Cayce, in dream, are the correlations of the physical mind with subconscious forces, and are presented in the picturalization of conditions present and to come, as related to that reached by deductive reasoning of the conscious forces. (254-107)

The readings also emphasize that in “the conscious mind only that which is drawn by comparison is evidenced in that consciousness” (5753-2). Thus the conscious mind is sensory-oriented, relying primarily on deductive reasoning for making comparisons.

#### 2.4.3.2 Subconscious Mind

The readings define the subconscious mind as lying between the soul and spirit forces within each individual—typically experienced during altered states of consciousness (such as sleep and psychic experiences). Because “psychic is of the soul” (513-1), this aspect of subconscious activity is more likely to manifest in “so-called spiritual minded people” (3744-2).

The subconscious mind takes care of the body when it is not able to take care of itself. Such unconscious, involuntary activity is mediated through autonomic nerve functions (e.g., 4648-1) in coordination with the glandular system (particularly the pineal system, e.g., 4844-1). The subconscious mind may be programmed by repetitive physical actions which may then be expressed unconsciously as the need arises (3744-2).

The readings refer to the subconscious mind as the “mind of the soul” (106-8) which never forgets and has access to the knowledge of other souls, as exemplified in the psychic process of Edgar Cayce:

Edgar Cayce’s mind is amenable to suggestion, the same as all other subconscious minds, but in addition thereto it has the power to interpret to the objective mind of others what it acquires from the subconscious mind of other individuals of the same kind. The subconscious mind forgets nothing. The conscious mind receives the impression from without and transfers all thought to the subconscious, where it remains even though the conscious be destroyed. The subconscious mind of Edgar Cayce is in direct communication with all other subconscious minds, and is capable of interpreting through his objective mind and imparting impressions received to other objective minds, gathering in this way all knowledge possessed by millions of other subconscious minds. (294-1)

Edgar Cayce's psychic process relied on hypnosis to enter a subconscious altered state. Initially the hypnotic induction was provided by a professional hypnotist. Eventually he developed the ability for autosuggestion, providing access to the subconscious level, that could then be directed by the person giving the specific suggestions for the type of reading required.

Although the readings occasionally recommended formal hypnosis for persons experiencing various physical and mental problems, more often they advocated a "naturalistic" approach called "suggestive therapeutics" (McMillin, 1991, pp. 188–195). The concept is to draw upon naturally occurring altered states from which the subconscious level of mind can be accessed. For example, the hypnagogic state that occurs during the first few minutes as the body enters sleep provides access to the subconscious. Helpful suggestions during this stage can enter directly into the subconscious mind. Similarly, the induction of a hypnotic trance is a common consequence of various physical treatments, such as a relaxing massage that produces muscle relaxation via rhythmic patterns of the strokes. Milton Erickson, perhaps the most famous hypnotherapist of the last century, often referred to trance as a state of relaxed self-awareness. Therefore, getting people to physically relax and feel comfortable is an important preliminary step in most hypnotic inductions (in Havens, 1985, p. 245).

For most individuals, access to the subconscious mind is most easily achieved through dreams during sleep. There are over 600 dream readings that not only assist with dream interpretation, but also explain what dreaming is, how it works, and how to draw upon dreams for growth and development. The subconscious mind is emphasized in these readings:

The dreams as we see that come to the body are the association of the physical and spiritual forces ... of the subconscious with inductive reasoning. For the subconscious and portions of

same vibration, passing to the force as governs reason in the entity... (294-38)

The readings strongly endorse the study and application of dreams as a means of self-knowledge ("know thyself"). This is consistent with the therapeutic use of dreams in the history of psychotherapy and extending into current practice in the field (Schredl et al., 2000).

Dreams can also provide a psychic window into the nature of reality creation that occurs at the higher levels of consciousness: "for dreams are that of which the subconscious is made, for any conditions ever becoming reality is first dreamed" (136-7).

The readings say that nothing of importance happens in our lives without being foreshadowed in a dream, because in the dream state we can tune in to that blueprint level and see what we are building. (Puryear & Thurston, 1978, p. 18)

Numerous books on the application of the dream material in the Cayce readings are available (e.g., Sechrist, 1995; Bro, 1968; Thurston, 1988). Meditation is another important practice for working with the subconscious:

By more constant meditation, and putting into action day by day a little more patience, a little more love, a little more forgiving, a little more prayer. These DEVELOP the mental of the subconscious to that point of SPIRITUAL activity. (538-30)

Meditation also provides access to an even higher state of awareness—the superconscious mind.

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### 2.4.3.3 Superconscious Mind

The readings associate the superconscious mind with the realm of spirit (900-20). While incarnate in a physical body, the superconscious level can only be experienced through the subconscious state (which then functions as a normal consciousness for the entity). Thus during certain dreams (when the subconscious functions in a conscious manner) the superconscious mind may manifest in visions and dreams of a transcendent nature (294-83). Likewise, Edgar Cayce was able to access the superconscious level of mind during his psychic trance states.

Then, consider also that which has been given, that through the subconscious or superconscious forces of the entity the manifestations may take place; or from the superconscious or subconscious forces of entities that may have passed into that designated as the spiritual realm. Through these, or through the universal consciousness or cosmic consciousness from the very abilities of the entity Edgar Cayce to wholly subjugate the physical consciousness as to allow the use of physical organs that may be attuned to all realms that pertain to psychic or mental or spiritual influences in the realms about the entity. (254-67)

Whereas conscious mind activity is closely associated with the central nervous system and the subconscious with the autonomic nervous system, the “endocrine system ... has a special relationship to the soul and superconscious mind” (Puryear & Thurston, 1978, p. 29). This is the “pineal system” that the readings call “the seat of the soul” (294-142), which provides access to universal (or cosmic) consciousness—the mystical experience of oneness with the Divine.

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### 2.4.4 Mind of the Atom

Mind permeates matter at the atomic level, as does will and consciousness (i.e., awareness). Thus the readings, especially the physical readings

addressing health issues, speak of the “mind of each atom” (137-81) and the “consciousness of each atomic force” (2097-1) that needs to be attuned to the divine within each atom, each cell of the body for healing to occur.

For all healing, mental or material, is attuning each atom of the body, each reflex of the brain forces, to the awareness of the divine that lies within each atom, each cell of the body. (3384-2)

The readings even speak of “the will of that atomic force” (136-63), noting that “each atom is made up of urges” (262-78). Attention to the mind, will, consciousness, and divine influence at the atomic level of existence resonates with some old ideas about mind and spirit that are seeing a revival among some researchers and scholars showing an interest in panpsychism. Panpsychism recognizes that all things have a mind or a mind-like quality. Coined by Italian philosopher Francesco Patrizi in the sixteenth century, the word derives from the Greek words *pan* (all) and *psyche* (soul or mind). Some philosophers have argued that every object in the universe, every part of every object, and every system of objects possesses some mind-like quality (Skrbina, 2024).

Panpsychism has become increasingly popular as a philosophical tool for addressing the mind-body interaction problem. Material monism views mind and consciousness as either nonexistent or as a property of matter. At best, mind and consciousness are an emergent property resulting from increasing complexity of matter. Panpsychism allows for the possibility that mind and/or consciousness may be ontologically fundamental—a category in itself. Panpsychism is distinguished from pantheism, which identifies everything, collectively, with God as a single unified being, wherein the universe itself is God.

The Cayce readings emphasize that nature is a manifestation of the Divine, but do not limit God to material expression. This view is consistent with panentheism—God within and without, personal and impersonal,

immanent and transcendent. Thus the omnipresent Divine is manifest as the spirit in all things, a view consistent with the standard Christian position as reflected in the readings' perspective on all such matters in which God is conceptualized as the Whole.

With regard to mind as the builder in the readings' triune model of reality creation (spirit is life, mind the builder, physical the result), the panentheistic approach does allow for both downward causation (emanation from above) and emergence from below (or within at the atomic scale). As with mind, spirit permeates the universe at all levels. Thus the interplay between spiritual energy and patterns generated by mind operates even at atomic and cellular levels, which could be interpreted as the emergence of distinctive new entities. This has important implications for evolution (Section 2.5.2.3.5).

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#### 2.4.5 Mind the Builder

For, first in spirit, then in mind, then is the materialization. For, mind is the builder ... (2787-1)

The readings endorse the concept of "downward causation" as exemplified in God's role as creator, expressing spirit through mind resulting in the cosmos—an ability inherited by souls for the purpose of reality creation (co-creation). Mind builds by shaping and forming the energy of spirit. Thus mind creates and organizes patterns—it is a "pattern generator" (Reed, 1989, p. 81).

In this context, such mental patterns have a definite resonance with Platonic forms—ideal patterns that are the basis for the manifestation of all created entities (spiritual, mental, and physical). In this sense (of mind as builder), mental patterns also fit with Aristotle's concept of formative

causation. Such mental forms are templates that express an ideal, an “essence or the what-it-is-to-be something” (Falcon, 2023).

As reality builder, mind is scalable—from the lowest levels of subatomic physics (conceptually a moving target, to be sure) to the unimaginable vastness of the universe (or universes—another labile scientific construct). Returning to the expression “downward causation” used above, it would be just as accurate to speak of “outward causation” (if allowing for spirit, mind, and consciousness to be within all things). Here we are approaching the accepted scientific terrain of “emergence” wherein spirit, mind, and consciousness “emerge” (or appear to emerge) from matter. One could just as easily say that matter emerges from the activity of spirit and mind (as asserted in the readings). It is a matter of perspective.

With regard to the scalability of mind the builder, the readings most often focus on the intermediate level (between the subatomic and cosmic) of human experience, particularly when addressing issues involving health and healing. The cells, tissues, and organs of the human body are constructed and maintained by mind the builder—through formal causation in which the energy of spirit is formed into matter that meets the needs of the body on a moment-by-moment basis. This is the healing power of the divine within. At the scale of soul, mind builds through conscious mental activity—thoughts are things—as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is—we reap what we sow. At this level one becomes immersed in the psychosomatic domain—whether in cause or cure, mind-body illness or healing. And of course, mind the builder at the level of the incarnate soul (i.e., the human entity on planet earth) fabricates (usually in a collective fashion) the social and cultural environment that feeds back into individual existence at all levels.

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### 2.4.6 Memory

Memory is an important area of philosophy of mind that increasingly reflects the trend toward “interdisciplinarity” that sometimes shades into philosophy of psychology and philosophy of neuroscience (Michaelian & Sutton, 2017). In particular, empirical and theoretical developments in psychology and the science of memory have broadened the discussion within philosophy to focus more closely on the causal theory of memory and the relationship between memory and imagination.

Numerous Cayce readings discuss memory, often from the practical standpoint of how to improve it and use it effectively in daily life. That is in keeping with the applied emphasis of the readings, particularly serving the needs of individuals seeking help with failing memory. Consistent with current research in the field, many readings describe neurological pathology in such cases. For example, in a reading given in July 1911 for a man suffering from a brain clot that might require surgery, this explanation was provided for his memory problems:

This condition is situated, as we have it, in the brain, at the right side, midway between the frontal and back brain, above the lower or third, above the sense as we know of remembrance, or to where impressions are brought to the mind of past occurrences, impressed to the brain, or those cells – like expressions transmitted and engraven on the brain, or producing a cell wherewith it is remembered. (3748-1)

Considering the date and state of neurophysiology at that time, this is a somewhat crude but generally accurate description of how a particular area of the brain (now recognized as the primary focus of memory in the hippocampus) encodes and reads impressions made upon brain cells. From the standpoint of modern philosophy of mind, this is consistent with the view that the brain is responsible for memory.

Yet the readings go far beyond any reductive interpretation of brain function as the explanation of memory. As has been noted, the brain is not the mind; the mind uses the brain, even in memory. Thus even though there may be “indentations in the brain’s activity that make for what man calls memory” (1062-1), this is not the entire story.

... coordinating of the physical body with the mental body creates that which is commonly known as memory.... Then there IS a memory within that is of the soul forces, which is the real essence of mind. For mind is a portion of the soul-force of each body... (416-9)

Thus memory involves multiple levels of mental activity—at the purely physical level and at deeper levels of mind (the subconscious) associated with soul forces:

... for memory brought in the light of consciousness is the outpouring of spirit. (Memory is the mind of the soul.) (137-125)

With this in mind, the readings provide insight into one of the purposes of sleep—“that period when the soul takes stock of that it has acted upon during one rest period to another ...” (5754-2). Thus during sleep the subconscious mind is busy, reviewing the activity that has taken place during waking consciousness: “... for the conscious mind feeds that which the subconscious digests in the sleeping or unconscious condition” (900-81).

Interestingly, scientists specializing in sleep research characterize sleep as a brain state optimizing memory consolidation, in opposition to the waking brain being optimized for encoding of memories (Rasch & Born, 2013). The readings also recognize the role of sleep in memory optimization, encouraging the study of information to be retained just before going to sleep (1581-2). Curiously, the neurological basis of this

technique may involve peripheral nerve systems (in addition to the brain activity commonly associated with memory):

*(Q) What is affecting memory of the body?*

*(A) The vibration that has to do with the sensory system and the sympathetic nerve system. The mental or memory forces may be trained by a constant usage of same in work taken just before going to sleep. That is, set the mental forces to retain a certain amount of reading matter, and sleep as it were. Then repeat that when awakened. (287-3)*

In addition to practical advice for enhancing memory in daily life, some of the readings that discuss soul memory relate to the akashic records—the collective memory of every thought and deed, as discussed in each life reading (Section 2.3.2). With regard to conscious memory, the question arose as to why past lives are not commonly remembered. Reading 2390-2 for a thirty-year-old woman addressed that specific question. It was a follow-up life reading that focused entirely on a past life in Georgia. In addition to very personal experiences that related to her current life patterns, the reading provided some general information on why humans tend not to remember past lives.

The reading reminded the woman that “birth in the material plane is death in the spiritual-mental plane.” As a baby matures normally in a physical incarnation, physical manifestations begin to be “impressed [as memories] upon the brain centers” resulting in “impressions to hinder rather than aid the memory of other [i.e., past life] experiences” (2390-2). The woman was told that she could develop the psychic ability to remember past lives if she chooses. This is consistent with other readings that describe the gradual orientation of the soul into the physical environment during maturation—losing the closeness to the spiritual realm and access to past life memories.

Parapsychological research suggests that some young children typically begin describing a previous life when they are two or three years old, and they usually stop by the age of six to seven. They make the statements spontaneously without the use of hypnotic regression. Over 2,500 cases have been investigated worldwide (Tucker, 2008).

This research is consistent with the theories that regard the normal function of the brain as a filter that restricts access to psychic phenomena (such as past life recall). For example, Aldous Huxley saw the biological function of the brain as a “cerebral reducing valve” that sustains everyday waking experience to maximize adaptive fit to its physical environment. That is, it limits mental processes (such as memory) to an awareness (most of the time) of what is biologically useful (Swanson, 2018, p. 8). With regard to biological development of the brain, Huxley asserted that normal brain functioning emerges gradually during development to prevent disorientation resulting from experiencing other levels of reality (Huxley, 1961, p. 214). This is consistent with the Cayce readings and parapsychology research on this subject.

For those adults who have matured with the ability to access psychic data (such as Edgar Cayce), the readings typically described the activation of the “energies of the Kundalini force” via the pineal system that can override normal physically oriented brain functions.

*(Q) Have I ever caught glimpses of past lives, or are these things more dreams and fancy?*

*(A) The entity has caught glimpses of past lives when it has gone out of itself or has allowed the energies of the Kundalini force to pass along the centers of the body. Beware, unless ye are well-balanced in purposes ... (5399-2)*

Access to the collective memory of the akashic records provided the basis for the life readings that Cayce provided. Numerous readings provide

specific recommendations for any individual to access this information safely and progressively through study, meditation, and application directed toward a spiritual ideal.

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### **Summary**

Philosophy of mind deals with the nature of the mind and its relation to the body and external reality. In this section the readings' expansive concept of mind extends from the divine (mind of God) to individual souls (incarnated as humans on planet earth), and even into the extremely small realm of atoms. The interaction of mind and physical matter (often framed philosophically as the mind-body problem) is addressed directly in the readings with regard to anatomy and physiology of the mind-body interaction through glands and nerves. Mental activity manifests at levels of consciousness (i.e., conscious mind, subconscious mind, superconscious mind) in practical ways that can be applied constructively, for mind is the builder.

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## **2.5 Philosophy of Religion**

Philosophy of religion is the philosophical examination of the themes and concepts involved in religious traditions. The field addresses the broader philosophical task of reflecting on matters of religious significance including the nature of religion itself, alternative concepts of God or ultimate reality, and the religious significance of general features of the cosmos such as the laws of nature, the emergence of consciousness, and historical events (Taliaferro, 2023).

This section will focus on some of the most unique and distinctive aspects of the readings' approach to religion. Although the religious emphasis of

the readings is primarily Christian, it is a cosmic Christianity that includes soul experiences throughout the universe with sojourns in the spheres or planes of consciousness (primarily planets) of this solar system and beyond. Reincarnation figures heavily in the soul's journey through materiality, with the central figure in Christianity, the man Jesus, having over thirty past lives that strongly influenced his lifetime in Palestine two millennia ago. According to the readings, during the so-called missing years of his young adulthood, Jesus traveled extensively, studying with teachers in Egypt, Persia, and India.

Naturally, with the recognition of reincarnation, karma (cause and effect across lifetimes) is an important part of the religious information in the readings, particularly in the health readings involving children born with serious congenital conditions. The creation story told in the readings includes involution, evolution, and a qualified special creation of humans. The creation of the physical universe (an ongoing process) is purposeful so that souls can experience separation from their Source, providing the optimal eventual opportunity for an intimate relationship with God that the readings call companionship.

God is not omniscient or omnipotent—whether by choice or not, we are not informed. God goes by many names, but is the One, the Whole, the All in all religious traditions that recognize the unity of the Divine. These are just some of the themes that will be addressed in this section, beginning with the concept of God as portrayed in the readings.

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### 2.5.1 Concept of God

*(Q) Please amplify on the specific purpose for which she [the woman receiving the reading] came into the world.*

*(A) Read that as has been given, to manifest thy concept of God. (1755-3)*

We have already explored the ontological category of God from the standpoint of monism in which spirit, mind, and unity are aspects of God (Section 2.1). Here we consider the religious implications of such a concept as rendered in the Cayce readings. The strongest theme running through the readings is the basic Judeo-Christian conceptualization emphasizing the oneness of God. This extends beyond a mere distinction from polytheism vs. monotheism, to focus on the unified nature of God as love, mercy, and justice in personal relationship with humans.

What IS thy God? Let each answer that within self. What IS thy God? Where is He, what is He? Then ye may find yourselves lacking in much. How personal is He? Not as Moses painted a God of wrath; not as David painted a God that would fight thine enemies; but as the Christ – the Father of love, of mercy, of justice. (262-100)

Thus the readings' critique of some prominent Old Testament concepts of God portrayed in scripture distinguishes the teachings of Jesus from older biblical depictions. God is more personal, less angry, and less warlike than is sometimes portrayed in those texts. God is painted as a loving parent full of mercy and justice, much as Jesus' parable of the prodigal son and his loving father (Luke 15:11–32).

The readings insist that God is both personal and impersonal, God within and without, immanent and transcendent. When emphasizing divine creative expression in human relations, the readings sometimes use terms like Creative Forces or Creative Energy to convey the power of God when channeled through practical application:

For each soul's expression in the earth is to be a channel through which Creative Forces or God may be made the greater manifest in the experience of those in individual contacts from day to day. So Life in all its experiences is a practical application of the concept of God or Creative Energy

in the lives of individuals as they deal with their associations.  
(1206-3)

When addressing divine energy at the biological level of physiology, the readings were clear in associating the Creative Energy of God with electricity:

And as the [therapeutic] electrical vibrations are given, know that Life itself – to be sure – is the Creative Force or God, yet its manifestations in man are electrical – or vibratory. Know then that the force in nature that is called electrical or electricity is that same force ye worship as Creative or God in action! (1299-1)

For materiality IS – or matter IS – that demonstration and manifestation of the units of positive and negative energy, or electricity, or God. (412-9)

Electricity or vibration is that same energy, same power, ye call God. Not that God is an electric light or an electric machine, but that vibration that is creative is of that same energy as life itself. (2828-4)

This aspect of God as life manifesting through the electrical forces of nature is similar to pantheism, yet probably more akin to panentheism. Pantheism emphasizes God's identity with world and the forces of nature—wherein God is nature and nature is God. Panentheism considers God and the world to be interrelated, affirming both divine transcendence and immanence (Culp, 2023). Thus God is electricity in nature and yet so much more. Panentheism comes in many different forms. Notably, process panentheists usually claim that God cannot know the future, as it is indeterminate and thus unknowable, and that God's power may not be omnipotent (Leftow, 1998).

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### 2.5.1.1 Omnipotence

A phrase echoed in many readings affirms that “God hath need of thee among those that seek to aid their fellow man” (3056-1). If God is omnipotent, why would God need the cooperation of humans?

Cooperation is emphasized in the readings as a spiritual practice in the search for God. Apparently God’s “need” for humans to cooperate in human activities is inherent in the concept of companionship with God as the ideal relationship. God’s power seems to be limited, whether voluntarily or not, for the sake of companionship.

The concept of a God that is self-limiting for the sake of relationship exceeds the more traditional view of the Divine as transcendent and all-powerful. It may be helpful to imagine a creation that is incomplete and requires assistance from the created—a world (or universe, for that matter) where God needs human cooperation to fulfill its purpose. This dynamic is familiar to parents involved in raising and training a child. A child’s development blossoms when the child feels genuinely needed. The sense of participation and accomplishment builds character and creates bonding with the adult. Perhaps that is why the parent/child relationship is sometimes used as a metaphor for the relationship of God to souls. Perhaps the wisdom of God is to leave something for souls to do in the vastness of the creation—some task that only souls can do in cooperation with each other and their Source. This perspective on omnipotence is consistent with the view of the readings with regard to God’s desire for companionship and expression as the reason for creation.

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### 2.5.1.2 Omniscience

For the philosophy chapter of Cayce’s biography *There Is a River*, author Tom Sugrue sought guidance with the problem of reconciling the

omniscience of God and His knowledge of all things with the free will of the soul and the soul's fall from grace. The response recognized the transcendence of the Divine while also recognizing a limitation:

Having given free will, then, – though having the foreknowledge, though being omnipotent and omnipresent, – it is only when the soul that is a portion of God CHOOSES that God knows the end thereof. (5749-14)

With regard to practical application, a reading given for a fifty-nine-year-old woman in 1937 included a request to foretell the future regarding the outcome of some personal and legal problems. The reply acknowledged the problem with predicting the future: “As to prognostications, the Lord Himself may not tell what one may think or do about a situation” (1402-2). The woman was encouraged to practice “loving indifference” as recommended by Jesus (turn the other cheek) so that the situation can be resolved optimally for everyone involved.

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### 2.5.1.3 Omnibenevolence

The readings insist that “God is Good”—yet defining good can be challenging. Here is a practical, applied example of the meaning of good in relation to oneself and God:

*(Q) Why does one do good for self or God?*

(A) That it may know itself to be itself. Sin, evil, hate, destroys – as the entity experiences that discontent brings confusion to anything. Then, good accumulates; good grows. GOD is good.

*(Q) What IS good?*

(A) GOD is good. (263-13)

Philosophers and theologians commonly use phrases like “perfectly good” or simply “benevolence” when describing God. The word omnibenevolence may be interpreted to mean perfectly just, all-loving,

fully merciful, or any number of other qualities, depending on precisely how “good” is understood. As such, there is little agreement over how an “omnibenevolent” being would behave. Omnibenevolence is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “unlimited or infinite benevolence.” Some philosophers have argued that it is impossible, or at least improbable, for a deity to exhibit such a property alongside omniscience and omnipotence, as a result of the problem of evil (Trakakis, 2024). The limited omniscience and omnipotence of God addressed above are relevant here, and the problem of evil is considered below (Section 2.5.6).

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#### 2.5.1.4 Does God Suffer?

... God is the great companion – the fellow-sufferer who understands. (Whitehead, 1929, p. 351)

While panentheists agree that human freedom logically precludes God’s prevention of future evil that results from human choice, many affirm that God’s response to unpreventable evil is that God suffers with the person suffering evil. (Culp, 2023)

Can God suffer? Can a viable concept of God include the idea that the Divine sacrifices and suffers for the opportunity of relationship? Can such an image of God integrate the paradoxical idea that the power of God is manifested through such apparent weakness?

The holy scriptures of Judaism and Christianity, and the theological ponderings of many great thinkers have encompassed such questions. From this perspective, God is conceived as “personal, loving, and history-making; as such, He is involved with his creation and his people.” Furthermore, if God does so as the God of love, “then such a God must, by necessity, experience suffering” (Weinandy, 2000, p. 8).

All that God is and does will be for the sake of the relationship... This free act of self-limitation, taken entirely at the divine initiative for the sake of the relationship, might be described as a divine kenosis, a self-emptying, an act of self-sacrifice. The very act of creation thus might be called the beginning of the passion of God. God has so entered into the world that God cannot but be affected by its life ... God cannot but suffer, and in manifold ways. (Fretheim, 1984, p. 58)

The concept of a self-limiting God—particularly for the sake of relationship—resonates strongly with the perspective expressed in many of the Cayce readings. As noted by Whitehead, companionship allows for the possibility of suffering, perhaps even for God. Although the readings do not explicitly state that God suffers, they do assert that God is both personal and impersonal (1158-12). If God is love, can such a personal God also suffer for the sake of love? The readings do speak of the sorrow of God, in terms with biblical overtones:

... the waywardness of each soul bring sorrow to the Father of Fathers, the God that is ONE. For, as each soul is as a corpuscle in the body of God, so does the soul that sinneth bring sorrow to the Father. (3028-1)

The readings also call attention to “longsuffering” as a fruit of the spirit and an attribute of God (e.g., 417-8, 2390-3). Therefore: “Be kind, be gentle, be patient, be longsuffering, for if thy God was not longsuffering with thee, what chance would you have?” (5081-1)

From the perspective of Christian New Testament theology and the Cayce readings, the life and death of Jesus exemplifies the reality of suffering for the sake of relationship—“suffering Christ to a suffering world” (540-18). Yet such suffering is regarded as the power of divine love, not a sign of weakness; rather, the opposite.

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### 2.5.1.5 The Triune Model of God

At times, the readings' emphasis on the oneness of God seems to contradict the Christian theological assertion of the Trinity—God in three persons. The readings strongly endorse both the oneness of God and the practicality of the triune concept. The reasoning is actually quite simple when viewed from the cosmic multidimensional perspective of the readings.

The souls that are aware of their being in a consciousness as they pass through the environ, or the dimension of that consciousness. Just as in the earth it is known as three dimensions, yet man may think in an eight-dimensional consciousness. (3037-1)

A later section will delve into the multidimensional structure of the universe and its relationship to soul development. Here is a sample that may be helpful in providing a context of multiple dimensions of consciousness and why this is relevant to the theological triune model of God:

In entering it [the soul] takes on those forms that may be known in the dimensions of that plane which it occupies, there being not only three dimensions – as of the earth – but there may be as seven, in Mercury – or four, in Venus – or five, as in Jupiter. There may be only one as Mars. There may be many more as in those of Neptune, or they may become even as nil – until purified in Saturn's fires. (311-2)

Thus this solar system is said to contain multiple dimensions of consciousness that correspond to the planets. With regard to consciousness, the earth is a three-dimensional experience. Here is the relevance to the triune model of God:

For the entity finds itself a body, a mind, a soul – three; or the earth consciousness as a three-dimensional plane in one. So man's concept of the Godhead is three-dimensional... (4035-1)

Human entities (incarnate souls experiencing the three spatial dimensions of earth consciousness) tend to think and form concepts based on three-dimensional experience. The theological construction of the Trinity in Christianity is an intellectual artifact of three-dimensional thinking.

For thy body, thy mind, thy soul are one, even as the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Ghost – the three-dimensional activity in  
a three-dimensional world. (2283-1)

When reflecting on the Christian concept of the Trinity, theologian Richard Drummond observes:

Thus, it is asserted that since man – the soul of man – “may think in an eight dimensional consciousness ... the universal consciousness manifested or expressed in the three-dimensional as Father, Son, Holy Spirit ... might be manifested or indicated in many more” dimensions in other realms than earth ... This is, of course, to say no more than sensitive theologians have long been saying, viz., God is more than our human theologies are able adequately to state ... (Drummond, 1978, p. 195)

A seven-dimensional concept of God during a Mercurian sojourn? A four-dimensional divinity in Venus? At the very least, most scholars would find a triune concept of God framed in traditional three-dimensional, earth-bound Christian theology rather less objectionable by comparison.

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#### 2.5.1.6 Creator God

The concept of God as creator is familiar in various religious traditions. The readings often use terms like Creative Force or Creative Energy when portraying this concept of God. Another common expression for God the Creator in the readings is first cause:

God, the first cause, the first principle, the first movement, IS! ... Yet this very movement that separates the forces in atomic influence is the first cause, or the manifestation of that called God in the material plane! Then, as it gathers of positive-negative forces in their activity, whether it be of one element or realm or another, it becomes magnified in its force or sources through the universe. Hence we find worlds, suns, stars, nebulae, and whole solar systems MOVING from a first cause. (262-52)

Although the expression “first cause” is used in 249 readings that discuss the origin of all created things, there is no attempt at a formal cosmological argument for the existence of God. It is usually just part of a description of how or why the universe (and everything in it) exists. The point is not to propose a lesson in physics—rather, it is the metaphysics. It is the “why” that is emphasized, as has been echoed throughout this text. It is about God’s desire for companionship and expression. The emphasis on relationship and creative expression is the primary consideration for individuals seeking to apply the information in daily life.

When used in the readings, the expression first cause was intended to focus on the initial creative act or impetus that resulted in all that is. When the First Cause moved, the universe (or universes—some readings do indicate plurality) came into being. By referring to the first cause in this way, the readings emphasize that we do live in a cause-and-effect universe that is lawful. The laws of physics are real and undeniable. But there are metaphysical laws as well, which are the basis for the creation and maintenance of all of reality—even realms beyond what we regard as the physical universe.

Thus the readings do not shy away from discussions of ultimate origins, yet they do fall back on symbolism from biblical scripture at times. However, to understand the reason for creation, detailed technical

explanations are unnecessary. The realization that the first cause (called God) created beings for the purpose of relationship and expression is enough to put into practice. A reading somewhat similar to the biblical Genesis account introduces the triune concept of time, space, and patience. Thus the patience of God the Creator is reflected in the eons of time that the cosmos has been evolving—broadly consistent with most modern scientific models of cosmology. And yet, the spiritual dimension of soul involvement at the cosmic scale is noted:

God moved, the spirit came into activity. In the moving it brought light, and then chaos. In this light came creation of that which in the earth came to be matter; in the spheres about the earth, space and time; and in Patience it has evolved through those activities until there are the heavens and all the constellations, the stars, the universe as it is known – or sought to be known by individual soul-entities in the material plane.  
(3508-1)

Many readings also echo the Bible verse “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). The soul’s journey through materiality is long and arduous, involving sojourns throughout the cosmos on numerous planets and planes of consciousness in varied star systems.

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### 2.5.2 The Soul’s Journey

For those who ponder the possibility of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, the Cayce readings answer in the affirmative. Several readings contain explicit discussions of the reality of extraterrestrial life. There are mentions of other “people of the universe” (281-16) and “visitations of those from the other spheres” (1681-1).

However, the precise nature of the alien life forms is uncertain. The soul’s descent into the material universe has been widespread. When discussing

life in other places in the cosmos, the readings may have simply been referring to some wandering souls who have taken up residence in other realms in forms appropriate to those environs.

Apparently, souls are quite mobile in the universal sense. Movement between systems in the cosmos is common and part of the larger plan for soul development. According to the readings, all the souls on earth have at some point explored the realms of other planets and beyond. In that sense, all souls are truly citizens of the universe. However, universal citizenship does not require the three-dimensional flesh bodies found on earth—rather, the soul utilizes a form appropriate for each unique multidimensional environment. The readings describe the soul's journey through the cosmos as a flight in which it tries out its wings, for better or worse:

Just so a SOUL ... taking on a form, coming in the dimension of that plane in which it finds – through its awakened forces, by the various spheres of relativity of forces – to make manifest ITSELF, or – as it were – it has flown out from its source to try ITS wings, to seek ITS own doing – or undoing; dependent upon that as has been builded, and the use it makes of that given it. (311-2)

The image of souls taking flight from one planet to another is a common theme in ancient traditions throughout the world. In his book *Star Maps* William Fix (1979) documents the diverse manifestations of the concept of “magical flight” from various sources, ranging from the shaman's journey to modern parapsychological research on out-of-body experiences.

Of particular note is the pyramid text of Unas from ancient Egypt that describes how the pharaoh periodically underwent a ritual near-death experience that allowed him to project out of body and into space. Based on these extraterrestrial excursions, star maps were created to portray the

soul's flight and return as part of a dramatic initiation experience that provided the pharaoh with insights for leading his people. The star maps painted as murals on the ceilings and walls of pyramid temples are suggestive of the soul's planetary and stellar destinations between earthly lives. Thus the recognition of our solar system (and other star systems deep in space) as the after-death realm of the soul provided a foundation for ancient Egyptian cosmology and the mystery religions of antiquity. Based on his research, Fix concludes:

The message of the star maps and the many testimonies of antiquity is that man is older than the oldest bone on earth.... Man was a conscious sentient being before he came to earth. Perhaps, to use the image suggested earlier, he appeared like hundreds of millions of tiny stars that had comprised a living river of light which flowed from an unnameable source. Man came freely of his own will and choice, descending en masse, like a shower of sparks of light ... (p. 215)

Thus the Egyptian star maps are archaeological testaments to the soul's inherent cosmic citizenship and mobility among the heavenly bodies that represent planes and spheres of consciousness beyond our present earthly sojourn.

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#### 2.5.2.1 Astral (Planetary) Sojourns

The Cayce life readings focus on two aspects of the soul's journey — astral sojourns (within the environment of other planets or star systems) and reincarnation (past lives on earth). Most of the Cayce readings that include information on astral sojourns are restricted to the planets of this solar system, thus the term planetary sojourn is commonly used and will be the primary focus of this section.

For planetary sojourns, the consciousness associated with experience of each planet has its own unique qualities that provide opportunities for soul growth and development. Earthly incarnation requires a three-dimensional flesh body as the soul's physical vehicle. Sojourns in the multidimensional consciousness of other planets (and other star systems) are nonphysical, requiring the use of a subtle body, for which the readings include several terms (e.g., astral body, celestial body, cosmic body, etc.).

Some Cayce scholars posit that planetary sojourns are strictly symbolic or metaphoric (e.g., Bro, 1989, pp. 154–155; Todeschi, 2007, p. 111). As Bro pointed out, the “truth in astrology was difficult to relate to modern thought”—hence he opted for a purely symbolic interpretation of planetary sojourns. Yet the readings are clear in affirming something more, calling upon multidimensional concepts that may have a basis in modern physics (as discussed below). Furthermore, the physical position of the planets cited does seem to matter in the practice of astrology (as encouraged in the readings). If astrological influences are purely symbolic, the practice of astrology (utilizing birth charts and planetary alignments) is inconceivable. Thus the concept of planetary sojourns (while certainly associated with symbolism at the mental level) does strongly imply some sort of residency within the planetary environs of this—and presumably other—solar systems.

To sojourn is to stay as a temporary resident (Webster's Universal Encyclopedic Dictionary). The readings refer to the temporary habitation within this solar system (or other star systems) as “universal or planetary sojourns” (441-1). A temporary residency implies more than a simple tourist's excursion. A sojourn implies an investment of time and energy in a locale before moving on to the next destination. This is exactly the meaning of sojourn in the Cayce readings. Whether it be a sojourn on the earth in a physical body (or one of the other heavenly bodies in some other

vehicle), the soul entity cannot stay put in any particular place for too long without becoming stuck and losing the potential for evolving back to the Source. On the subject of planetary sojourns, Rudolf Steiner and Edgar Cayce expressed a similar viewpoint, as documented by Fix (1979, pp. 176–180): both insisted that souls travel to the planets after death and return to earth to be born again into human experience. Steiner saw the journey as a strict and orderly procession through all the spheres of the solar system, while Cayce’s itineraries are more dynamic, allowing the individual to visit the particular sphere or planet with the developmental influences most required.

Planetary sojourns are part of the soul’s journey through the dimensions of consciousness of this solar system and beyond:

Astrological aspects, – not because the stars were in such a position, but because of the activities of the entity as an entity through that consciousness accredited to the various phases or dimensions of activity, – we find in the earth plane the three dimensions, in Venus the four, in Jupiter the five, in Uranus the seven – all of these; not as of planes, as sometimes spoken of, but consciousnesses – the ability to reason from certain activities. (3006-1)

Not that the entity as a physical being has dwelt upon Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus, but in those consciousnesses that are peculiar to the conditions or dimensions of those planes of consciousness. For they, as the earth, are a part of His creation and a part of thy abode – just as the material consciousness in the earth. (2405-1)

The concept of multidimensional space (beyond the standard physics model of three dimensions in space plus time) is theorized by some modern physicists. In particular, string theory (and its variations such as superstring theory and M-theory) posit such multidimensionality with at

least nine spatial dimensions. The extra dimensions are beyond our normal perceptual range, but are essential for the elaborate mathematical formulas that are the foundation of these models (Greene, 2024). At the level of the soul's journey, the cosmos hums like vibrating strings: "Each planetary influence vibrates at a different rate of vibration" (539-2).

The readings use a similar multidimensional model to explain the workings of the universe. They insist that our own local solar system operates in eight dimensions (5755-2). Just like string theory, the extra dimensions are invisible to our terrestrially oriented senses. However, the Cayce readings suggest that each soul has the inherent capacity to operate in the extra dimensions that correspond to the planets in this system. Between earthly lives, souls exist on the other planets (i.e., planetary sojourns).

By taking on a form appropriate for the unique dimensional environment of each astral sojourn, the soul utilizes a subtle body sometimes referred to as an astral body. In addition to that term, some readings also speak of a celestial body or cosmic body when describing the vehicle used in the soul's journey apart from the earth.

Then, born in what body? That as befits that plane of consciousness ... These are consciousnesses, these are bodies. To give them form or shape – you have no word, you have no form in a three-dimensional world or plane of consciousness to give it to one in the seventh [dimension] – have you? (5755-1)

Astrologically we find urges, not because the Moon or the Sun or Leo or Pisces may have been in this or that position when the entity was born. But the entity as a consciousness experienced those activities or awarenesses in those environs. Thus these become part of the soul experience. As will be found, Leo – or the consciousness of that mind will be a part of the entity's awareness. Thus at times the entity will appear headstrong, wilful; yet, as has been indicated, there are other

influences of the benevolent nature (from Jupiter) making for the broadness, the bigness of the entity's abilities. In Venus combined with same, we find a great deal of color, a great deal of emotion, will be a part of the entity's experience. (2905-3)

The Cayce readings compare the activity in the various astral sojourns to the educational programs of great universities that are known and revered for advanced specialized training. Just as a university may have a reputation for a particularly good music, drama, mathematics, or business program, each planet in this solar system has its own special area of study and achievement. Thus the planetary system (and the cosmos as a whole) provides the soul with diverse educational opportunities to grow and develop to become fit companions to the Creator:

Just as the entity's attending this or that university, this or that place of learning, would make for a parlance peculiar unto itself. Even though individuals may study the same line of thought, one attending Harvard, another Yale, another Oxford, another Stanford, another the University of Arizona, they each would carry with them the vibrations created by their very activity in those environs. In the same way emotions arise from individual activity in a particular sojourn, and are called the SPIRIT of the institution to which the entity may have carried itself in its activity. So we find those astrological [usually planetary] sojourns making these vibrations or impressions in the present entity ... (633-2)

Philosophically, the concept of the soul visiting the planets of this solar system as spheres of consciousness between earthly lives can be traced back at least as far as Plato. The Myth of Er is a story at the end of Plato's Republic which includes an account of the cosmos and the afterlife with some similarities to the Cayce readings' description of planetary sojourns. The story begins as a man named Er has died in battle. His body remains un-decomposed for ten days and is placed on a funeral pyre where he

revives and shares his experiences of an afterlife journey involving reincarnation and the celestial spheres of the astral plane. Since the Republic is essentially a political treatise, the Myth of Er can easily be interpreted as a morality tale wherein moral people are rewarded and immoral people punished after death. And yet, if taken somewhat literally, as perhaps something like a near-death, out-of-body experience, the impression resembles a glimpse into what the readings call planetary sojourns.

From this perspective, upon physical (near) death the soul of Er is transported to a meadow landscape that may correspond to what the readings call the “borderland” or “inter-between.” This is essentially a staging area where souls choose the next steps in their development.

Now when the spirits which were in the meadow ... came to a place where they could see from above a line of light, straight as a column, extending right through the whole heaven and through the earth, in colour resembling the rainbow, only brighter and purer; another day’s journey brought them to the place, and there, in the midst of the light, they saw the ends of the chains of heaven let down from above: for this light is the belt of heaven, and holds together the circle of the universe, like the under-girders of a trireme. From these ends is extended the spindle of Necessity, on which all the revolutions turn. (Plato, 1998)

A description of the heavenly bodies that are spun and woven on the celestial spindle is provided. This all resonates with the readings’ imagery of the “skein of time and space” (540-4) and “warp and woof of its [the entity’s] inner experience” during planetary sojourns (370-3). Eventually each soul must decide where to proceed (based on its past record and future hopes). The souls proceed to the:

... throne of Necessity; and when they had all passed, they marched on in a scorching heat to the plain of Forgetfulness,

which was a barren waste destitute of trees and verdure; and then towards evening they encamped by the river of Unmindfulness, whose water no vessel can hold; of this they were all obliged to drink a certain quantity, and those who were not saved by wisdom drank more than was necessary; and each one as he drank forgot all things. Now after they had gone to rest, about the middle of the night there was a thunderstorm and earthquake, and then in an instant they were driven upwards in all manner of ways to their birth, like stars shooting. (Plato, 1998)

Thus, according to the Myth of Er, souls are born into the astral realms of the planets like “shooting stars.” Note the similarity to the “living rivers of light” of souls transporting through the cosmos in the Egyptian texts documented by Fix. Since Er had not drunk from the waters of forgetfulness he was able to return to physical consciousness and tell his tale.

Although the planetary environs are not described in the Myth of Er, the qualities ascribed to the Greek gods whose names were assigned to the planets match those given in the readings (which also align closely to astrological descriptions). The unique characteristics of these gods form the lessons to be learned in the inter-life education program:

As in Mercury pertaining of Mind. In Mars of Madness. In Earth as of Flesh. In Venus as Love. In Jupiter as Strength. In Saturn as the beginning of earthly woes, that to which all insufficient matter is cast for the beginning. In that of Uranus as of the Psychic. In that of Neptune as of Mystic. In Septimus [Pluto] as of Consciousness. (900-10)

Historically, a few centuries after Plato, with the widespread adoption of the Ptolemaic model of the universe, soul activity on other planets after death (or between earthly lives in the case of reincarnation) was widely accepted. Notably, Dante’s *Divine Comedy* explicitly portrays the soul’s

journey through various realms after death, including passage through the known planets of that time as a means of soul development in preparation for heaven (Alighieri, 1909).

Medieval scholar and popular author C. S. Lewis utilized this framework in some of his science fiction works (“The Space Trilogy”) wherein the consciousness of planets in our solar system provides the mental environment for the plot of the stories (Lewis, 1938; 1943; 1945). Even the Narnia series of children’s books is believed to have utilized the medieval cosmological mindset by setting each story within the symbolic environment of each planet—a scheme discovered by Michael Ward during research for his doctoral dissertation, and elaborated in subsequent works:

... Lewis had cryptically designed the [Narnia] Chronicles so that the seven heavens spoke through them like a kind of language or song. He had translated the planets into plots, and the music of the spheres could be heard silently sounding (or tingling, as he would have said) in each tale. The Narnia series, I now started to see, was a literary equivalent of Holst’s Planets Suite; each one of the seven heavens gave the key to a different Chronicle. (Ward, 2020, p. 146)

With regard to the multiple dimensions (beyond the three of waking earthly experience) ascribed to planetary sojourns in the readings, the work of P. D. Ouspensky may be relevant. Interestingly, the readings encourage the study of Ouspensky’s *Tertium Organum*. In seeking to understand what might now be called paranormal experiences, Ouspensky realized that “We begin to conceive of the idea of a ‘higher space’ possessing more dimensions than ours” (Ouspensky, 1922, p. 24). However there was no discussion of how higher dimensions of space might relate to between-earthly-life sojourns as described in the Cayce life readings.

Physicist Bernard Carr proposes a hyperspatial model of mind and matter in which extra dimensions, beyond the ones commonly regarded as space and time, are the basis for mental experiences associated with higher-dimensional space. The extra dimensions are amalgamated into a “Universal Structure” which can be interpreted as a “higher-dimensional psychophysical information space” offering the possibility of a paradigm in which matter and mind are merged at a very fundamental level (Carr, 2015, p. 269). One might argue that subtle matter associated with extra dimensions operates in a different frequency range—a notion found in various esoteric traditions and metaphysical approaches.

This is particularly relevant to the Cayce readings’ assertions concerning the continuity of consciousness before and beyond physical earthly incarnations of the soul. Philosophically, this relates to the various issues associated with “survival.” Carr’s hyperspatial model suggests “survival space”—the space in which the “soul” could theoretically reside after death. “For example, if reincarnation occurs, the soul is presumably located somewhere between incarnations” (Carr, 2015, p. 267). In traditional religious texts this would require some form of nonphysical space such as the Buddhist bardo (intermediate state), perhaps related to dream space and mental activity. The readings call this the “borderland” or “inter-between,” which echoes the Christian conception of purgatory—a transitional in-between phase in the soul’s journey.

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#### 2.5.2.2 Death (God’s Other Door) and Soul Birth

As noted, the readings’ multidimensional model of the universe allows for many dimensions beyond our habitual earthly perceptions. Each soul is a multidimensional entity with the innate capability to pass between these multidimensional realms. Death in one experience is simply a transition to the next experience in another dimension. There is no real death as such for

the soul—only transition to another learning environment. The Cayce readings refer to the transition as passing through “God’s other door”:

Death – as commonly spoken of – is only passing through God’s other door. That there is continued consciousness is evidenced, ever, by the associations of influences, the abilities of entities to project or to make those impressions upon the consciousness of sensitives or the like. As to how long – many an individual has remained in that called death for what ye call YEARS without realizing it was dead! (1472-2)

Another analogy used in the readings to describe the inter-life transition is that the soul takes flight from one realm to another. Numerous life readings specify from which planet the soul took its flight before being born into an earthly body. For example:

Now, we find the spirit and soul took possession and completed this entity, as we have at present, late in the evening – 11:29 [11:29 P.M.]. We find the soul and spirit entity took its flight, or its force being present and bringing this present entity’s completeness, from that of Venus’ forces, with those of Jupiter, Mercury, Neptune being the ones in the assistance to the conditions bringing the forces to this present plane’s development, with afflictions of those in Mars and in that of Septimus. (4228-1)

The soul birth process is actually quite interesting and instructive from the standpoint of how the soul originally became encased in a flesh body. In several readings the questioner asked Cayce about the time of the physical birth and soul birth, which are not necessarily the same. Sometimes the soul birth, by which the soul enters and takes possession of the physical body, is a couple of hours before or after the physical birth. The idea of the soul pushing itself into a baby’s body will be a helpful image to remember when we discuss the soul’s initial entanglement in thought projections in the section that deals with human origins.

The readings compare the gradual process by which the newly incarnated soul becomes aware of its earthly environment to the process of awakening in another realm after physical death—i.e., a sojourn in one of the other planetary realms (or other star systems, as the case may be). The readings also compare a baby's gradual awakening to its earthly environment as an explanation of what it was like for the first wave of souls who became encased in thought form bodies that hardened into flesh—the story of human origins and evolution.

*(Q) Describe some of the planes into which entities pass on experiencing the change called death.*

(A) Passing from the material consciousness to a spiritual or cosmic, or outer consciousness, oft does an entity or being not become conscious of that about it; much in the same manner as an entity born into the material plane only becomes conscious gradually of that designated as time and space for the material or third dimensional plane. In the passage the entity becomes conscious, or the recognition of being in a fourth or higher dimensional plane takes place, much in the same way as the consciousness is gained in the material. For, as we have given, that we see manifested in the material plane is but a shadow of that in the spiritual plane. (5749-3)

Robert Grant's "The Place We Call Home: Exploring the Soul's Existence After Death" (2000) is an excellent resource for a deeper exploration of the after-death experience portrayed in the readings. Grant utilizes a comparative studies approach to integrate the Cayce material with the near-death-experience (NDE) literature, with emphasis on the work of Raymond Moody and George Richie. The borderland as a temporary sojourn in the astral realm corresponds to the "meadow" intermediary stage in Plato's Myth of Er, or perhaps even the purgatory intermediary realm of Dante's Divine Comedy. Once reoriented to the broader context of the soul's journey, souls can choose (or are assigned) educational experiences within planetary spheres of consciousness, or even more

highly advanced development in other star systems via the cosmic portal of Arcturus:

Arcturus is that which may be called the center of this universe, through which individuals pass and at which period there comes the choice of the individual as to whether it is to return to complete there – that is, in this planetary system, our sun, the earth sun and its planetary system – or to pass on to others. (5749-14)

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### 2.5.2.3 Origins

Typically a philosophy of religion will include some telling of a creation story—of how the cosmos and the creatures within it came to be. In modern culture, the science of big bang cosmology and evolutionary theory have become established as the primary source for insight into origin stories of the creation and evolution of the universe and life within it. However, some philosophers of religion comment on the near-sightedness of scientists and science popularizers, who:

... fail to distinguish between the order of biological explanation and the order of philosophical explanation. They do not recognize that creation is first of all a category of metaphysical reflection and that, furthermore, the materialism which they embrace is a position in natural philosophy not required by the evidence of biology itself. Divine agency, rather, ought to be seen in the fundamental teleology of all natural things, in the need for a First Mover, and in the complete dependence of all things on God as the source of their existence. It is natural philosophy, a more general science of nature than the specialized empirical sciences which examines the first two topics, and it is metaphysics which proves that all that is comes from God as cause. (Carroll, 2000)

Undoubtedly, this is controversial conceptual territory. The Cayce readings contribute nothing to reduce the controversy, even though the readings do provide support for both traditional scientific and theological accounts of origins—including the creation of the physical universe and its evolution (at all levels). Yet, bringing the soul into the discussion from the beginning and blending it with evolution in a dramatic and unique manner will likely fail to satisfy either side of the conceptual divide. However, the readings do seem to have a high degree of internal consistency and explanatory power, as will be explored below.

Broadly speaking, in the context of origin theories, creation is a process unfolding in stages that some call evolution. Here is a simple outline of creation and evolution as explained in the readings:

- Spiritual Creation – The first creation is of souls as companions in a spiritual realm (no physical universe yet). The souls are distinct entities, but apparently there is insufficient separation for some souls' liking.
- Spiritual Rebellion – Apparently there was too much togetherness—some souls desired more of their own space. The level of rebellion could even be described as “war” (281-33). This theological theme lays the philosophical foundation for addressing The Problem of Evil and moral agency (Section 2.5.6). It is the moment where the part (the individual soul) attempted to define itself as independent of the Whole (the First Cause).
- Creation and Evolution of the Physical Universe – This creative expression provided a place where souls can become aware of their separation—with enough space and time to grow up to be fit companions with their Source. It is a patient process of evolutionary development of the whole universe and the entities within it.

- Entanglement of Souls in Matter – Some souls were not content to be co-creators on the sidelines so to speak, and chose to create thought forms that gradually materialized into composite physical bodies—not ideal for soul development. Thus souls entered into and became entangled in matter.
  - Creation/Adaptation of the Human Body – This could be viewed as a special creation or simply an adaptation of existing lifeforms for souls to continue their evolution in becoming fit companions to the Creator. This could also be seen as a discontinuity (or at least a highly creative variant) in the evolutionary process.
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#### 2.5.2.3.1 Spiritual Creation

*(Q) When did I first exist as a separate entity?*

*(A)* Would this add to thy knowledge? The first existence, of course, was in the MIND of the Creator, as all souls became a part of the creation. As to time, this would be in the beginning. When was the beginning? First consciousness! There is no time, there is no space. (2925-1)

“Cayce thus shares with the great Alexandrian theologian Origen the conviction that all souls pre-existed; that is, they all had their origin in God ... but existed in the spiritual realm prior to their appearance in this world ...” (Drummond, 1978, p. 82). When asked about the reason for creation, the readings affirmed that it was God’s desire for companionship and expression. This fascinating explanation for the source of creation is based on the dynamics of relationship. Truly fulfilling companionship (a connection with another) requires an opposing or balancing by expression (a separate sense of self-awareness or autonomy). There is an inherent push and pull that results in a greater unity, much as we see in the ancient Chinese concept of ying and yang as expressed in the Tao.

Try to imagine a relationship where two individuals were totally the same in every regard. Further imagine that the apparent total oneness of identity was inherent because neither individual had a choice in the matter—that the expression of individuality was either forbidden or unrealized. Although this example is certainly extreme, the underlying dynamics are all too common in our modern world. Just ask any counselor or psychotherapist who specializes in dysfunctional relationships. A person needs a healthy, separate sense of self (an ego) and the ability to express that individuality as a precondition for being able to function in a healthy relationship with another person. Is it not fascinating that the most intimate and relevant aspects of our mundane mortal lives are somehow related to the birth of souls in the mind of the Creator (and eventually to the creation of the physical universe itself)?

Desiring companionship and recognizing the full implications of what that requires, the Creator endowed each soul with the ability to make choices and express itself. This is part and parcel of being a companion and co-creator with the First Cause. In this essential respect, souls were created in the image of the Creator. This gift of the Creator is called will—one can even call it free will, although there is a price to be paid. The ultimate use of will (“free will”) is the choice to be a companion and co-creator with the First Cause—or not.

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#### 2.5.2.3.2 Spiritual Rebellion

... error or separation began before there appeared what we know as the Earth, the Heavens; or before Space was manifested. This becomes hard to conceive in the finite mind; as does the finite mind fail to grasp the lack of or NO time. (262-115)

In the realm of spirit (“before” the creation of the material universe), souls were provided the opportunity of oneness and companionship with their Source. However, the choice of companionship with the Creative Force called God was not a foregone conclusion. Some souls chose to reject the offer of companionship with the Creator and seek other forms of self-expression. Other souls stayed close to the First Cause. This is essentially the story told by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). For some of the souls who declined companionship, the rejection took the form of outright rebellion and warring.

For the Spirit of God moved and that which is in matter came into being, for the opportunities of His associates, His companions, His sons, His daughters. These are ever spoken of as One. Then there came that as sought for self-indulgence, self-glorification; and there was the beginning of warring among themselves for activity – STILL in Spirit. (262-114)

Many souls have rebelled; do and will rebel. For, as seen, these rebellions, these disorders have brought about time and space activity for the [akashic] records. (585-2)

The exaggerated separate sense of self, chosen by some souls, has been cited as the “original sin” or “FALL” described in the Bible. Or was it a great adventure that was simply too irresistible for the fledgling souls? One reading simply notes that the soul “has flown out from its source to try ITS wings, to seek ITS own doing – or undoing” (311-2). The concept of spiritual rebellion does have obvious implications for the problem of evil and suffering in the world (as discussed below in Section 2.5.6).

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#### 2.5.2.3.3 Creation and Evolution of the Physical Universe

God, the first cause, the first principle, the first movement, IS! ... Yet this very movement that separates the forces in atomic influence is the first cause, or the manifestation of that called

God in the material plane! Then, as it gathers of positive-negative forces in their activity, whether it be of one element or realm or another, it becomes magnified in its force or sources through the universe. Hence we find worlds, suns, stars, nebulae, and whole solar systems MOVING from a first cause. (262-52)

Although the expression first cause is used in 249 readings that discuss the origin of all created things, there is no attempt at a formal cosmological argument for the existence of God. It is usually just part of a description of how or why the universe (and everything in it) exists. The point is not physics. It is metaphysics. It is the “why” that is emphasized as has been echoed throughout this text—it is about God’s desire for companionship and expression.

Thus the readings do not shy away from discussing the origins of the universe, although they do tend to fall back on symbols and terminology from biblical scripture at times. But to understand the reason for creation, detailed technical explanations are unnecessary. The realization that the first cause (called God) created beings for the purpose of relationship and expression is enough to put into practice. The readings point out that souls created in the image of God naturally have the same desire for companionship and expression as the Creator. This has some unintended (but not necessarily unexpected) consequences that will be described shortly. For now the key point is that “not only the earth but materiality – [is] an expression of creation” (1747-3). The material universe is a manifestation of divine creative expression for its own sake emanating from the first cause.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the readings’ cosmology is the sequence of creation. The first creation was the creation of souls in the mind of God. The creation of the physical universe came later. To follow this story, we must allow our imaginations to abandon the familiar context

of space and time and become open to the possibility of a spiritual reality of “no time and no space.” The idea of a reality outside our space-time orientation has important cosmological consequences. At this point, the emphasis is on the primacy of spirit as the basis for the readings’ explanation of the creation and evolution of the physical universe.

The whole physical universe is evolving for a purpose—to provide a classroom in consciousness for souls to develop as co-creators and companions to their Source. Materiality provides the opportunity for an awareness of separation that souls require for creative expression and maturing into fit companions to each other and their Source.

Hence the awareness of the soul as to its separateness, or its being separated, only comes through the manifestations of the principles of that cosmic consciousness in materiality. Hence it is as evolution in a part of the development of the whole of the universe; not this consciousness of our own solar system, but of that about all solar force, of which our own system is only a mere part of the whole consciousness. (1602-3)

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#### 2.5.2.3.4 Entanglement of Souls in Matter

Souls are spirit entities created for companionship and expression—with God and with each other. The expressive aspect of soulness can be extreme. The readings tell a fascinating story of how souls become involved in flesh bodies—on earth and in other systems throughout the cosmos when “individual soul-entities ... came into the earth materiality, through the spirit pushing itself into matter” (3508-1). The readings explain that as strange as this may seem to modern sensibilities, it is still happening every day all over the world when babies are born. The readings call it “soul birth” (as described above). Disincarnate soul entities push into (and take possession of) newborn babies at about the time of

birth. However, physical incarnation in the earth was not part of the original divine plan for soul expression.

The plan for the soul included experience of all creation, but it did not necessarily mean identification with and participation in all forms and substance. Nor did it mean interference in creation by souls. It did not mean that they were to spin their own little worlds, twisting and bending laws to make images of their dreams ... The solar system attracted souls, and since each system is a single expression, with its planets as integral parts, the earth came into the path of souls ... The earth was an expression of divine mind with its own laws, its own plan, its own evolution. Souls, longing to feel the beauty of the seas, the winds, the forest, the flowers, mixed with them and expressed themselves through them. They also mingled with the animals and made, in imitation of them, thought forms: they played at creating; they imitated God. But it was a playing, an imitating, that interfered with what had already been set in motion, and thus the stream of mind carrying out the plan for earth gradually drew souls into its current. (Sugrue, 1973, pp. 310–311)

Thus souls pushed themselves into existing material forms as well as thought forms of their own imaginative creation.

As to their forms in the physical sense, these were much RATHER of the nature of THOUGHT FORMS, or able to push out OF THEMSELVES in that direction in which its development took shape in thought – much in the way and manner as the amoeba would in the waters of a stagnant bay, or lake, in the present. As these took form, by the gratifying of their own desire for that as builded or added to the material conditions, they became hardened or set – much in the form of the existent human body of the day, with that of color as partook of its surroundings much in the manner as the chameleon in the present. (364-3)

The main problem was not so much the creative involvement of souls in the evolution of life on planet earth. The souls became so entangled in materiality that they lost their sense of purpose of being—particularly the desire of becoming one with God as equal companions.

*(Q) May we assume that the term “entangle” means a soul’s participation and immersion in a form or system of creative expression which was not necessarily intended for such participation and immersion, as the earth?*

*(A) To be sure, there are those consciousnesses or awarenesses that have not participated in nor been a part of earth’s PHYSICAL consciousness; as the angels, the archangels, the masters to whom there has been attainment, and to those influences that have prepared the way. Remember, as given, the earth is that speck, that part of creation where souls projected themselves into matter, and thus brought that conscious awareness of themselves entertaining the ability of creating without those forces of the spirit of truth. (5755-2)*

The readings use the term “involution” to describe the entanglement of souls in matter (2079-1). Whereas evolution (with respect to the soul) is movement towards the First Cause, involution is the opposite. Involution is not over—souls can still choose to move away from the Creator. With regard to human origins, the entanglement of souls in physical forms required a creative solution beyond the evolutionary process that had been in place to that point in earth’s development.

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#### 2.5.2.3.5 Evolution and Human Origins

The evolution of life as may be understood by the finite mind. In the first cause, or principle, all is perfect. In the creation of soul, we find the portion may become a living soul and equal with the Creator. To reach that position, when separated, must pass through all stages of development, that it may be one with the Creator. (900-10)

Historically, the tension between science and religion has been exemplified by the challenge of reconciling Darwin's theory of evolution with religious ideas about God, creation, and the origin of life—especially human beings. The Cayce readings represent the possibility of a fascinating integration between religion and science in this area. The integration is based on the primacy of Spirit as a Creative Force in the origin of life and the purposeful adaptation of living entities to the varied environments created by that Force as manifest in nature.

... for time and space are as the evolution upon which the forces of the divine make for that change that brings same into the experiences of those souls who seek to become one with the Creative Energies. (254-95)

A rather long reading given on February 14, 1924 began with the question: "What are the laws governing relativity of all force?" The explanation expanded from a brief discussion of cosmology to the topic of evolution set in the context of the soul's journey through the various realms of the universe in its evolutionary process of return to its Source:

... evolution from sphere to sphere, or from plane to plane ... That of the spirit is the spark, or portion of the Divine that is in every entity, whether complete or of the evolution to that completeness.... in VARIOUS SPHERES through which this soul and spirit of the given entity has passed in its evolution to the present sphere ... (3744-5)

In reply to a request for a definition of evolution with reference to the human family, a reading focused on the spiritual and mental aspect by noting that "man's evolving, or evolution, has only been that of the gradual growth upward to the mind of the Maker." This is soul evolution as a process of becoming one with God. Apparently seeking a distinctly physical explanation of evolution, the next question asked if the Darwinian theory of evolution of man was right or wrong. The reply stated:

Man DID NOT descend from the monkey, but man has evolved, resuscitation, you see, from time to time, time to time, here a little, there a little, line upon line and line and line upon line. In all ages we find this has been the developing – day by day, day by day, or the evolution ... (3744-5)

The reading went on to explain that the evolving human form was adapted to the various local regions and conditions on the planet, much as portrayed by Darwin's theory. Then the reading steered back to a more spiritual emphasis by putting human evolution within the broader context of creation from a first cause involving long periods of time, both in the past and future:

The theory is, man evolved, or evolution, from first cause in creation, and brings forth to meet the needs of the man, the preparation for the needs of man has gone down many, many thousands and millions of years, as is known in this plane, for the needs of man in the hundreds and thousands of years to come. (3744-5)

So to understand the readings' perspective on evolution, one must consider the broader (cosmic) context of that concept as a process beyond biological evolution on earth (as contemporary science tends to frame it). The readings also point out the role of will in the evolution of higher species, while acknowledging that species may be propagated through variation (whether random or not) shaped by heredity and environment—which does not disprove the reality of spirit forces manifesting in a material world:

... for evolution is as of a fact in the mind of the creative energy, and the will of the energy creating is of the higher forces, same as the will of the individual in the higher species ... yet the species may be propagated through that variation, and the variation or the acceptance of the condition is the proof of the heredity, of the environmental conditions, and not

a disproof of the spirit forces as manifesting in the material world ... for the motive energy is from the divine ... (900-249)

The spiritual evolution of the soul in its return to its source is cosmic in scale, with evolution on earth as one part of the process of testing and development through the eons of time and space called eternity:

As in the spirit forces, the development comes through the many changes, as made manifest in the evolution of man. In the development in eternity's realm, is that a finite force as made of creation may become one with the Creator, as a unit, atom, or vibration, becomes one with the universal forces ... all made manifest in flesh, and development, through the eons of time, space, and CALLED eternity. (900-16)

For a man writing a book on evolution and reincarnation, the question of "survival of the fittest" was raised:

*(Q) Now, let's take the animal. One great belief at the present time is the survival of the fittest –*

*(A) Applies in the ANIMAL kingdom – not in man!*

*(Q) That's a touchy point, and it will take a lot of explanation on my part.*

*(A) Let all read history! Which has survived – the brute strength, or the development towards that of God? Which survives – the man that studies God and seeks to emulate His forces and powers, or the man that emulates the forces of earth or flesh? This answers itself! (900-340)*

This reading went on to emphasize that "evolution began in the mind of the Creator" as manifested in the creation of the cosmos, including distinctive human beings on planet earth, possessed of that:

... dividing point between man and animal and plant, and mineral kingdom – GIVEN then the will, and the soul, that it might make itself One with that Creation. Now, that will, then, is heredity. That environment is the evolution. There you have

reincarnation, there you have evolution, there you have the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, the animal kingdom, each developing towards its own source, yet all belonging and becoming one in that force as it develops itself to become one with the Creative Energy, and one with the God. (900-340)

Some of the information presented above is consistent with standard scientific evolutionary theory, such as gradual adaptation to physical environment over long periods of time. The readings also emphasize the continuity of the evolutionary process, beginning with the creation of the cosmos in the mind of God with evolution proceeding in compliance with a lawful universe.

Scientific explanations of origins also insist on continuity. This is particularly obvious with regard to evolution and cosmogenesis. The scientific story of creation and evolution imagines that all life on earth is traced back to some single cell that self-organized in a primordial pool of water. On a cosmic scale, the molecular constituents of that first cell are traced back to exploding stars and further back to the singularity that produced the big bang—about fourteen billion years of continuity (National Academy of Sciences, 1999).

With regard to the continuity of the evolutionary process of life on earth, the readings insist that the continuity is based on mental and spiritual activity. But it is a continuous process of development, as with the mainstream scientific theory. Both approaches allow for periods of increased change called “punctuated equilibrium” so that the process of gradual, continuous development is sometimes accelerated in response to sudden and dramatic environmental shifts.

It is with human origins and development that a significant discontinuity is asserted in the readings’ approach. The soul rebellion in spirit and subsequent entanglement in matter posed a serious problem in the plan for

souls to return to their source as fully equal companions and co-creators. The solution was to manifest (from the realm of mind and spirit) a physical form suitable for soul development so that the entrapped/entangled souls could continue the journey home.

After surveying ancient myths and creation stories in the anthropological literature, William Fix arrived at a conclusion essentially in agreement with much of the readings' explanation of origins: "Man came into materiality from outside it; his spirit preexisted the beginning of his terrestrial adventures and the emergence of his physical body. Many mythologies distinguish the creation of the physical body as a separate and last act" (Fix, 1984, p. 277).

Fix is not a biblical creationist looking to justify simplistic scriptural pronouncements. His thoughtful and scholarly approach to the integration of mind and spirit with the best of scientific achievements in this field is worthy of consideration. He proposes two possible means for the appearance of humans within the evolutionary process on this planet: psychogenesis and apparition theory. His thinking on psychogenesis relies heavily on the work of Robert Broom, an anthropologist who suggested that spiritual agencies were involved in evolution. Fix hypothesizes psychogenesis as "the initiation of a novel form of creature through the activity of a psychic—that is a mental or spiritual agency" (p. 87).

Furthermore, Fix acknowledges the scientific assumption of "a smooth continuity of forms" yet asserts that "It is just as easy to interpret the fossil record ... pertaining to man as showing discontinuities and strange accelerations in the rate of change" (p. 287). He concludes:

... in this hypothesis there was never a time when man was an animal, with purely animal passions and instincts. This theory also seems to me to have the admirable feature of retaining much that is oldest and best in Western tradition – of

employing some of the best elements of contemporary science while not neglecting the crucial element of our ancient metaphysics, which so many people still find strong reason to accept. In a sense, psychogenesis is a perfect compromise between evolution and creation, retaining the best features of both... The theory of psychogenesis is not a substitute for evolution, but rather the mechanism behind it. And it profoundly extends the concept of evolution to apply to the human spirit itself. The purpose must have been to provide a vehicle suitable to the further development, refinement, or evolution of those spirits. And if we entertain the possibility of reincarnation, it is possible to see this spiritual evolution as an ongoing and dynamic process that is very much alive and continuing in the world today. (p. 289)

The second hypothetical explanation of mental and spiritual involvement in human evolution proposed by Fix is apparition theory, deduced directly from diverse ancient sources. The idea is that fully complete human forms could have been projected from the mental/spiritual realm and “materialized or solidified” somewhat in the way magnets materialize a magnetic field if iron filings are spread on a paper above them. Fix admits that apparition materialization is “right around the corner from a miracle of special creation” (p. 301), although it does not necessarily require special divine intervention. If rebellious souls projected thought forms into matter and became entangled in them, perhaps more spiritually attuned souls could project fully human forms into matter and push themselves into these bodies. Some readings do allow for ambiguity in this matter, indicating a special creation of the human form by “Creative Forces, God” (e.g., 262-119) while other readings apparently support the idea of one or more highly advanced souls making the intervention (e.g., 262-115, 288-29, 364-3).

Regardless of the theory involved, Fix points out that pre-existing evolved hominid forms would have provided the basis for a suitable modification

for human incarnation of spirit. His purpose is simply to “show that there really are alternatives to evolving man from ape via the mechanics of accident” (p. 302). This is probably the closest parallel to the approach of the readings with regard to the question of human origins.

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### 2.5.3 Mysteries

And the disciples came, and said unto him [Jesus], Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.  
(Matthew 13:10–11)

The system of metaphysical thought which emerges from the readings of Edgar Cayce is a Christianized version of the mystery religions of ancient Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, India, and Greece. It fits the figure of Christ into the tradition of one God for all people, and places Him in His proper place, at the apex of the philosophical structure; He is the capstone of the pyramid. (Sugrue, 1973, p. 305)

What were the mysteries that Jesus apparently shared with his disciples that were inappropriate for the general public of that day? The Cayce readings may provide insight into some of the mysteries surrounding the life and teachings of Jesus that have been neglected or ignored by leaders of the Christian church. The philosophy of religion portrayed in the Cayce readings is embedded in such mysteries.

In preparation for writing the philosophy chapter of his biography of Edgar Cayce, Tom Sugrue asked the entranced Cayce the question: “Is Gnosticism the closest type of Christianity to that which is given through this source?” The reply simply noted “This is a parallel” before complaining about some “attempts to take short cuts” by early church leaders. A followup question confirmed that the primary short cut in

question ruled out reincarnation as a theological proposition in Christianity (5749-14). The work of theologian Richard Drummond takes a serious look into this aspect of the Cayce readings and the historical milieu of the early church, especially as it pertains to Gnosticism:

Sugrue's question was not as precisely phrased as could be desired. We shall see that the term "Gnosticism" as commonly used includes a wide variety of both views and practices, but Cayce's answer is intriguing, to say the least. In fact, it would be disconcerting, at least to most contemporary Christian ministers. (Drummond, 1978, p. 59)

Drummond provides a scholarly review of the subject in his book *Jesus Christ, Christianity and the Edgar Cayce Readings*. Of particular relevance (given the reply to Sugrue's questions about Gnosticism and reincarnation cited above), Drummond addresses concerns about determinism in Christian Gnosticism:

The whole problem of alleged determinism in Christian Gnosticism, however, is given a different coloring by reason of the fact that many writers within this category taught the pre-existence of souls or, more specifically metempsychosis or the reincarnation of souls. By affirming the possibility of a succession of human lives upon earth, this doctrine, in addition to teaching the ancient, spiritual origin of the soul, clearly widens the possibilities of final salvation. It may be surprising to modern Christians to learn that this doctrine, in one form or another, was widely held in the early church, even indeed, by Christians who could not be classed as Gnostic in the narrower sense of the word. (Drummond, 1978, p. 71)

Drummond acknowledges the legitimate criticism of some of the early Christian Gnostics for their generally negative view of the world of matter. However, he also points out that much of this form of Christian Gnosticism avoids a fixedly dualistic distinction between matter and spirit. The

differentiation is primarily moral and spiritual, reflecting differing qualities of mind and spirit, rather than distinct ontological categories. Thus the world could be viewed as good, “but it is not comfortable and is not intended to be.” The world provides “educational” opportunities so that humans may return to perfect fellowship with their Maker (p. 75).

The readings provide an abundance of information on the Gnostic environment in which Christianity began. Much of the data comes from life readings for individuals said to have had past lives in that region during the years immediately before, during, and after the birth, life, and death of Jesus. These readings also describe the diverse religious and cultural environment alluded to by Sugrue with regard to the mystery religions of that place and time.

Modern scholars have noted the possibility that various mystery religions may have influenced early Christians, including (but not limited to) the cults of Eleusis, Dionysus, Isis and Osiris, Mithra, Cybele (the Magna Mater or Great Mother), and the Dea Syria—all of which promised purification and immortality. Within these cults some believed in death and resurrection; the concept of redemption through a mystical union with the deity; and doctrines of regeneration, baptism, and a sacred meal (Fai & Olagunju, 2022). Such striking parallels with early Christianity are at the very least intriguing, and for some, definitive:

To say Christianity was a mystery religion is not to say that Christianity is exactly like any other mystery religion, any more than any mystery religion was ‘exactly like’ any other ... If instead we define a mystery religion as any Hellenistic cult in which individual salvation was procured by a ritual initiation into a set of ‘mysteries’, the knowledge of which and participation in which were key to ensuring a blessed eternal life, then Christianity was demonstrably a mystery religion beyond any doubt. If we then expand that definition to include a set of specific features held in common by all other mystery

religions of the early Roman era, then Christianity becomes even more demonstrably a mystery religion ... (Carrier, 2023, p. 96)

Drummond does agree with Sugrue by acknowledging “a certain continuity between the so-called Mystery Religions of pre-Christian antiquity at their best and the life experience of Jesus...” (p. 112). He also points out that a number of readings refer to Jesus as the “Great Initiate,” who took “those last of the Brotherhood degrees with John [the Baptist, his cousin], the forerunner of Him” in the great pyramid at Giza in Egypt (5748-5).

Actually, the final initiation was only a portion of the education and training of Jesus into the mysteries. The readings describe journeys to other distant lands, including about a year in Persia studying with Junner, about three years in India learning from Kahanji, and finally with Zar in Egypt where he spent the longest period of study and initiation into the mysteries (749-2).

*(Q) Outline the teachings which were received in India.*

(A) Those cleansings of the body as related to preparation for strength in the physical, as well as in the mental man. In the travels and in Persia, the unison of forces as related to those teachings of that given in those of Zu and Ra. In Egypt, that which had been the basis of all the teachings in those of the temple, and the after actions of the crucifying of self in relationships to ideals that made for the abilities of carrying on that called to be done. In considering the life physical of any of the teachers, these should not be looked upon by students as unnatural conditions. (749-2)

In other words, many of the apparent “unnatural” activities attributed to Jesus in the scriptures (i.e., miracles) are actually natural abilities latent within each individual, that may be developed and utilized as the soul continues to evolve in its journey back to its Source. Thus the life and

teachings of Jesus are an example—a pattern that may be applied in the lives of every soul that incarnates into a flesh body on this planet. Furthermore, the readings point out that the soul entity that incarnated as Jesus had as many as thirty different incarnations previous to the lifetime as Jesus of Nazareth. Glenn Sanderfur's *Lives of the Master* (1988) is an excellent resource for delving into the reincarnational aspects of the Jesus story, exploring numerous connections to what might have been related to the “mysteries” that Jesus shared with his close disciples.

With respect to the broader context of the soul's journey (as described above), the soul entity that incarnated as the man Jesus is portrayed in the readings as the “soul who first went through the cycle of earthly lives to attain perfection, including perfection in the planetary lives”—which was a “voluntary mission of One Who was already perfected and returned to God, having accomplished His Oneness in other [celestial] planes and systems” (5749-14).

The celestial dimensions journeyed by the soul entity that incarnated as Jesus take on a curiously ironic tone when viewed through the lens of Richard Carrier's *Jesus from Outer Space: What the Earliest Christians Really Believed About Christ* (2020). Although Carrier asserts that the earliest Christians taught Jesus came from outer space, he points out that the accepted cosmology of that era taught that multiple spheres of heaven physically surrounded the earth. The heavenly realms were supported by gaseous or ether-filled spaces, extending all the way to the moon and beyond—all of which encompassed what today would be called “outer space.” Thus the most accurate translation of words that meant “the heavens” in antiquity is quite simply “outer space.”

What does this all mean? The most accurate description of earliest Christian thought is that Jesus was an angelic extraterrestrial, who descended from outer space to become a man, teach the gospel, suffer an atoning death, and rise again

to return to his throne among the stars, even more powerful than before. (Carrier, 2020, pp. 8–9)

So while Carrier is focused strictly on the mythological basis for the Jesus story in an effort to deny any factual historicity of traditional claims by early Christian authorities, the celestial context of his thesis resonates with the perspective espoused in the Cayce readings. Indeed, each soul's journey traces a similar celestial path. Each soul is a citizen of the universe. "Outer space" is the cosmic neighborhood in which the soul entity sojourns as it makes its way back to its Source. Apparently this is an archetype projected into the mythologies of many ancient mystery religions, as documented thoroughly by Carrier. Thus from the perspective of the readings, "Jesus from outer space" is not an exception, not a theological anomaly—rather the pattern for all souls to follow.

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#### 2.5.4 The Essenes and Jesus

According to the readings, the life and work of Jesus (including the origin of Christian mysteries) were part of a carefully planned and orchestrated group effort. Numerous readings provide a deeply complex and nuanced perspective on the early Christian movement, rooted in the role of the Essenes in providing the foundation for the teachings and example provided by the man Jesus described in the Christian Bible.

Sugrue's opinion that the Cayce readings represent a Christianized version of the mystery religions of ancient Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, India, and Greece is supported by the information on the Essenes as portrayed in the readings. Although historical sources differ somewhat as to details, the readings are remarkably consistent regarding the fundamental facts concerning the Essenes. Josephus informs us that the Jews at the time of Jesus belonged to one of three major sects: the Pharisees, Sadducees, or Essenes. His writings suggest that the Essenes believed in reincarnation

and communication with angels. The white-robed adherents of this reclusive sect practiced communal ownership of property. Much time was spent studying and copying Jewish texts that prophesied the end of days. According to Philo of Alexandria, the Essenes shared their possessions, lived by agriculture and handicrafts, rejected slavery, and believed in the immortality of the soul. Philo regarded the sect as “champions of Virtue.” Thus the Essenes were an ascetic group that emphasized purity and ritual cleansing (New World Encyclopedia, 2024). Based on these historic writings, it is generally believed that Essene groups and communities were probably scattered throughout Palestine, consisting of men and women with different rules of living but similar strict adherence to Mosaic law. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls several decades ago thrust the Essenes into the forefront of modern biblical scholarship. The scrolls are widely recognized as having been produced by Essenes living at Qumran as documented in the historical sources reviewed above (Britannica, 2024).

One of the fascinating manuscripts found at Qumran is known as the War Scroll, which describes a confrontation between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. This battle extends beyond conflict with the orthodox Jews in the Jerusalem temple to encompass conflict on a cosmic scale as the forces of good do battle with those of evil. Some have noted the similarity of this dualistic thinking to the Zoroastrian religion of the Persians to which the Jews would have been exposed during the exile in that distant land (Shapero, 1997). Some modern scholars have suggested that John the Baptist and Jesus may have been Essenes and that this mysterious Jewish sect could have had a profound effect on the origins of Christianity (Larson, 1977).

According to the Cayce readings, the Essenes studied the scriptures and other related documents but were also students of astrology, numerology, phrenology, and reincarnation (5749-8). In many respects, their practices

were a combination of Judaism and Zoroastrianism. The Essene movement included both Jews and Gentiles with connections to groups throughout the region extending to Persia and India to the east, and Egypt to the west. This accounts for the distant connections allowing Jesus to study in Egypt, Persia, and India.

The Essenes had felt severe persecution by the Sadducees, who denied the reality of reincarnation. The use of astrology, numerology, and phrenology was also problematic for these Essenes, who tended to keep a low profile, at times bordering on secrecy. The Cayce readings observe that the Essenes were aware of the precession of the equinoxes and the astrological change to a new cycle—the Piscean age associated with the coming of the messiah (5749-8).

When asked about the names used by the Essenes, Cayce acknowledged that the “various groups” sometimes were known by various names, much as we find today with the diverse denominations of modern Protestant Christianity. However, even with local differences, the foundation of Essene beliefs focused on prophecy, especially the predictions of Elijah and Samuel.

Thus, based on the readings, the Qumran Essenes were probably a subgroup in a larger, more diverse movement with cross-cultural ties. For example, one could not expect to understand the whole of complex religious movements (such as Christianity or Islam) by studying the life and work of inhabitants of a single monastery.

With regard to mysteries and possible connections of the early Christians with the mystery cults and religions of that era, the Essene influence is intrinsic to the development of Jesus prior to his public ministry. Perhaps the greatest mystery of Christianity as explained in the readings is that of the man Jesus himself who became Christ—embodying the mysteries of

the soul's journey back to its Source—for that is the ultimate meaning of “Christ” in the readings. Seeking clarification of the term “Christ Consciousness” (used in many readings), Sugrue posed this question in his reading for the philosophy chapter of his book:

*(Q) Should the Christ-Consciousness be described as the awareness within each soul, imprinted in pattern on the mind and waiting to be awakened by the will, of the soul's oneness with God?*

*(A) Correct. That's the idea exactly! (5749-14)*

Thus the deeply mysterious and theologically complex meaning of Christ is translated into common language that can be applied in daily living. It is the innate (a priori) potential for oneness with God (as the purpose for being) that is echoed throughout the applied philosophy of the readings. Christ is the term associated with the man (Jesus) who attained this consciousness and taught it by precept and example so that each soul may attain to that level of oneness.

Philosophically, the concept of “Christ Consciousness” (as portrayed in the readings) can be regarded epistemologically as a procedural way of knowing. It is not just about belief; it is a method of relating the self to the Whole. Drummond's scholarly book *Unto the Churches: Jesus Christ, Christianity and the Edgar Cayce Readings* delves deeply into the mysteries of the life and teachings of Jesus (including extensive background on the Essene involvement in that historical process) and is highly recommended for those who wish to pursue the subject further.

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### 2.5.5 Teleology

teleology, (from Greek telos, “end,” and logos, “reason”), explanation by reference to some purpose, end, goal, or function. Traditionally, it was also described as final causality

... by Aristotle when he declared that a full explanation of anything must consider its final cause ... (Britannica, 2023)

The readings are adamant about purpose, especially “the purpose or cause of being” (826-11) and the creation of the universe “for a definite purpose” (2424-1). This stands in radical contrast to modern scientific materialism that denies purpose in either.

First Cause is the term introduced by Aristotle to explain how things in nature exist in a chain of causation stretching backward in time. Aristotle believed that there must be a First Cause because such causal chains cannot be infinite in length. For Aristotle the First Cause is the “Prime Mover” — a deity of “pure form” (i.e., without any matter). The First Cause is a self-caused being, unlike all other beings because those other beings are other-caused. Thus the First Cause (as a necessary being) has always existed from eternity (New World Encyclopedia, 2009).

Nearly 250 readings include the term “first cause,” usually in the context of explicit teleological references to the purpose of being and creation. For example, reading 262-52 was requested with the express purpose of explaining the “Oneness of all Force” in “logical, systematically arranged statements.” The term first cause is italicized for emphasis:

The basis, then: “... God is One!” From this premise we would reason, that ... God, the first cause, the first principle, the first movement, IS! ... activities that are in accord with the Creative Force or first cause – its laws, then – is to be one with the source, or equal with yet separate from that first cause ... In the beginning there was the force of attraction and the force that repelled. Hence, in man’s consciousness he becomes aware of what is known as the atomic or cellular form of movement about which there becomes nebulous activity. And this is the lowest form (as man would designate) that’s in active forces in his experience. Yet this very movement that separates the forces in atomic influence is the first cause, or the

manifestation of that called God in the material plane! Hence we find worlds, suns, stars, nebulae, and whole solar systems MOVING from a first cause. (262-52)

Thus is laid out the purpose of being (“to be one with the source, or equal with yet separate from that first cause”) and identification of God as the first cause responsible for the creation of the cosmos. For Aristotle, first cause relates to change and motion, which he also identified as efficient cause (Falcon, 2023). With that in mind, here is another example of first cause teleology in the readings, emphasizing the animation, movement, and force of spirit as an efficient cause in the creation of life and the visible manifestation of the material universe:

Then Life, or the manifestation of that which is in motion, is receiving its impulse from a first cause. What is the first cause? That which has brought, is bringing, all life into being; or animation, or force, or power, or movement, or consciousness, as to either the material plane, the mental plane, the spiritual plane. Hence it is the force that is called Lord, God, Jehovah, Yah, Ohum, Abba and the like. Hence the activity that is seen of any element in the material plane is a manifestation of that first cause. One Force ... this rate of activity of a first cause or first principle that is in movement, and unless in movement is not capable of being manifested in a material world. For, the movement itself (to make applicable another law) DRAWS about a nucleus the positive and negative forces as to bring into visibility from one sphere or realm to another that force or power. (254-67)

Certainly such explicit teleology of creation by a divine first cause is relevant to contemporary debates about intelligent design and scientific evolutionary theory. Philosophically, the argument from causation (as a proof for God) goes back to theists such as the medieval scholar Thomas Aquinas (Pasnau, 2023). The readings’ use of the term first cause is

generally consistent with such reasoning; however, in the readings the emphasis is on explaining rather than convincing or proving by argument. In that respect the readings more closely resemble the approach of Swinburne, wherein the existence of God is a matter to be tested or verified by observing the world and life with an open mind (Swinburne, 2023). Ultimately, the readings encourage application to provide proof—that is, if the information provided is put into practice in daily life, the experience will support the premise of a first cause as creator and companion.

The other Aristotelian concept relevant to teleology in the readings is “final cause,” which addresses the “sake of which something is done or takes place” (Falcon, 2023). In the readings, the term final cause is not explicitly mentioned, yet the idea is readily apparent, encompassing the ultimate plan or end goal for creation and created beings. This covers notions such as destiny, heaven, hell, afterlife, eternity, and continuity of consciousness. We have already explored some of this in terms of reincarnation, planetary sojourns, the nature of time and space, free will vs. determinism, etc. Here the emphasis is on the ultimate aim or goal of creation and what that experience might be like for souls. The readings persistently emphasize the purposefulness of the soul’s journey back to its source in oneness, yet preserving its identity:

Life is real, life is earnest! yet it is not all of life to live, nor all of death to die – for with the thoughts and the deeds done in the mind and the body, these are that builded by the entity, or body, and must be met, and an account given of those things rendered in the body and the mind. For the soul liveth, and is a portion of the Creative Energy, and it returns to the Whole, yet reserving in itself the oneness in the ability to know itself individual, yet a portion of the Whole. (136-70)

Oneness with God is a recognized quality of mystical experience. Throughout the ages, mystical accounts commonly describe a timeless

state of ego dissolution, when all sense of a personal self dissolves into that which is Universal and Eternal (Grace, 2011, p. 147).

The readings are inclusive of such mystical experiences and yet nuanced when discussing oneness with the Divine. It is important to keep in mind that the “personal self” (i.e., personality) that may dissolve into the Universal is an aspect of the soul entity that incarnates on earth in a flesh body. The readings recognize levels (so to speak) of selfhood that comprise the “selves of an entity” (5754-2). One of the major challenges to “know thyself” is recognition of the higher levels of the self (e.g., higher self or inner self) that the readings associate with the individuality of the soul. Making personality one with individuality is a major step in soul development. So it is important to identify exactly what is meant when speaking of dissolution of a personal self into the Universal or Eternal.

Assuming that we are speaking of the soul entity itself (and not a superficial layer of personality), for some soul entities a complete dissolution into the Whole (with loss of personal identity) is the eventual endpoint of the soul’s total experience. But this is not the ideal, not the plan in a larger sense. The readings insist that all souls make it back to their Source, but some may not develop to the point of full companionship—there may be a loss of identity. The goal or purpose of existence is: “knowing itself to be itself and yet one with the Father, never losing its identity.” However, when the soul is determined to be totally willful in total self-centeredness, it may “lose its identity ... death indeed – separation from the Creative Force. The soul may never be lost, for it returns to the One Force, but knows not itself to be itself any more” (3357-1). Thus:

Know that no entity enters a material experience by chance.  
Souls are purposeful in their seeking... For the will is that gift  
of the Creator, enabling a soul to be one with God – or in its  
own wisdom or own foolishness – to destroy its own self. (3486-1)

The loss of personal identity is familiar in philosophical thinking about death, even for those espousing some form of transcendent union with God. Secular thinking on death tends to emphasize nonbeing—physical death is the end with no inherent purpose beyond a single lifetime lived. In contrast, the readings regard the destiny of the soul as a process of growth and development termed evolution.

This same dynamic is reflected in nature as change over time. The energy of spirit is the source of matter and continues to enter and change, to evolve toward the destiny of becoming one with its source. Thus the destiny of the soul is intertwined with “all of creation”:

Then, the Destiny of the soul – as of all creation – is to be one with Him; continually growing, growing, for that association. What seeth man in nature? What seeth man in those influences that he becomes aware of? Change, ever; change, ever. Man hath termed this evolution, growth, life itself; but it continues to enter. That force, that power which manifests itself in separating – or as separate forces and influences in the earth, continues to enter; and then change; continuing to pour in and out. (262-88)

Thus humans (and indeed all souls, whether incarnate or not) with the whole of creation itself are in a process of becoming—of evolution as purposeful development in the direction of oneness with the Creative Energy called God:

Then man, the creation in itself, that combining all of the forms of creation so far created, that that same force might understand by having passed through that same creation as was necessary to bring up to that dividing point between man and animal and plant, and mineral kingdom – GIVEN then the will, and the soul, that it might make itself One with that Creation. Now, that will, then, is heredity. That environment is the evolution. There you have reincarnation, there you have evolution, there you have the mineral kingdom, the plant

kingdom, the animal kingdom, each developing towards its own source, yet all belonging and becoming one in that force as it develops itself to become one with the Creative Energy, and one with the God. (900-340)

Philosophically, the soul's return to the Source is the process of ontological reintegration and the realization of unity. In conjunction with self-development, this is the purpose of being—to know yourself to be yourself and yet one with the Whole. This is the essence of teleology in the readings—companionship and expression as the reason for creation.

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#### 2.5.6 The Problem of Evil

If God is good, why is there evil and suffering in the world? This question is particularly troublesome in situations involving apparent innocent suffering, as frequently occurs when multitudes are killed or injured in natural disasters or babies are born with serious congenital conditions. If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, how can this be allowed to happen? If God is NOT all-knowing and all-powerful, what kind of God is that, anyway?

A common religious answer is that God indeed is good, all-knowing, and all-powerful, but has reasons for allowing evil and suffering to exist that are beyond human understanding. Thus ultimately, it becomes a matter of faith and acceptance. Historically, philosophical thinking on the problem of evil has been the basis of a positive argument for atheism, usually in the form of either a logical argument or evidential proof. A simple logical argument might look like this:

- If God exists, then God is omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect.
- If God is omnipotent, then God has the power to eliminate all evil.

- If God is omniscient, then God knows when evil exists.
- If God is morally perfect, then God has the desire to eliminate all evil.
- Evil exists.
- If evil exists and God exists, then either God doesn't have the power to eliminate all evil, or doesn't know when evil exists, or doesn't have the desire to eliminate all evil.
- Therefore, God doesn't exist. (Tooley, 2021)

If God lacks the qualities of omniscience or omnipotence, then the logical problem of evil can be resolved—it depends upon one's concept of God. The readings make it clear that God is limited in both omniscience and omnipotence—and capable of suffering (see Section 2.5.1.4 above). Such resolutions to the problem of evil can also be found in process theology and open theism that limit God's omnipotence or omniscience based on free will in others (e.g., Viney, 2022; Rissler, 2024).

The other primary argument in favor of atheism (based on the problem of evil) is evidential:

... the evidential version of the problem of evil (also called the a posteriori version and the inductive version), which seeks to show that the existence of evil, although logically consistent with the existence of God, counts against the truth of theism. As with the logical problem, evidential formulations may be based on the sheer existence of evil, or certain instances, types, amounts, or distributions of evil... Evidential arguments purport to show that evil counts against theism in the sense that the existence of evil lowers the probability that God exists. (Trakakis, 2024)

To address the evidential argument, it is helpful to recognize that evil encompasses both moral evil caused by free human actions and natural

evil caused by natural phenomena such as disease and earthquakes (Sherry, 2024). Moral evil results from the misuse of free will on the part of a moral agent so that the agent becomes morally blameworthy for the resultant evil. Thus moral evil includes specific acts of intentional wrongdoing (e.g., lying, murdering, defects in character such as dishonesty and greed). In contrast, natural evil results from the operation of natural processes, in which case no human being can be held morally accountable for the resultant evil. Common examples of natural evil are natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes that result in enormous suffering and loss of life, illnesses such as cancer and dementia, and disabilities such as blindness and deafness (Trakakis, 2024).

In the Cayce readings, the primary argument against moral evil (as evidence against the existence of God) is the free will defense. The free will defense claims that evil is caused not by God but by human beings, who must be allowed to choose evil if they are to have free will. It also provides some explanation for natural evil in cases involving human factors such as greed or thoughtlessness (Sherry, 2024). Thus the readings insist that evil is not an ontological substance, but rather a disorder or misapplication of will within the great chain of being.

With regard to natural evil (apart from potential human contributions), the readings point out that when a soul incarnates into any realm (be it a flesh body on planet earth or in some other form elsewhere in the cosmos), the soul entity must take on the challenges of that environment.

Yet, when one is in ANY environ, one is subject to the laws of same ... (559-7)

As to urges latent and manifested from sojourns in the earth, as well as those [planetary] interims between – so long as an entity enters into this solar system of urges, it is subject to the laws thereof. (3645-1)

### 2.5.6.1 Karma and Reincarnation

Karma is an ancient concept which refers to the law of cause and effect. The word karma itself means “action,” but implies action and reaction. All actions have consequences, some immediately, some delayed, others in future incarnations. Thus humans bear responsibility for all their actions and cannot escape the consequences, although bad actions may be expiated by good actions (Reichenbach, 1988).

Non-theistic religions have also addressed evil, including its nature and existence, specifically with respect to suffering as it relates to karma and reincarnation:

For Hindus and Buddhists, these considerations [of evil] are rooted in karma and rebirth.... In its popular formulations, rebirth is the view that the conscious self transmigrates from one physical body to the next after death. Each human being has lived former lives ... Rebirth is connected to the doctrine of karma. As typically understood within Hinduism and Buddhism, karma literally means “deed” or “action”—what one does ... one reaps the good and bad consequences of her or his actions, either in this life or in another life. Reincarnation and karma seem to offer a better account of evil and suffering than does theism. (Meister, 2024)

The Cayce readings present a panoramic view of the human condition which parallels Hinduism and Buddhism. From this perspective humans are regarded as immortal beings evolving toward unity with the divine source of being. This view includes reincarnation and the ability of each individual to choose certain key probabilities concerning a particular lifetime. Naturally, genetics plays an important role because heredity provides a relatively stable and predictable means of having the necessary life experiences to encounter one’s personal karma.

In many cases where readings were given for persons inflicted with serious congenital disorders, the readings would comment that it was a karmic condition. In clinical terms, this meant that it would be a particularly difficult condition to heal and that the spiritual aspects of the experience would play a crucial role in achieving a constructive result. In such cases, the readings would often observe, “The entity is meeting self,” and caution the person to use the experience as a stepping-stone rather than a stumbling block. In such cases involving children, karma was usually a family affair where the care of the afflicted person was a karmic responsibility of the parents or guardians. From a theoretical perspective, karma provides a link among key concepts such as choice, responsibility, and the continuity of consciousness.

Karma is cause oft of hereditary conditions so called. Then indeed does the soul inherit that it has builded in its experience with his fellow man in material relationships. Q. What is the cause of my condition [cancer] and what treatment is recommended? A. The basic cause is karmic. (3313-1)

In interpreting the physical and mental disturbances here, the sources and basis for these are in the karmic conditions of this body. To those responsible for this body: Rather than feeling it is a calamity, know that it is an opportunity to meet not only those things in self, but to help this individual entity or soul in search for its oneness with the Creative Forces, or God. (5044-1)

Section 4.3 (The Aesthetics of Truth) explores the aesthetic aspects of karma with regard to “the beauty of understanding” and “the BEAUTY of transition” in a case involving a six-year-old girl with terminal illness—what might be considered a worst-case scenario from a purely medical or even humanistic perspective. Yet, karma can be part of a greater context of healing when the soul and its journey are considered.

## Summary

Religion is intrinsic to the philosophy of the readings. Grounded in a complex concept of God that has elements of traditional Christianity, the readings' philosophy of religion definitely stretches those boundaries to the limit. Most notably, reincarnation as past earthly lives as well as between-life sojourns in other (nonphysical, astral) realms overrides any simplistic notions of an afterlife in heaven and hell (unless one takes heaven literally as outer space). Likewise, the man Jesus (who attained Christ consciousness) has a cosmic identity well suited for embodying oneness with the Divine in precept and example. The soul—its creation, journey, and destiny—is part of a larger origin story that includes creation of the universe and the evolution of all entities therein in the mind of God, making their way back to the Source.

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## 2.6 Philosophy of Science

Philosophy of science is the study of the assumptions, foundations, and implications of scientific inquiry, addressing questions such as what distinguishes science from other modes of knowledge, how scientific progress is achieved, and what the relationship is between scientific theories and the reality they describe (Okasha, 2002). As a method, science represents one of humanity's most powerful and reliable tools for understanding the natural world. Yet, as emphasized in the discussion of epistemology (Section 1), every method of knowing rests upon deeper philosophical assumptions. Science is no different. It presupposes a world that is orderly, intelligible, and accessible to human investigation through observation and reason. The Cayce readings affirm this presupposition but insist that scientific knowledge, as typically practiced, captures only a portion of reality. Human experience unfolds across body, mind, and spirit, and any adequate philosophy of science must integrate these ontological domains if it is to reflect the oneness underlying creation.

The Cayce readings consistently offer a holistic philosophy of science—one that honors empirical methodology while insisting that the natural world, the human being, and consciousness itself are permeated by purpose, meaning, and spiritual causation. This integrative view corresponds in notable ways with Alfred North Whitehead's critique of scientific materialism in *Science and the Modern World* (1925), which argues that experience, value, and creativity are fundamental aspects of the cosmos and cannot be adequately accounted for by a physics that treats matter in motion as the ultimate category of reality. Whitehead's process philosophy, alongside the pragmatism of William James and the holistic physics of David Bohm, serves as the primary philosophical context for the general considerations developed in Section 2.6.1.

The philosophy of science has roots in ancient Greek philosophy and developed as an autonomous discipline during the nineteenth century, reaching its mature institutional form in the twentieth century alongside the emergence of scientific methodology as itself a subject of rigorous analysis. The philosopher Philip Kitcher has drawn a useful distinction between what he calls the philosophy of the special sciences and general philosophy of science:

Some philosophers continue to work on problems that are continuous with the natural sciences, exploring, for example, the character of space and time or the fundamental features of life. They contribute to the philosophy of the special sciences, a field with a long tradition of distinguished work in the philosophy of physics and with more-recent contributions in the philosophy of biology and the philosophy of psychology and neuroscience .... General philosophy of science, by contrast, seeks to illuminate broad features of the sciences, continuing the inquiries begun in Aristotle's discussions of logic and method. (Kitcher, 2024)

This section draws upon Kitcher's distinction by approaching the philosophy of science in two stages. The first, through general considerations grounded in the philosophical domains explored throughout this text (Section 2.6.1), addresses what a philosophy of science consistent with the Cayce readings looks like as a broad intellectual orientation: holistic, empirically open, and attentive to the spiritual and mental dimensions of the natural world. The second stage examines certain special sciences that are particularly prominent in the Cayce readings—physics, biology, health science, transpersonal psychology, and anthropology (Sections 2.6.2.1 through 2.6.2.5)—considering how the readings engage each field and what a holistic philosophy of science would contribute to each. The concluding subsection (Section 2.6.3) considers the work of Thomas Kuhn on scientific revolutions and asks whether the shift toward a more holistic and integrative science—one that the Cayce readings have anticipated—may represent the kind of fundamental change in scientific practice that Kuhn called a paradigm shift.

### 2.6.1 General Considerations in the Philosophy of Science

Generally, the Cayce readings are open and favorable to the pursuit of science, using the term in over 500 readings. The readings thus represent a positive engagement with the scientific enterprise, affirming its value while proposing an expansion of its foundations. The central tension is that mainstream science operates within a materialistic monism that the readings regard as incomplete. Viewed from the perspective of the readings, modern science typically limits its investigation to the physical results of spiritual and mental interaction. This myopia can distort the findings of science, leaving significant gaps—most notably the failure to adequately explain consciousness and the full scope of human experience,

including the transpersonal aspects traditionally regarded as mystical or psychic.

From the standpoint of the applied philosophy of the readings, the scientific endeavor necessarily involves the investigation of the interactive relationship of spirit, mind, and matter in the human experience—often exemplified within the context of health science. Historically, this is the basis for the holistic medicine movement of the twentieth century, which expanded into almost every area of contemporary life. In popular culture, the term has become so widely used as to feel worn out. But in a formal philosophical work, holism remains a precise technical term for the theory that parts of a whole are in intimate interconnection and cannot be understood in isolation from one another. That concept has been at work throughout this manuscript since the Introduction and serves as its central thematic thread. Thus, in general terms, the Cayce readings' approach to the philosophy of science can be regarded as holistic—integrating the triune model of spirit, mind, and body into each aspect of the scientific method as it is applied.

Know that all that materializes must first happen in spirit, and the law of cause and effect ever remains. (3412-2)

The holistic model of the readings resonates strongly with important twentieth-century thinkers who have recognized the limitations of materialistic science and advocated for a much broader and more expansive view of reality. Three prominent examples illustrate the potential of such an approach and provide a philosophical context for the discussion of special sciences that follows.

### **Whitehead's Process Philosophy**

There is a fascinating Neoplatonic resonance between the metaphysics of the Cayce readings and that expounded by process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead in *Religion in the Making*. Notably, mind mediates “the

various relationships within the real physical and spiritual worlds” (Whitehead, 1926, p. 102). “A mental occasion is the ultimate fact in the spiritual world, just as physical occasion ... is an ultimate fact in the physical world. There is an essential reference from one world to the other” (p. 103).

Furthermore, writing in *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead observes that the mental activity of philosophy is “the architect of the buildings of spirit, and it is also their solvent:—and the spiritual precedes the material” (Whitehead, 1925, p. viii). Thus mind is the builder (and destroyer), but the process of creation begins with the energy of spirit. Physical matter actualized as the cosmos is the result via an ongoing interactive process of creative expression, providing the opportunity for relations at all levels—from atomic to cosmic, from the spiritual to the physical. Whitehead’s evocative images harmonize with the readings’ fundamental axiom: “spirit is life; the mind is the builder; the physical is the result” (394-1). Essentially, Whitehead posits an architect-builder with spirit preceding the material result in the process of physical creation.

Of particular relevance to the philosophy of science, Whitehead’s critique of what he termed “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness”—the error of treating the abstract constructs of materialist science as if they constituted the whole of reality—maps directly onto the readings’ insistence that mainstream science captures only the physical result of a deeper spiritual and mental process. For Whitehead, as for the readings, science conducted within a purely materialistic framework mistakes a useful partial description of reality for the thing itself. A philosophy of science adequate to the full scope of nature must therefore acknowledge and investigate the spiritual and mental dimensions from which physical reality proceeds.

### **James’s Holistic Pragmatism**

The pragmatic philosophy of William James closely parallels the holistic and applied approach of the Cayce readings (see Appendix B) by treating consciousness, spirituality, and altered states as legitimate data for inquiry rather than as anomalies to be excluded in the name of objectivity. The readings themselves recommended James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* on multiple occasions (e.g., reading 307-4), an endorsement consistent with the participatory and perspectival epistemology described in Section 1.1. Like the readings, James emphasized connectedness beyond the ego and argued that such experiences are universal enough to warrant rigorous scientific study. This holistic approach does not weaken science; instead, it enlarges science's domain by allowing it to investigate the full range of human experience, including religious and mystical life.

From the standpoint of philosophy of science, the resulting picture is not anti-scientific. Rather, James's pragmatism suggests that scientific theories should be evaluated by the breadth and depth of the experiential realities they illuminate, while holism insists that those realities are embedded in systems of relation that cannot be understood by fragmentation alone. A holistic philosophy of science can therefore claim James as a precursor: science should remain empirically disciplined, but it should also remain open to the integrative study of mind, meaning, and interconnection. A later subsection explores James's work from the standpoint of transpersonal psychology, particularly as it pertains to the scientific study of parapsychology (Section 2.6.2.4).

### **Bohm's Implicate Order**

That in the material world is a shadow of that in the celestial  
or spiritual world. (524- 2)

David Bohm's writings offer a powerful holistic critique of fragmentary thinking in both physics and epistemology. In *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Bohm argues that the apparent separateness of things belongs to the

explicate order, while a deeper implicate order expresses an underlying unbroken totality in which entities are enfolded within one another (Bohm, 1980; Bohm & Hiley, 1993). This view supports a philosophy of science that treats wholes, relations, and process as ontologically basic rather than as convenient byproducts of reductionist analysis. There is a strong resonance with the Cayce readings' consistent emphasis on the relations between parts and the whole, conceptualized as unity and oneness. In particular, Bohm's "notion of a higher-dimensional reality which projects into lower-dimensional elements" resonates strongly with the Cayce readings' descriptions of hyperdimensionality, mind/body interactions, and unity—as evident in "the higher-dimensional ground in which mind and body are ultimately one ... the manifest order derives from the ground of the implicate order." (Bohm, 1980, p. 265)

Thus Bohm's work connects strongly with the holistic philosophy of the readings, though the relationship is suggestive rather than direct. The Cayce material repeatedly emphasizes the integration of mind, body, and spirit, the importance of spiritual development, and the idea that healing requires attention to the whole person rather than a symptom-based model alone. That emphasis resonates with Bohm's insistence that fragmentation is itself a source of confusion and conflict, and with his concern that human beings habitually divide reality into abstract compartments that obscure deeper unity. Both frameworks privilege wholeness, relationality, and transformation over reductive analysis.

Yet the two perspectives belong to different epistemic registers. Bohm's holism emerges from physics and a critique of scientific fragmentation, while the Cayce readings belong to a spiritual-healing tradition that employs revelatory discourse and practical guidance rather than formal physical theory. Still, they converge in a shared philosophical intuition: reality is most adequately understood when the parts are interpreted within a larger dynamic Whole, and human well-being depends on

recovering that larger context. In the language of philosophy of science, Bohm offers a rigorous metaphysical and methodological rationale for holism, while the readings provide a spiritually framed holistic vision that echoes some of the same anti-fragmentary impulses from within the lived experience of illness, healing, and soul development.

### **Summary**

In general, a philosophy of science consistent with the Cayce readings is holistic, integrating the triune model of spirit, mind, and body into each aspect of the scientific method as it is applied and practiced. Whitehead provides process-philosophical grounding for this position, demonstrating that the spiritual precedes the material in physical creation and that science confined to materialistic abstractions commits the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. James broadens the empirical scope of science to include consciousness, religious experience, and altered states as legitimate objects of rigorous inquiry—a precedent the readings themselves explicitly endorsed. Bohm supplies a physics-based critique of reductionism, showing that a fragmented approach to reality obscures the implicate wholeness that the readings place at the heart of their ontology. Together, these three thinkers establish the philosophical legitimacy of the holistic approach that the subsequent subsections apply to each of the special sciences.

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### **2.6.2 Special Sciences**

The Cayce readings engage with almost every area of special science—the term used by philosophers such as Kitcher (1993) to designate particular scientific disciplines as distinct from the general philosophy of science. The following subsections focus on the fields most relevant to understanding the applied philosophy of the readings as a whole.

A consistent theme running through each of these subsections is the holistic triune of spiritual, mental, and physical dimensions. Soul involvement is especially prominent in biology, health science, psychology, and anthropology—fields where development is a central scientific concern. Soul development is at the core of the philosophical foundation of this text: the “reason for creation” (companionship and expression) and the “purpose of being” (individuality in oneness, a relational ontology) necessarily inform how the readings approach every branch of empirical inquiry.

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#### 2.6.2.1 Physics

Physics is the most fundamental of the natural sciences, concerned with the basic constituents of matter and energy and the laws governing their interactions. The Cayce readings do not propose a rival physics in the technical sense—they offer no competing field equations or mathematical formalism. What they do offer is a metaphysical framework within which the questions physics asks receive a broader context: questions about the ultimate nature of matter, the origin of physical law, the relationship of energy to consciousness, and the structure of space. Four themes in the readings carry particular relevance for the philosophy of physics: holism at the atomic scale, the ontological unity underlying the physicist’s pursuit of a unified theory, vibration as a creative principle, and the readings’ concept of the relativity of force.

#### **Holism and the Physics of Mind in Matter**

Although modern mainstream physics proceeds without reference to religious or spiritual categories, the holistic physics implicit in the Cayce readings places the divine at the center of material reality—not as a supernatural intervention in natural law but as the ontological source from

which physical law itself proceeds. The readings describe the creative energy of God in explicitly electromagnetic terms:

For materiality IS — or matter IS — that demonstration and manifestation of the units of positive and negative energy, or electricity, or God. (412-9)

Know then that the force in nature that is called electrical or electricity is that same force ye worship as Creative or God in action! (1299-1)

This identification of creative force with electromagnetic activity is not presented in the readings as metaphor but as ontological description: the physical forces that physics studies are the outward expression of a deeper spiritual source. Spirit is first cause; mind shapes and patterns that energy; physical matter is the result—“spirit is life; the mind is the builder; the physical is the result” (394-1). The readings thus extend this causal sequence from the cosmic scale down to the smallest constituents of matter.

The readings insist that spirit, mind, will, and consciousness permeate matter at the atomic scale—a position that resonates with the contemporary philosophical interest in panpsychism discussed in Section 2.4.4. The readings speak of the “mind of each atom” (137-81), the “consciousness of each atomic force” (2097-1), and “the awareness of the divine that lies within each atom, each cell of the body” (3384-2). The readings even call attention to “the will of that atomic force” (136-63) and note that “each atom is made up of urges” (262-78)—a striking suggestion that agency, however minimal, extends to the subatomic level. This culminates in a remarkable reading that scales the principle from atom to cosmos:

Every cell of the body is a universe in itself, with all the elements necessary for the creating of, the bringing into being

of that necessary. For is not the human body the effect of all of creation? (1158-22)

The philosophical implication is significant for the philosophy of physics: if mind and spirit are genuinely operative at the atomic level, then a physics that brackets consciousness as irrelevant to its equations is not merely methodologically incomplete—it is ontologically truncated. This is the holistic critique the readings direct at materialistic science, echoed in the work of Whitehead and Bohm discussed in Section 2.6.1.

### **Unity and the Metaphysical Basis of Unification**

The pursuit of a unified field theory—and its more ambitious successor, a Theory of Everything (TOE)—represents one of the defining intellectual projects of modern theoretical physics. Since Einstein's general relativity unified space, time, and gravity in a single geometric framework, physicists have sought to extend that unification to encompass the remaining fundamental forces: electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force, and the weak nuclear force. String theory and M-theory are among the most developed contemporary attempts at such unification (Greene, 2000). The goal remains elusive, but the conviction that such unity must exist—that the universe is not an arbitrary assembly of unrelated forces—drives the entire enterprise.

The Cayce readings approach this same question from the opposite direction and reach the same conclusion by a different route. Where physics seeks unity through mathematical formalism, the readings assert it as an ontological fact grounded in the nature of the Creator:

The first lesson for SIX MONTHS should be ONE – One – One – ONE; Oneness of God, oneness of man's relation, oneness of force, oneness of time, oneness of purpose, ONENESS in every effort – Oneness – Oneness! (900-429)

God, the first cause, the first principle, the first movement, IS!  
... In the manifestation of all power, force, motion, vibration,  
that which impels, that which detracts, is in its essence of one  
force, one source, in its elemental form. (262-52)

From this perspective, the readings provide what might be called a metaphysical guarantee for the scientific pursuit of unification: the forces must ultimately be unified because they derive from a single conscious Source. The physicist's intuition that the universe is mathematically coherent reflects, in the readings' view, a spiritual truth already present at the foundation of reality. While physics attempts to describe the "how" through forces and fields, the readings address the "why" through the inherent nature of the First Cause. The scientific search for a TOE can therefore be understood, from the standpoint of the readings, as the process of mathematically documenting a spiritual truth that is established as fundamental ontological law.

This insight offers a productive contribution to the philosophy of science. Debates about scientific realism—about whether the entities postulated by our best theories genuinely exist, and whether the success of physics in unifying phenomena is evidence of something deep about reality—are typically conducted entirely within a materialist framework. The readings suggest that the success of unification efforts is not merely a feature of the mathematical structure of the universe but reflects its ontological origin in a single Source. A holistic philosophy of science informed by the readings would expect unification, and would interpret its progressive achievement as confirmation that scientific investigation is approaching, by empirical means, a truth that the readings state directly.

### **Vibration as Creative Principle**

The Cayce readings posit vibration as a foundational, all-encompassing principle underlying matter, mind, and spirit—not merely a physical

phenomenon but the primary mode by which the creative force of the universe expresses itself:

All force is vibration, as all comes from one central vibration and its activity into, out from, and its own creative forces. (900-422)

Electricity or vibration is that same energy, same power, ye call God. Not that God is an electric light or an electric machine, but that vibration that is creative is of that same energy as life itself. (2828-4)

These readings assert a monistic ontological framework in which all existence—matter, energy, mind, and spirit—is a differentiated manifestation of a single vibrational source. The full metaphysical implications of this are explored in the discussion of ontology (Section 2.1) and the readings' concept of spirit as First Cause. Here the more limited question is whether this concept bears any instructive relationship to the role of vibration in modern physics.

In contemporary physics, vibration is not merely one phenomenon among others—it is increasingly recognized as fundamental to the nature of matter itself. At the level of quantum field theory, all elementary particles are understood as excitations—that is, vibrational states—of underlying quantum fields that permeate space (Griffiths, 2008). A photon is an excitation of the electromagnetic field; an electron is an excitation of the electron field. The particle picture familiar from classical physics gives way, at this level, to a picture of reality as composed of fields in various modes of vibration. String theory extends this further, proposing that even the quantum fields themselves arise from the vibrational modes of unimaginably small one-dimensional strings (Greene, 2000). In this framework, different particles correspond to different vibrational frequencies of the same fundamental strings—a picture in which the variety of matter reduces to variety of vibration.

The point of contact with the readings is not that string theory and the readings are saying the same thing—the theoretical frameworks are entirely different in kind, one mathematical and empirical, the other metaphysical and revelatory. The point of contact is that both locate the deepest level of physical reality in something vibrational and dynamic rather than in static material substance. The readings' assertion that "each planetary influence vibrates at a different rate of vibration" (539-2; see also Todeschi, 2007) also suggests a cosmic extension of this principle beyond the subatomic scale—a claim that belongs more properly to the discussions of hyperdimensions and planetary sojourns addressed below and in Section 2.5.2.1.

### **The Relativity of Force**

The readings make frequent reference to what they call the "law of relativity" or the "relativity of force." It is important to establish at the outset that this designation does not refer to Einstein's theory of relativity in any technical sense. The two uses of the word share only an etymological root and a broad intuition that nothing in the universe exists in absolute isolation. Einstein's general theory of relativity (1916) is a specific mathematical framework describing gravitation as the geometric curvature of four-dimensional spacetime produced by mass and energy—a theory with precise empirical predictions and extraordinary experimental confirmation (Norton, 2021). The readings' "relativity of force" is an ontological principle of universal interdependence that encompasses mechanical, astrological, and personal systems alike. Treating these as parallel accounts of the same phenomenon would be misleading; they are better understood as two distinct ideas that share a name and a common philosophical motivation.

The readings articulate their concept of relativity in the following terms:

*(Q) Explain in detail the law of relativity.*

(A) This law of relativity we find, as has been given, relates to the law as was set in motion in the beginning, when the Universe as a whole came into existence. As related to the mind, and to the earth conditions, we find first beginning with that of the earth in its position, with the other elements about same. These became the law of the relative position regarding the spheres, and as there begun the lowest form of the animal and mineral, and vegetable, forces in the earth, we begun with all relative condition regarding those conditions from other spheres, and their relations to same. (900-24)

What the readings describe here is a principle of universal internal relations: every element of the cosmos stands in a constitutive relationship to every other element, with those relationships extending from the physical to the astrological to the personal. This is ontological holism rather than a geometric theory of spacetime. Other readings elaborate that the concept involves “vibratory force and gravity” and that “every atom in the Universe has its relative relation with every other atom”—a statement closer to Leibniz’s monadological interconnectedness or Bohm’s implicate order than to Einstein’s field equations. Crucially, the readings extend this principle into the human realm, positing that human development consists in the understanding and application of the “relativity of all forces”—making this principle ontological, psychological, and ethical simultaneously.

The philosophical value of holding these two concepts alongside each other—while keeping their differences clear—lies in what each illuminates about the other’s limitations. Einstein’s relativity, for all its elegance, treats the mind of the observer as external to the field equations: the observer’s frame of reference affects what is measured, but the observer’s consciousness is not itself a physical variable in the theory. The readings’ relativity of force, by contrast, includes consciousness, purpose, and

spiritual attunement as active variables in any complete account of reality. This constitutes a philosophical challenge to the methodological naturalism that typically underlies mainstream physics: if mind is genuinely the builder, as the readings consistently assert, then an adequate account of physical forces cannot treat the mental and spiritual dimensions as external to the causal order.

This is not a criticism of Einstein's theory as physics—it is a claim about the philosophical scope of what physics, by methodological convention, is prepared to study. The readings offer a holistic ontology that would, if taken seriously as a framework for philosophy of science, require the expansion of scientific inquiry beyond the domain of measurable material phenomena to include purpose, meaning, and consciousness as legitimate objects of investigation. That expansion is precisely what thinkers like James and Bohm, discussed in Section 2.6.1, have also advocated from within the Western philosophical tradition.

### **Hyperdimensions: A Cross-Reference**

The Cayce readings also speak extensively to the multidimensional structure of the cosmos—asserting that the solar system operates in eight dimensions (5755-2) and that each planetary sphere corresponds to a distinctive dimensional level of consciousness accessible to soul entities between earthly incarnations. The resonance of this material with modern string theory and M-theory (which posit nine or more spatial dimensions beyond the three of ordinary experience) and with physicist Bernard Carr's hyperspatial model of mind and matter has been examined in detail in Sections 2.3.1, 2.5.2.1, and Appendix C. That treatment also includes the relevant reading excerpts (5149-1, 5755-2, 311-2, 5755-1) and the key Carr (2015) quotations. The reader is directed to those sections for the full discussion. The point of relevance for the philosophy of physics is simply that the readings' multidimensional model provides a holistic

metaphysical context within which the extra dimensions proposed by string theory—typically regarded as physically inaccessible—correspond to levels of consciousness and experience available to the soul. Here again, the readings do not propose a rival physics but a broader metaphysical framework within which physical theories find their context.

### **Summary**

The Cayce readings engage the philosophy of physics not as a competing scientific theory but as a holistic metaphysical framework that both contextualizes and challenges mainstream physics' assumptions. At the atomic scale, the readings assert that spirit, mind, will, and consciousness permeate all matter—a position that resonates with contemporary panpsychist philosophy and points toward the incompleteness of a purely materialistic account of the subatomic world. On the question of unification, the readings provide an ontological ground for the physicist's persistent intuition that the forces must ultimately be one: they originate in a single conscious Source, and the scientific project of documenting that unity mathematically is, from the readings' standpoint, the empirical confirmation of a spiritual truth. Regarding vibration, the readings' vision of vibration as the fundamental creative principle of the universe finds an unexpected structural parallel in quantum field theory's description of particles as excitations of underlying fields—though the two frameworks remain distinct in kind. Finally, the readings' concept of the relativity of force, while sharing a name with Einstein's theory, is properly understood as an ontological principle of universal interdependence that extends the relational structure of reality into the domains of consciousness, purpose, and spiritual development—domains that a holistic philosophy of science must ultimately be prepared to investigate.

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### 2.6.2.2 Biology

Modern philosophy of biology, rooted in methodological naturalism, largely rejects teleological and vitalistic explanations, focusing instead on reductionist and mechanistic models for phenomena such as cellular regulation, developmental patterning, and evolution (Godfrey-Smith, 2014). In contrast, the Cayce readings present an integrative biological framework that is explicitly teleological and holistic. The readings emphasize mind as a primary causal force in biological processes—“spirit is life; the mind is the builder; the physical is the result” (394-1)—recognize a role for individual will alongside genetic determinism, and describe evolution as a purposeful creative process. This comparison highlights a fundamental ontological divide, challenging scientific materialism by insisting that a complete science of life must integrate non-material causation.

Three representative areas will be explored in some detail, corresponding to the cellular, organismic, and species levels of biological organization: the role of the centrosome and emotion in cellular reproduction; holistic human prenatal development and soul birth; and the readings’ contribution to a more comprehensive philosophy of evolutionary biology.

#### **Cellular Biology: The Centrosome and the Power of Emotion**

*(Q) What power does the centrosome have, and what is it relative to in a living, human body?*

*(A) The emotions as related to the CENTRAL forces in the eventual activity within the lyden gland itself, or that ability to reproduce within its own self. (281-63)*

Reading 281-63, given in 1943 for members of the Glad Helpers healing group, provides fascinating information pertaining to genetics, embryonic and fetal development, and reproduction at both the cellular and systemic levels. The question about the “power” of the centrosome is particularly

striking in that the response links cell-level emotional power to cellular reproduction through the activity of the lyden gland.

The centrosome is a small organelle that orchestrates many important processes in the cell, acting as a signaling center and participating in cell cycle progression. Cell tissue development and homeostasis depend on its polarizing activity. In animals it is the major microtubule-organizing center of the cell, contributing to the establishment of polarity during interphase and the formation of a bipolar spindle in mitosis (Sillibourne, 2016). During mitosis, microtubules extend outward from duplicated centrosomes to form the mitotic spindle responsible for the separation and distribution of chromosomes. As Cooper (2000) notes, “the centrosome thus plays a key role in determining the intracellular organization of microtubules, although most details of its function remain a mystery.”

Centrosome microtubule activity has been associated with information processing and cell fate decision making (Barvitenko et al., 2018). More expansively, microtubule activity in the brain has been theorized to orchestrate quantum vibrational superpositions resulting in moments of conscious experience (Hameroff, 2022). Considering the use of the terms “power” and “forces” in reading 281-63, evidence of bioelectrical involvement in centrosome functions is consistent with the readings’ framing. Research has confirmed that a small physiological electric field orients cell division (Zhao, Forrester, & McCaig, 1999), and centrosome activity during mitosis has been characterized as functioning as an “electronic generator” (Nygren et al., 2020). A broader synthesis of this evidence appears in Zhao and Zhan (2012):

Recent advances concerning intracellular electric fields generated by cell organelles and super-macromolecular complexes shed new light on the mechanisms that govern the dynamics of mitosis and meiosis.... Electric fields generated by synchronized oscillation of microtubules, centrosomes, and

chromatin fibers facilitate several events during mitosis and meiosis, including centrosome trafficking, chromosome congression in mitosis and synapsis between homologous chromosomes in meiosis. These intracellular electric fields are generated under energy excitation through the synchronized electric oscillations of the dipolar structures of microtubules, centrosomes and chromosomes. (Zhao & Zhan, 2012)

Thus the “power” of the centrosome may be grounded in bioelectricity operating within cells—a conclusion consistent with the readings’ consistent identification of electrical force with creative, spiritual energy (Section 2.6.2.1). With regard to the role of the lyden gland in this context, the readings insist that it regulates the life force energy of the body during physiological processes such as reproduction at all levels, as well as during deep meditation and psychic experience: “... the lyden and through the reproductive forces themselves, which are the very essence of Life itself within an individual” (281-3). The energy network regulated by the lyden is system-wide:

The spiritual arises from the centers in the lyden ... glandular forces that are as hidden energies, or the very nature of the creative or reproductive forces. There are the abilities of each center, each gland, each atom to reproduce itself within the body – which is the very nature of glandular reaction. (1468-5)

The spiritual activity ... is as the electron that is Life itself; but raised in power ... in the activities of the glands ... Hence these may literally be termed, that the pineal and the Leydig [lyden] are the SEAT of the soul of an entity. As to the abilities of physical reproduction, much of the activity of the Leydig [lyden] makes for that as of embryonic in its activity ... (294-142)

During gestation, from the very instant of conception, the spiritual energy of reproductive forces first moves from the lyden through the developing pineal system: “Conceived, then the first movement is along that center or

gland [pineal] ... [to] all of the centers of activity through which spirit first moves from the lyden – the center of the spiritual forces ...” (281-53). Thus the initial division of the fertilized egg represents the spiritual reproductive energy of cellular division regulated by the lyden—a pattern continued through all subsequent cell generations throughout gestation and across the entire lifetime of the individual entity.

The theoretical linkage of microtubule activity with consciousness (Hameroff, 2022) is philosophically evocative in light of reading 281-63’s association of emotion with the centrosome, cellular reproduction, and lyden gland activity. As discussed in Sections 2.4.4 and 2.6.2.1, the readings assert that spirit, mind, will, and consciousness permeate matter even at the atomic scale. The philosophically important question here is what it might mean for emotion to operate at the cellular level. It is at this point that Alfred North Whitehead’s process philosophy offers significant resources.

According to Whitehead, the basis of experience is emotional—an approach his commentators have called panexperientialism to distinguish it from the more familiar panpsychism (Griffin, 2001; Segall, 2024). Experience, in the Whiteheadian sense, extends all the way down to the metaphysical foundations of reality:

... Whitehead hypothesized an extension of the Jamesian notion of drops of experience from human beings to all actual entities. This goes all the way down the chain of being to atomic and subatomic entities. Given the developments of electromagnetic and quantum physics, he believed that it made more sense to assume that there is some degree of experience in every entity than to assume there is none on the lower end of being and that somehow, miraculously, experience sprang from nowhere. (Smith, 2010)

As to the nature of cellular emotion, the readings provide suggestive context. The reason for creation is “God’s desire for companionship and expression” (5749-14): desire is a spiritual attribute (2114-1), the fundamental motivating force at all levels of existence. Considering desire as the force in sexual reproduction is not controversial; entertaining the possibility of emotion at the level of cellular reproduction is more speculative, but finds philosophical grounding in Whitehead’s concept of concrescence:

Concrescence, as Whitehead defines it in a neat little formula, is the process whereby “the many become one and are increased by one.” It is iterative, cycling, cumulative, such that each subsequent concrescence includes the concrescences that came before it.... This description Whitehead intended to apply across all scales, from the physical realm to the biological realm. You can even understand our own psychological experience in terms of these moments of concrescence. That is what Whitehead aims for with his categories—a scheme that applies across all levels. (Segall, 2024)

At the biological level of the cell, concrescence may manifest as the activity of reproduction, carrying forward genetic information from the past combined with the novelty of creative impulse seeking expression. This example from cellular biology illustrates the integrative potential of the readings: drawing upon current research, relevant philosophical perspectives, and a holistic metaphysical framework to contribute to advances in the philosophy of science at the cellular level.

### **Prenatal Human Development and Soul Birth**

The Cayce readings describe human prenatal development not merely as a biological process but as a holistic, purposefully orchestrated period of growth—one in which an eternal soul entity is attracted to, and ultimately connects with, a physical vehicle to become a terrestrial human entity. The

readings contain numerous elaborations on this process. The following discussion focuses particularly on reading 281-47, one of thirteen readings given for the Glad Helpers healing group between 1937 and 1943 on the human endocrine system, as an especially comprehensive example.

Reading 281-47 begins by elucidating the physical processes of embryological and fetal development from conception to birth in a sequence of tissue and organ development at definite time periods (weeks and months)—a straightforward account consistent with mainstream science. Then at paragraph 13 the focus shifts to the actual question the group had sought to address:

The seeking here is for that area, that center, in which the system makes its relative relationships or associations with spiritual, mental and physical being. These areas indicated, that have come through growth into being in relation to the mental, spiritual and physical attitude of the mother, are constantly dependent upon that one from which the body draws its PHYSICAL sustenance; but purpose, desire and hope are through the mental. (281-47)

The members of the Glad Helpers were not seeking biological explanations available in academic textbooks. They wanted to understand how mind and spirit are anatomically and physiologically involved in development—what center is responsible for the coordination of “spiritual, mental and physical being.” The reading identifies the central role of the mother’s “mental, spiritual and physical attitude”—a point not entirely distant from modern psychosomatic medicine, which recognizes that maternal stress significantly affects fetal development (Buss et al., 2012). The reading then identifies the specific anatomy:

Thus these centers are opposite the umbilical cord [i.e., along the spine], or those areas through which ALL messages of desire, or of the mental nature, pass; not only to the brain in its

reflexes but along the cords to the pineal—that has been and is the extenuation of its first cause. In those glands that are eventually known as the genital, or in the lyden [Leydig], and the inner centers of the thyroid through and from which the exterior forces are indicated in their activity, there begins then the formation of the superficial circulation; that leads or connects between its spiritual import, its mental purpose, and its physical development—for their coordination. (281-47)

Appendix A contains an extensive review of the “Pineal System” as the neuroendocrine network that integrates and coordinates mental and spiritual activity with the physical body, acting as the seat of the soul (294-142). The key point here is that during gestation, as the physical body develops to be functional in the material world, the pineal system also develops as the neuroendocrine interface between the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Physical development during gestation is holistic in the readings’ sense: mind (the builder) patterns the energy of spirit (expressed biologically as bioelectricity) into physical forms that biology recognizes as anatomy. As noted in the discussion of the centrosome above, even a strictly materialistic reading of this process—glands and nerves, bioelectrical fields, microtubule dynamics—is consistent with standard modern biology. The holistic framework adds the claim that these biological structures serve as vehicles for a deeper spiritual causation.

A normal gestation period results in a viable newborn. From the perspective of the Cayce readings, however, this is only the first stage in the creation of a full human entity. Physical birth marks the separation from the maternal lifeline, but the human entity is not complete until soul birth—the moment at which a soul entity enters the body and takes possession of it:

*(Q) Does soul enter child at conception or birth or in between?*

*(A) It may at the first moment of breath; it may some hours before birth; it may many hours after birth. This depends upon that condition, that environ surrounding the circumstance. (457-10)*

Various readings for particular individuals indicate a range of up to six hours before or after physical birth for soul birth to occur (e.g., 314-1, 826-8, 987-4). The exact timing was practically relevant for individuals seeking astrological charts, since soul birth marks the moment of connection to the planetary sphere from which the soul took its flight (see Section 2.5.2.1 and Appendix C for the full treatment of planetary sojourns and soul birth):

Now, we find the spirit and soul took possession and completed this entity, as we have at present, late in the evening – 11:29 [P.M.]. We find the soul and spirit entity took its flight, or its force being present and bringing this present entity's completeness, from that of Venus' forces ... (4228-1)

An essential philosophical distinction underlies this account of prenatal development and soul birth—the readings' differentiation between spirit and soul forces:

There is a vast deal of difference between spiritual and soul forces, for, as given, each force there has been set guards or bounds. Spirit forces are the animation of ALL LIFE giving life-producing forces in animate or inanimate forces.... In the soul forces, and its dwelling in man, we find the animation, the spiritual element, the soul that developing element, and contained in the brain, in the nerve, in the centers of the whole system. (900-17)

Spirit is the universal animating life force operative in all biological processes—from cellular reproduction to the sustained physiological activity of the maternal body throughout gestation. Soul is the individual

expression of spirit—the eternal, conscious entity that takes possession of the body at soul birth, bringing with it the record of its prior sojourns and the free will that governs its development throughout the present incarnation. All soul is spirit, but not all spirit is soul: spirit is the universal source, soul is the individual expression. This distinction has implications for how the philosophy of science approaches the study of life: spirit forces are more likely to fall within the domain of biology, registering as bioelectricity associated with reproduction and development; soul forces may be more accessible to psychology and consciousness studies—a point taken up in the transpersonal psychology section (Section 2.6.2.4).

### **Evolutionary Biology**

Evolutionary change arises from the continuous interaction between heredity and environment, wherein heritable biological variation provides the material upon which natural selection acts. Heredity includes genetic inheritance, mutation, recombination, and other mechanisms that generate and transmit variation across generations; environmental conditions shape evolutionary outcomes by influencing differential survival and reproduction (Futuyma & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Mayr, 2001). Within this framework, heredity and environment are inseparable, and their interplay as formalized in the theory of natural selection provides the foundational account of biological diversity.

The Cayce readings are broadly consistent with this account as far as it goes—and explicitly affirm the gradual developmental character of biological change over long periods of time. When asked directly whether Darwin’s theory of evolution was correct, a reading replied: “Man DID NOT descend from the monkey, but man has evolved, resuscitation, you see, from time to time, time to time, here a little, there a little, line upon line and line upon line. In all ages we find this has been the developing—day by day, day by day, or the evolution ...” (3744-5). The readings affirm the

reality of the evolutionary process, the long spans of geological time involved, the adaptation of organisms to local conditions, and the continuity of development across kingdoms of nature (see Section 2.5.2.3.5 for the full treatment of evolution and human origins).

However, from the holistic perspective of the readings, the mainstream scientific account of evolution is philosophically partial. It is conducted within the assumptions of materialistic monism and therefore addresses only the physical dimension of a process that is also mental and spiritual. The readings' contribution to a philosophy of evolutionary biology is to insist that evolution is purposeful—that it unfolds within a teleological framework established at the moment of creation, oriented toward the development of soul entities capable of companionship with their Source. As one reading puts it:

The evolution of life as may be understood by the finite mind. In the first cause, or principle, all is perfect. In the creation of soul, we find the portion may become a living soul and equal with the Creator. To reach that position, when separated, must pass through all stages of development, that it may be one with the Creator. (900-10)

The readings also point to the role of will in evolution at the level of higher species—a factor entirely absent from standard evolutionary theory, which treats organisms as passive recipients of selective pressures:

... for evolution is as of a fact in the mind of the creative energy, and the will of the energy creating is of the higher forces, same as the will of the individual in the higher species ... yet the species may be propagated through that variation, and the variation or the acceptance of the condition is the proof of the heredity, of the environmental conditions, and not a disproof of the spirit forces as manifesting in the material world ... for the motive energy is from the divine ... (900-249)

From a philosophy of science perspective, this is a significant philosophical claim. The readings do not propose a creationist rejection of evolutionary science—they accept variation, heredity, environmental adaptation, and geological timescales. What they do propose is that these biological mechanisms operate within a larger metaphysical framework in which spirit is the energizing first cause, mind provides the developmental patterns, and the physical result (including the evolution of species) expresses a purposeful creative process rather than a merely mechanical one. The practical implication for evolutionary biology is that the emergence of consciousness and moral agency in human beings—phenomena that purely mechanistic accounts of natural selection struggle to explain—become intelligible within the readings’ teleological framework as the intended outcome of a purposeful process rather than an emergent accident.

The most striking contribution of the readings to the philosophy of evolutionary biology concerns human origins specifically. The readings describe the creation of the human form as involving the active intervention of highly developed soul entities, through what researcher William Fix (1984) has called psychogenesis—the initiation of a novel biological form through spiritual and mental agency (see Section 2.5.2.3.5 for the full discussion). This is not equivalent to biblical special creation; it is a claim that the evolutionary process, at the decisive point of human origins, was influenced by non-material causal factors—the same spirit-mind-body causation that the readings assert is operative throughout biology at the cellular and organismic levels. A holistic philosophy of biology consistent with the readings would treat such non-material causation as a legitimate object of investigation rather than as a violation of methodological naturalism to be ruled out in advance.

## Summary

The Cayce readings engage biology at three levels of organization, each of which challenges the sufficiency of a purely materialistic account of life. At the cellular level, the readings' connection of the centrosome with emotional force and lyden gland activity—grounded in the identified role of bioelectrical fields in mitosis—points toward a biology in which experience and emotion, understood in the Whiteheadian sense of panexperientialism, are operative even at the level of cell division. At the organismic level, the readings' account of prenatal development situates standard embryological biology within a holistic framework in which the developing pineal system serves as the neuroendocrine interface between physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions, culminating in soul birth as the moment at which an eternal entity fully takes possession of its physical vehicle. At the level of species and evolutionary history, the readings affirm the broad mechanisms of evolutionary science while insisting that evolution is purposeful and teleologically oriented, that it operates as a causal factor at the level of higher species, and that the emergence of human consciousness reflects an intentional creative process rather than a mechanical accident. Taken together, the readings represent a holistic philosophy of biology in which spirit, mind, and body are causally integrated at every level of life—from the atom to the organism to the species.

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### 2.6.2.3 Health Science

The philosophy of health science concerns the core assumptions and epistemological foundations that guide medical practice and research. The current dominant framework is based on biomedical reductionism—a form of materialistic monism—that privileges biological and physical processes while treating mental, psychological, and spiritual phenomena

as secondary, emergent, or reducible to underlying molecular mechanisms (Engel, 1977; Bolton & Gillett, 2019). In contrast, the Cayce readings propose a radically different philosophy of health that is fundamentally holistic, insisting that health is an emergent property of the inseparable relationship between body, mind, and spirit (Frisch & Rabinowitsch, 2019). The readings thus represent one of the most sustained and detailed expressions of holistic health philosophy in the twentieth century—a connection that has not gone unnoticed by mainstream medical scholarship. An editorial in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* observed:

The roots of present-day holism probably go back 100 years to the birth of Edgar Cayce in Hopkinsville, Ky. By the time he died in 1944, Cayce was well recognized as a mystic who entered sleep trances and dictated a philosophy of life and healing called “readings.” His base was established at Virginia Beach, Va., now the headquarters of the Cayce Foundation. Closely associated with that foundation is the Association for Research and Enlightenment, Inc. [A.R.E.], which also runs a medical clinic under physician direction in Arizona. (Callan, 1979, p. 1156)

The A.R.E. Clinic cited by Callan was established by William and Gladys McGarey, two of the founding physicians of the American Holistic Medical Association. Over several decades the McGareys applied the healing principles of the readings in their daily family practice while writing books and articles and offering healing retreats and conferences. William McGarey compiled the *Physician’s Reference Notebook* (McGarey, 1968), containing 53 chapters addressing common conditions ranging from acne to varicose veins and major disease entities such as cancer, epilepsy, migraine, and multiple sclerosis—written by physicians in a structured clinical format and providing a practical guide for clinicians working with the Cayce material. In a similar vein, the Meridian Institute has conducted

numerous research projects investigating the health information in the readings, generating peer-reviewed articles and presentations at health professional meetings. The breadth and depth of this body of clinical and research literature—spanning anatomy, physiology, pathology, and treatment across the full spectrum of human illness—makes health science the field most richly represented in the Cayce corpus.

The primary philosophical question this material raises for the philosophy of science is epistemological: Can information provided by an individual in an altered state of consciousness constitute a valid source for scientific hypothesis generation and testing? This question is addressed in detail in Section 1.1 (Edgar Cayce's Psychic Process) within the framework of perspectival knowledge, and it overlaps with the scientific study of transpersonal experience discussed in Section 2.6.2.4. Here the focus is on two specific philosophical contributions the readings make to the philosophy of health science: the role of mind in healing, exemplified by the placebo response; and the role of spirit as life force, expressed biologically as bioelectrical activity.

### **Mind the Builder and the Placebo Response**

Within the holistic framework of the readings, the concept of mind as the builder is particularly relevant to the philosophy of health science. One of the most consistent and well-established findings of medical science research is the role of mind in health, exemplified by the placebo response. Mein (2022) has drawn the connection explicitly:

The healing response, better known as the placebo response, is a well-documented phenomenon that calls for an intensive discussion about the nature of healing and the power of the spirit-mind-body relationship. It also invites us to fully explore the healing philosophy in the Cayce readings, which led to their linkage with the word holism and which can help us truly

understand what often gets bandied about these days as quantum or fifth-dimensional healing. (Mein, 2022, p. 32)

Virtually every well-designed double-blind, randomized medical study has shown that the physical body responds with real physiologic changes when it perceives that something is being done to promote its healing—even when what is given are sham pills, shots, or surgeries. The response is so strong and so well documented that inclusion of a placebo condition in medical research is not merely advisable but required if the study is to be taken seriously. The stronger a person's belief in a treatment and the more expectation of improvement it creates, the stronger the body's response.

The readings account for this phenomenon not as an anomaly requiring explanation but as the expected expression of a fundamental ontological principle: "Spirit is the Life, Mind is the Builder, and the Physical is the Result" (394-1). Mind directs, forms, and patterns the energy of spirit into the structure and function of the body. The placebo response is, from this perspective, direct empirical evidence of mind's causal role in physical health—the very principle that biomedical reductionism treats as peripheral or epiphenomenal. From the readings' standpoint, the scientific establishment of the placebo effect as a reproducible, measurable phenomenon is one of the strongest pieces of experimental evidence for the holistic premise.

The readings take this well beyond research design, insisting that mind be engaged consciously and intentionally through mental exercises and techniques such as visualization, affirmations, and suggestive (hypnotic) therapeutics. Thus the role of mind the builder in healing and health maintenance is an applied philosophy at every level—from personal lifestyle choices and daily activity to clinical application and the design of medical research. Modern health science has begun to recognize the role of

mental activity in health and healing, most prominently under the umbrella of cognitive-behavioral psychology and cognitive neuroscience (Fordham et al., 2021). This is genuine progress in developing an evidence-based approach to mind within what is gradually becoming a more holistic framework. The metaphysical implications remain quietly in the background—but if the role of mind and spirit continues to be documented empirically, the cumulative weight of evidence may eventually compel the kind of fundamental reconceptualization that Section 2.6.3 discusses under the heading of paradigm shift.

### **Spirit and Health Science**

... all healing of every nature is the changing of the vibrations from within, – the attuning of the divine within the living tissue of a body to Creative Energies. This alone is healing. Whether it is accomplished by the use of drugs, the knife or what not, it is the attuning of the atomic structure of the living cellular force to its spiritual heritage. (1967-1)

Spirit, in the readings' framework, is the life force energy animating a physical body. Several readings insist that this energy is electrical in nature—not in the simplistic sense of conventional electricity, but as a low form of electrical vibration that is the physical expression of the Creative Force: "... know that Life itself – to be sure – is the Creative Force or God, yet its manifestations in man are electrical – or vibratory" (1299-1). This identification of life force with electrical activity has resonance with contemporary biomedical research. Modern work on endogenous bioelectric signaling networks—the voltage gradients and electrical fields that govern cell growth, tissue patterning, and regeneration—represents one of the most rapidly developing frontiers of biological science (Levin, 2014). Research on ephaptic coupling (the influence of extracellular electrical fields on neural and non-neural cells), gap junction bioelectricity spanning virtually all cell types of the body, and the emerging field of

bioelectrical therapeutics (Wang et al., 2024) all describe phenomena that the readings anticipated in their characterization of spirit as an electrical life force.

The readings go beyond the obvious analogy with neural electrical activity to include glandular function as a primary channel through which spiritual energy is transduced into physiological activity. Glands operate, in the readings' view, as spiritual centers through which the Creative Force enters the physical body and regulates its vital processes—a concept explored in anatomical and physiological detail in Appendix A (The Pineal System). The neuroendocrine dimension of this model is developed extensively in two clinical texts that apply the readings' framework to specific disease categories: the treatment of schizophrenia (McMillin, 1991), which documents pineal system dysfunction as central to the etiology, pathophysiology, and treatment of that condition across 325 scholarly references; and the treatment of epilepsy (McMillin, 2022), which extends the same framework to seizure disorders across 547 references. Both works present the readings' holistic model in APA-style academic format accessible to health researchers, clinicians, and academic scholars.

The philosophical contribution of this material to the philosophy of health science is direct. If spirit, understood as a form of bioelectrical life force, is genuinely operative in the body—if it can be identified, measured, and influenced through therapeutic means—then the boundary between the spiritual and the physical that biomedical reductionism treats as absolute begins to dissolve. This does not require abandoning the scientific method; it requires extending its domain. The readings' framework suggests that a fully adequate philosophy of health science would treat the spiritual dimension of the organism not as a metaphysical luxury but as a subject of empirical investigation—one that may eventually prove as productive for medicine as the germ theory of disease or the discovery of the double helix.

The question of how such investigation is to be conducted brings the discussion naturally to the domain of transpersonal psychology (Section 2.6.2.4), which addresses the scientific study of consciousness, altered states, and the non-material dimensions of human experience.

### **Summary**

Of all the special sciences, health science has the most extensive and directly applicable body of Cayce material for scientific exploration. The breadth and depth of the physical readings—covering anatomy, physiology, pathology, and treatment across the full spectrum of human illness—provides an unusually rich resource for hypothesis generation and testing within a holistic framework. Philosophically, the readings make two specific contributions to the philosophy of health science. First, through the concept of mind as the builder, they provide a metaphysical grounding for the placebo response: the experimental demonstration that mind causally influences physiology is, from the readings' standpoint, not an anomaly but the expected consequence of a fundamental ontological principle. Second, through the identification of spirit with bioelectrical life force, the readings anticipate and provide a theoretical framework for the rapidly emerging field of bioelectric medicine, suggesting that the spiritual dimension of the organism is not merely metaphorical but physiologically real and therapeutically relevant. Both contributions invite the philosophy of health science to expand its foundations beyond biomedical reductionism toward the holistic integration of spirit, mind, and body that the Cayce readings have consistently proposed.

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#### **2.6.2.4 Transpersonal Psychology**

Transpersonal psychology—which integrates the study of transcendent and spiritual dimensions of human experience within a psychological framework—occupies a contested position at the intersection of science,

philosophy, and the humanities. The question of what separates science from non-science, known as the demarcation problem, is among the most enduring and unresolved issues in the philosophy of science (Laudan, 1983). Transpersonal psychology explores the full spectrum of human experience including mysticism, altered states of consciousness, and paranormal phenomena, thereby challenging core assumptions of methodological naturalism and the physicalist ontology that underlies mainstream scientific psychology (Grof, 1975; Tart, 1975).

The origins of transpersonal psychology are philosophically rich. William James's landmark study *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) established a precedent for taking seriously the epistemic claims arising from mystical and altered states, arguing that such states are "noetic" in character—they present themselves as genuine sources of knowledge about reality (see Appendix B for a detailed treatment of the connections between James's philosophy and the Cayce readings). Although the emergence of transpersonal psychology as a distinct field occurred after the death of Edgar Cayce in 1945, the conceptual congruence with the readings is well recognized. Atlantic University (associated with Edgar Cayce's A.R.E.) offers master's degrees in transpersonal psychology emphasizing the applied philosophy of the readings through meditation, dreamwork, and journaling, and conducts ongoing research on topics addressed in the readings.

In practice, transpersonal psychology presents a mixed picture. Certain subfields—particularly research on meditation, contemplative practices, and their cognitive and neurophysiological correlates—have generated an impressive body of empirical findings (Lutz et al., 2008; Davidson & Lutz, 2008). Research on meditation has produced replicable results regarding attention regulation, emotional processing, and structural neuroplasticity, giving transpersonal psychology at least a partial foothold in mainstream

cognitive neuroscience (Tang et al., 2015). The more controversial claims—particularly those involving paranormal phenomena—have generated findings whose replicability remains disputed (Bem, 2011; Wagenmakers et al., 2011).

The term psychology, from the Greek psychē (soul) and logos (study), originally denoted the scientific investigation of the soul—a pursuit foundational to Western philosophy from Aristotle onward (G. Richards, 2010). Modern scientific psychology has largely divested itself of this soul-centered framework, emphasizing instead behavioral observables and neurophysiological processes. The work of Herbert Puryear, a clinical psychologist and scholar of the Cayce readings, represents a significant exception. His recent volume *A Psychology of the Soul* (2025) delves into the meaning of soul with regard to the soul’s journey, the body–soul connection through glands and nerves, the importance of dreamwork, and the validity of parapsychology—all directly relevant to the subsections that follow. In Puryear’s framework, “a person may be defined as the process and record of the expression of the Infinite into the Finite” (Puryear, 2025, p. 3)—a formulation that resonates closely with the applied philosophy of the readings throughout this manuscript.

### **Cayce Life Readings and the Transpersonal Self**

Although the Cayce readings as a whole prominently address the full range of psychic and mystical topics, it is the nearly 2,000 life readings that engage most directly and expansively with transpersonal issues. They are especially resonant with transpersonal psychology because they place psychological life within a developmental horizon that extends beyond one embodied lifetime. Rather than treating personality as a closed system determined by current-life biology and biography, the life readings frame the human self as a soul in evolution, moving through reincarnational

cycles on earth and, in many readings, through astral or planetary sojourns between earthly incarnations.

The life readings raise questions that are foundational to the philosophy of science: what counts as a legitimate object of inquiry; how theories relate to evidence; and how one distinguishes explanatory frameworks from empirical claims. The readings were offered as a worldview in which reincarnation, astral sojourns, and spiritual development organize human experience in ways that are potentially testable, even if not yet fully tested. The wording of the hypnotic suggestion used to obtain a life reading itself suggests a striking psychological model:

*(Q) Give the words that should be given to this body [Edgar Cayce] to obtain a reading of this kind, a life reading, with the former appearances and their effect in the present life on an individual.*

*(A) “You will have before you—the body, giving name and place of the individual at birth, the name at birth as given—and you will give the relation of this entity and the Universe, and the Universal Forces, giving the conditions that are as personalities latent, and exhibited, in the present life. Also the former appearances in the earth’s plane ...”*

The phrase “conditions that are as personalities latent, and exhibited, in the present life” implies psychological pluralism—and perhaps a form of structured multiplicity that has resonance with modern research on dissociative phenomena. Each life reading is a psychological assessment in which current personality patterns are understood as composite expressions of soul experience across multiple incarnational and interplanetary sojourns. This expands the conventional framework of heredity and environment to a cosmic perspective in which the soul’s full history of choices, relationships, and developmental experiences constitutes a form of transpersonal inheritance.

From a transpersonal therapeutic standpoint, what distinguishes the life readings is their insistence that present character is intelligible only in relation to the soul's longer trajectory. The individual's fears, talents, and relational patterns are interpreted as traces of prior incarnational choices and unfinished lessons, so that therapeutic work becomes less about symptom removal than about remembrance, integration, and ethical transformation. Within a transpersonal framework, this makes the life readings an example of spiritually oriented depth psychology that recontextualizes personal suffering as part of a larger evolutionary process of consciousness—with Jungian depth psychology probably providing the closest contemporary analogue.

Over the decades, dedicated researchers have attempted to evaluate the historical accuracy of claims made in the life readings. Although the informal results of such investigations are thought to be supportive of the reincarnation hypothesis, they do not yet constitute scientific evidence by conventional standards. However, a substantial scientific literature on reincarnation has been developed by professional researchers. Ian Stevenson (1974, 1987) pioneered a rigorous empirical approach, employing control groups, carefully ruling out fraud or suggestion, and emphasizing corroborating evidence. His work suggested that some children's detailed memories of past lives could not be readily explained by existing psychological theories, leading him to consider reincarnation as a plausible scientific hypothesis while acknowledging the limitations of his studies and advocating for further research. Stevenson's work has been extended at the University of Virginia's Division of Perceptual Studies (DOPS), particularly by Jim B. Tucker (2005, 2013, 2021), who maintains a database of over 2,200 cases suggestive of reincarnation, emphasizing features such as birthmarks corresponding to prior wounds, verifiable statements by children confirmed through historical records, and a rigorous exclusion of normal explanations.

With regard to astral sojourns and their astrological correlates, the work of Michel Gauquelin, a French psychologist, is relevant. Gauquelin (1967, 1973) conducted systematic empirical investigations into claimed correlations between planetary positions at birth and personality traits or life outcomes. His approach was cautious and self-critical, emphasizing replication and control for confounding variables. His results demonstrated statistically significant correlations between planetary positions and human characteristics in certain domains, challenging a purely dismissive attitude toward astrology while stopping well short of validating the full astrological tradition. The scientific reception of his work remains mixed, with critics citing possible statistical artifacts and supporters viewing his meticulous methodology as a significant step toward empirical engagement with phenomena the readings address under the heading of planetary sojourns (Section 2.5.2.1). To date, no scientific research has been conducted directly on the life readings' specific portrayal of reincarnation and astral sojourns. The work of Stevenson, Tucker, and Gauquelin provides methodological models that a holistic philosophy of science might draw upon in approaching such subjects.

### **Dreams**

In the Cayce readings, dreams are not treated as random neural byproducts but as a central medium through which the soul receives guidance, confronts unresolved issues, and occasionally accesses information beyond the reach of ordinary waking consciousness (Thurston, 1988). The Cayce tradition offers extensive symbolic interpretations and practical guidance for working with dreams, emphasizing their role in moral and spiritual development as well as in everyday problem-solving—consistent with the applied, practical emphasis of the readings' philosophy throughout (Sechrist, 1995; Thurston, 1988; Bro, 1968). This view assumes a multi-layered model of consciousness in which the unconscious and superconscious dimensions

are continuous with spiritual realities, not merely with personal or biological processes (see Section 2.4.3 for the readings' full account of conscious, subconscious, and superconscious mind).

Transpersonal psychology has generally taken a similarly expansive view of dream phenomena, with theorists such as Jung and Wilber arguing that dreams can mediate archetypal, symbolic, and transpersonal contents (Scotton, 2012; Wilber, 2000). James's classic analysis of religious and mystical experience provides a relevant conceptual framework: he emphasized that many such experiences have a "noetic" quality, presenting themselves as illuminations full of significance and insight rather than mere hallucinations (James, 1902/2004). Dreams in the Cayce material often possess this noetic quality and are evaluated not only for their correspondence with external events but for their transformative impact on character and outlook (Bro, 1968).

To fully appreciate the readings' perspective on dreams, it is helpful to recognize the context of dreaming as an altered state of consciousness. Two readings establish the ontological baseline:

Sleep – that period when the soul takes stock of that it has acted upon during one rest period to another, making or drawing – as it were – the comparisons that make for Life itself in its ESSENCE ... (5754-2)

Each and every soul leaves the body as it rests in sleep. (853-8)

For humans, dreams are a real experience of the soul, apart from but linked to daily waking life. The readings identify several types of dreams, ranging from mystical experiences of the spiritual world to nightmares provoked by a disagreeable meal:

In dreams, visions and experiences, each individual soul passes through or reviews or sees as from a different attitude

those experiences of its own activities. And these are, in dreams or visions, as emblematical [symbolic] conditions in the experience of that soul-entity. At others we may find the activity of the body-physical regarding the diet or the activities in any experience of the mental body. (257-136)

One of the more philosophically significant types of dream in the readings involves precognitive experience, which also expresses the metaphysical principle of downward causation: "... for dreams are that of which the subconscious is made, for any conditions ever becoming reality is first dreamed" (136-7). This claim—that mental patterns precede and shape physical events—is consistent with the readings' foundational axiom that spirit is life, mind is the builder, and the physical is the result (394-1).

The Cayce dream material contributes to the philosophy-of-science discussion by challenging the assumption that only laboratory-style data are relevant to understanding mind and behavior. It suggests that a comprehensive psychology of the person may need to account for dream experiences as sources of meaning, guidance, and sometimes anomalous information, even when the mechanisms underlying such phenomena remain poorly understood (Scotton, 2012). This raises a question central to the philosophy of science: should the epistemic status of dream experiences be judged solely by their ability to generate externally verifiable predictions, or also by their phenomenological structure and their long-term effects on the dreamer's life? Some philosophers of science have argued that the domain of legitimate evidence should not be limited to third-person observational data, especially in fields where first-person experience is the primary datum, such as psychology and phenomenology (Hansson, 2008). In the context of transpersonal psychology, dreams become a key example of how subjective reports, symbolic interpretation, and practical outcomes might be integrated into a broader evidential

framework that includes but is not exhausted by experimental verification (Scotton, 2012; Wilber, 2000).

### **Parapsychology**

Psychic is of the soul; the abilities to reason BY the faculties  
or by the mind of the soul. (513-1)

Parapsychology is the scientific investigation of anomalous phenomena that appear to violate conventional causal explanations—including extrasensory perception (ESP), which encompasses telepathy (mind-to-mind communication), clairvoyance (perception of remote or hidden objects), and precognition (knowledge of future events), as well as psychokinesis (the purported influence of mind on physical systems) and survival-of-bodily-death phenomena such as apparitions and near-death experiences (Irwin & Watt, 2007). Parapsychology occupies a uniquely contentious position: it employs conventional scientific methods—controlled laboratory experiments, randomization, double-blind protocols, and meta-analysis—while investigating claims that appear to contradict established physical principles (Radin, 1997).

Within the framework of the Cayce readings, psychic experience is not defined as a supernatural gift or a deviation from natural law, but as a natural attribute of the soul:

For PSYCHIC is of the soul, if in its true constructive sense.  
And as the soul is an individual, intricate portion of the whole,  
then the experience of each soul in its reaction with, upon or  
from experiences in that field of activity, presents a study  
within itself. (1135-6)

D. G. Richards (1998), a researcher and scholar of the Cayce readings, has articulated the broader framework:

What, then, is the Cayce perspective? First, here exists a universal awareness, spiritual in nature, with the potential to express itself in the world but not limited to time and space. This is the ultimate level, or the ground of all being, or God.... We are part of the whole, yet we experience ourselves as unique individuals.... In psychic and spiritual experiences we make contact with some aspects of that universal awareness. (D. G. Richards, 1998, p. 28)

Parapsychology, from the readings' standpoint, is therefore the study of the mind's ability to operate beyond the linear constraints of three-dimensional space and the biological limitations of the physical brain. Psychic experience is the expression of the relationship between the part (soul) and the Whole—the central theme of the readings' applied philosophy throughout this manuscript. Various psychic manifestations are experiences of the soul becoming aware of its greater context as a spiritual being: "Psychic is of the soul, then, first becoming aware of its inactivity or activity toward the Creator within thine own experience" (261-15).

The legitimate scientific purpose of parapsychological study, from this perspective, is not fortune-telling but the demonstration of the soul's inherent connection to the Creative Forces—empirical evidence for the metaphysics of oneness. The Cayce material can thus be regarded as an expansion of the field of psychology: from behavioral and cognitive psychology outward to transpersonal psychology. Materialist neuroscience struggles with what Chalmers (1995) called the hard problem of consciousness—the explanatory gap between objective brain processes and subjective experience (Koch & Hepp, 2006; Earle, 2025; Irvine, 2016). Transpersonal psychology acts as the bridge that spans this gap by including the soul as a causal variable. By definition, transpersonal psychology subsumes parapsychological phenomena—ESP, near-death

experiences, non-local awareness—as natural expressions of the soul rather than as inexplicable anomalies.

For the philosophy of science, the readings add an important methodological point. The evaluation of psychic phenomena should extend beyond laboratory settings to include the criterion of application in lived experience:

Psychic is of the soul. As to whether psychic information is from those who have attuned themselves to the influences that are even in the material world, or to that force or source which has been sent or given in Creative Forces that are constructive in the experience of others, may only be judged by the application of same in the experience of the individual. (5752-5)

In other words, the outcomes of psychic research are best judged by the application of the information in the experience of the individual. This is entirely consistent with the pragmatic and applied orientation of the readings throughout—and with the Jamesian pragmatism that Section 2.6.1 identifies as one of the philosophical foundations of the readings' approach to science. The holistic applied philosophy of the readings is relevant to the full spectrum of scientific inquiry, including psychic and spiritual experiences.

### **Summary**

Transpersonal psychology occupies a philosophically significant position at the intersection of science, experience, and the study of consciousness. Certain areas of inquiry—most notably meditation research—have established a credible scientific foothold in cognitive neuroscience. Reincarnation research, through the rigorous work of Stevenson, Tucker, and their colleagues at the University of Virginia, represents a serious empirical engagement with claims that are central to the readings' account of the soul's journey. Astrological correlates of planetary sojourns,

investigated empirically by Gauquelin, remain scientifically inconclusive but methodologically instructive. Parapsychology, the most contentious subdomain, presents empirical data that resist easy dismissal but have not yet achieved the threshold of replicability required by current scientific standards—in part due to methodological controversy and apparent tensions with established causal principles, notwithstanding attempts to invoke quantum theory as an explanatory bridge. The Cayce readings assert the reality of psychic experience as a practical matter of applied philosophy, providing an explanatory framework and a scalable metaphysical model that ranges from the atomic to the astronomic. Dreams, reincarnation, astral sojourns, and psychic phenomena are all understood as natural expressions of the soul's relationship to the Creative Forces—and as legitimate objects of scientific inquiry when approached with the kind of methodological pluralism that a truly holistic philosophy of science makes possible. Transpersonal psychology and its controversial offspring, parapsychology, stand at the forefront of the possible paradigm shift discussed in Section 2.6.3.

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### 2.6.3 *Paradigm Shift?*

The concept of paradigm shifts, as developed by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), provides a framework for understanding radical transformations in scientific thought. Kuhn proposed that science does not simply accumulate facts but rather operates within a dominant framework—a paradigm—that encompasses shared assumptions, methodologies, and criteria for what counts as valid evidence. Scientific progress is not uniformly gradual; it is punctuated by episodes of crisis in which the accumulation of anomalies that resist explanation within the current paradigm eventually compels a wholesale reconceptualization. Paradigm shifts are thus epistemologically and ontologically significant: they are not merely revisions of prior knowledge

but transformations in the way reality itself is understood (Bird, 2012; Fuller, 2000).

Based on the preceding sections exploring the relevance of the Cayce readings to each of the special sciences, the crucial question is whether a shift toward a more holistic and integrative science—one that the readings have anticipated—may represent the kind of fundamental change in scientific practice that Kuhn described. From a Kuhnian perspective, the holistic framework of the readings could qualify as an emergent alternative paradigm—one that addresses systematic anomalies across the spectrum of scientific inquiry, from the hard problem of consciousness to the inadequacy of biomedical reductionism in health science, from the teleological character of biological development to the non-local phenomena investigated by parapsychology. But is there evidence that such a shift is actually underway?

### **The Contemporary Context: Are We in a Shift?**

In the decades since Kuhn's work was published, science has continued to evolve at an unprecedented pace. Some scholars argue that the current moment is one of significant paradigmatic transition. The rise of fields such as complexity theory, network science, and systems biology is often cited as evidence of a move away from the reductionist perspective that has dominated modern science (Capra, 1996). These approaches challenge the assumption that complex phenomena can be fully understood by breaking them down into their individual components. Instead, they emphasize interconnectedness, feedback loops, and emergent properties—phenomena that arise from the interaction of parts but are not predictable from the properties of the parts themselves. The study of ecosystems, climate systems, and the human brain all demand this more systemic approach, suggesting a potential shift toward what some researchers are now explicitly calling a holistic paradigm.

Murphy (2025) offers a pointed diagnosis of where contemporary science stands:

The scientific enterprise is at an inflection point. The reductionist model, while eternally valuable for deep, mechanistic inquiry, is insufficient alone to address the complex, interconnected problems that define our century. The holistic paradigm offers a more complete path—a way to synthesize our deep, vertical knowledge into a horizontal, integrated understanding of the world.... The journey from reductionism to holism is the great intellectual project of our time, demanding nothing less than a re-imagination of how we produce knowledge itself. (Murphy, 2025, p. 9)

Murphy's use of the term holistic is a striking example of how the concept has permeated the scientific lexicon. It is worth noting that his usage differs from that of the founders of the American Holistic Medical Association, whose emphasis was explicitly spiritual—grounded in the sacred dimensions of the spirit-mind-body relationship. Murphy's holism is ecological and systemic, focused on the unity, relationality, and interconnectedness of natural systems rather than their spiritual dimensions. Yet the underlying metaphysical intuition—that reality is constituted by relations and wholes rather than isolated parts—is shared. One might note that the ecological version of holism, however secular its framing, is well represented in the readings: "... he who understands nature walks close with God" (1904-2).

One that fills the mind, the very being, with an expectancy of  
God will see His movement, His manifestation, in the wind,  
the sun, the earth, the flowers, the inhabitant of the earth ... (341-31)

For the love of nature grows, and is akin to God. For all nature  
manifests life, and life IS the manifestation of God. (1968-1)

The progress of holistic thinking in psychology and health science has been reviewed in the preceding sections. Michael Levin's work in bioelectricity suggests that holistic concepts are scalable from the cellular to the organismic level, and that collective intelligence operating across biological substrates may represent a unifying principle applicable throughout the life sciences (Levin & McMillen, 2024). In the metaphysical tradition associated with the Cayce readings, Ervin Laszlo's concept of the Akashic field—a universal information substrate underlying all physical and conscious phenomena—represents an attempt to articulate a theoretical framework for holistic reality that bridges physics, consciousness studies, and spiritual experience (Laszlo, 2007). While Laszlo's work belongs to speculative metaphysics rather than mainstream science, it illustrates the kind of integrative theoretical vision that a fully holistic paradigm would require.

Whether these trends collectively constitute a full-fledged Kuhnian paradigm shift remains a topic of intense debate. Perhaps the future of science will involve a continuous interplay between reductionist and holistic approaches, with each contributing unique insights at different scales of inquiry. The growing emphasis on complexity, interconnectedness, and systemic understanding at minimum suggests significant pressure on the boundaries of the current paradigm (Morin, 2008).

### **Implications for the Philosophy of Science**

The holistic philosophy of the Cayce readings challenges the dominance of reductionist materialism in a specific and philosophically pointed way. In Kuhn's model, paradigm shifts are triggered not by the general inadequacy of the current paradigm but by the accumulation of specific anomalies—results that the prevailing framework cannot explain and that multiply across different domains. The readings, viewed through this lens,

can be understood as identifying a systematic set of such anomalies: the causal efficacy of mind in healing (which biomedicine has documented in the placebo response but not theoretically integrated); the non-local character of psychic experience (which parapsychology has repeatedly measured but mainstream science has refused to incorporate); the teleological structure of biological development (which evolutionary theory describes mechanistically but cannot fully explain); and the hard problem of consciousness (which neuroscience has not resolved within a purely materialist framework). Each of these anomalies has been addressed in the preceding subsections. What the Cayce readings contribute is a unified explanatory framework—the triune model of spirit, mind, and body—within which all of these anomalies find a common source and a consistent account.

Just as Kuhn’s model shows that paradigm shifts typically occur when a new framework resolves multiple anomalies simultaneously, the holistic paradigm of the readings offers precisely this kind of integrative resolution. It does not propose to replace the experimental method or the findings of the special sciences; it proposes to reframe the metaphysical assumptions within which those findings are interpreted. Where current science asks how physical processes produce consciousness, the readings ask how consciousness produces physical processes—a reversal that, if adopted as a working hypothesis, would reorganize the questions that health science, biology, psychology, and physics each pursue. The specific implications most visible in the preceding sections include: in health science, a shift from symptom management to soul-level healing within a triune model; in biology, a shift from mechanistic to teleological accounts of development and evolution; in transpersonal psychology, a shift from treating psychic and spiritual experience as anomalous to treating them as natural expressions of the soul’s relationship to the Creative Forces; and in

physics, a shift from treating consciousness as an epiphenomenon to treating it as a constitutive dimension of physical reality.

### **Summary**

The concept of paradigm shifts offers a valuable lens through which to interpret the philosophical and applied significance of the Edgar Cayce readings' engagement with science. By reframing health, consciousness, evolution, and human potential within a consistently holistic framework, the readings propose a coherent alternative to reductionist materialism—one that addresses multiple anomalies across the special sciences rather than any single domain in isolation. The specific form that holism takes in the readings differs from its current usage in complexity science and systems biology: the readings' holism is grounded in a spiritual ontology in which spirit is the First Cause, mind is the builder, and the physical is the result. This is a stronger claim than systemic interconnectedness alone, and it remains largely outside mainstream scientific acceptance.

Whether this represents a paradigm shift already underway or a possible future transition depends on empirical developments that remain open. The growing recognition of bioelectricity, the maturation of reincarnation research, the accumulating evidence from meditation neuroscience, and the deepening acknowledgment of the hard problem of consciousness each create pressure on the boundaries of the current paradigm. Whether that pressure will ultimately be resolved by extending the current paradigm, by replacing it, or by some integration of reductionist and holistic approaches cannot yet be determined. What can be said is that the applied philosophy of the Cayce readings is internally coherent, empirically engaged, and practically oriented—and that these are precisely the qualities Kuhn identified as characteristic of a candidate paradigm whose time may be approaching.

### 3. Ethics

Ethics (also known as moral philosophy) is the discipline concerned with questions of what is good or bad—right or wrong. It is usually divided into three major areas of inquiry: normative ethics, applied ethics, and metaethics. Normative ethics explores universal principles that govern the actions of people in various situations. Applied ethics examines concrete ethical problems in real-life situations such as bioethics or business ethics. Metaethics examines the underlying assumptions and concepts of ethics (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). The terms ethics and morality are closely related, sometimes leading to confusion based on historical usage:

It is now common to refer to ethical judgments or to ethical principles where it once would have been more accurate to speak of moral judgments or moral principles. These applications are an extension of the meaning of ethics. In earlier usage, the term referred not to morality itself but to the field of study, or branch of inquiry, that has morality as its subject matter. In this sense, ethics is equivalent to moral philosophy. (Singer, 2024, para.1)

The Cayce readings focus primarily on the application of normative and applied ethics. Edgar Cayce's Judeo-Christian beliefs are reflected in the readings' orientation toward biblical moral values such as the Ten Commandments and Jesus' teachings about love (the "law of love").

The readings also promote a strong applied ethical emphasis based on ideals. The formula is to choose a spiritual ideal and then to make mental and physical activity consistent with that spiritual ideal. Every aspect of life (whether family, work/business, recreation, etc.) is made consistent with the spiritual ideal in principle and in application.

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## 3.1 Metaethics

Metaethics deals with the underlying assumptions and concepts of ethics, taking into consideration a broad perspective including epistemology and metaphysics (as discussed in previous sections). With this in mind, consider the metaethical implications of the following diverse viewpoints.

Each human lives one lifetime and at death either: 1) ceases to exist (materialism); or 2) enters an afterlife state shaped by faith and conduct during life, as in many Christian and other religious traditions. Another possibility (in certain cultural settings including the Cayce readings) is reincarnation, although transmigration of human souls into animal forms is not endorsed in the readings. These options influence the discussion of ethics and morality in many philosophical systems.

From the perspective of the Cayce readings, the context of human experience is that of the soul finding its way back to its Source (from which it has become separated), through multiple lifetimes (reincarnation) on planet earth and in-between experiences in other realms of consciousness (e.g., planetary sojourns). The process is educative with the goal of soul development producing a “fit companion” to the Creative Force called the Whole or God. The ultimate aim of this expansive process is to become one with the Whole while maintaining individuality (required for equality of relationship which the readings define as companionship). This approach offers complex, sophisticated options with regard to metaethics.

As an example of how this approach is applied in the midst of life, here is an excerpt from a reading given for a forty-three-year-old businesswoman on November 27, 1936. It is a life reading that details planetary sojourns and past lives. One earthly incarnation was in the area now called Mongolia.

Hence the longings for those experiences that come as the rising sun, the emblazonment upon the hearts and minds of the individuals for THEIR OWN CONCEPT of right and wrong, their OWN concept of that which answers within their daily relationships with their fellow man, to that as they would worship in that they would set as their guide, their god, their ideal. For as the entity experienced, until the beautiful or the beauty of a Creator may be seen in the vilest of the vile that is expressed in mortal body, there is little pure concept of the relationships of the souls of men with God, with the universe. For as the earth is ONLY a portion of a mighty array of forces and influences in our OWN little solar system, so man – though but a speck upon the earth and only as a grain in the universe – is a portion of that divinity that urges ON and ON and ON and ON! that makes for that eternal hope, that spark of light, that thread of soul in infinity itself! (1298-1)

This reading also makes note of the inherent complexity of life requiring “the prunings, the trainings, the guidings” to develop the awareness that:

Life IS the manifestation of God in motion; and that the beauties of nature, the loveliness and the dirtiness, the darkness and the light are one when the mind of God makes them purposeful in the experience of each soul, that it may have companionship with Divinity; knowing itself to be a part yet aware of its ability of choice. (1298-1)

Note the emphasis on having a concept of right and wrong. Many life readings use the language of morality (moral code, moral law, etc.) when discussing ethics, just as modern anthropology is factored into metaethical considerations, indicating a collective aspect to such discussions (Crisp, 2011). Yet the point is made that those past life experiences are still influencing this woman as she is engaged in the process of developing her own concept of right and wrong in the present based on an ideal—it is an ongoing process of soul development over lifetimes. The goal is the

attainment of companionship with Divinity, knowing itself to be part of that Whole yet aware of the ability to choose. In practice, the challenge is bringing harmony between “daily relationships with their fellow man” and the inner spiritual ideal that represents the Divine in each experience. There can be little growth until the “beauty of a Creator may be seen in the vilest of the vile” (i.e., the oneness of good and evil).

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### 3.1.1 Oneness of Good and Evil

Oneness (unity) is postulated to be an aspect of the primary ontological category called God (Section 2.1.1.1). With regard to ethics and morality, the obvious problem is how to reconcile the oneness of the Divine with good and evil, which appear to be opposites (whether viewed as duality or polarity).

*(Q) Explain how so called good and evil forces are one.*

*(A)* This has just been explained. When there is delegated power to a body that has separated itself from the spirit (or coming from the unseen into the seen, or from the unconscious into the physical consciousness, or from God’s other door – or opening from the infinite to the finite), then the activity is life; with the will of the source of that which has come into being. As to what it does with or about its associations of itself to the source of its activity, as to how far it may go afield, depends upon how high it has attained in its ability to throw off both negative and positive forces. Hence we say, “The higher he flies the harder the fall.” It’s true! Then, that which has been separated into the influence to become a body, whether celestial, terrestrial, or plain clay manifested into activity as man, becomes good or bad. The results to the body so acting are dependent and independent (inter-between, see) upon what he does with the knowledge of – or that source of – activity. (262-52)

Thus (within the context of human ethics and morality) it is a matter of the use of will by soul entities. This is hardly an original position on how to explain evil and suffering within a theistic framework. It is the price to be paid for the opportunity to become one with the Whole called God. Here is another excerpt that tells the same story with greater poetic force:

What is the more real, the book with its printed pages, its gilt edges, or the essence of that told of in the book? Which is the more real, the love manifested in the Son, the Savior, for His brethren, or the essence of love that may be seen even in the vilest of passion? They are one. But that they bring into being in a materialized form is what elements of the one source have been combined to produce a materialization. Beautiful, isn't it? How far, then, is ungodliness from godliness? Just under, that's all! Seek then, ye, in understanding as to where, why, from what source, there may be gained the experiences of an entity, a soul, through its journeys in this the odic sphere, or through that known as this solar system. Each portion of that one whole, in that we call life, as it uses the attributes of the physical forces of a created form manifested in a material world, makes a record; as truly as is seen in the cylinder of the plate of the phonograph, or as is given to the radio transmitter upon the ethers of a material world. (254-68)

The record spoken of here is the akashic record that contains an account of every thought and deed of every soul. From this perspective karma is written into the fabric of space and time (Section 2.3.2). Thus reincarnation, karma, and grace form the foundation of soul development, allowing unique, separated individuals to be one with their Source as equals in an intimate relationship called companionship.

Thus the metaethics of human experience is vastly expanded in context (of both perspective and scale). Ethical decision-making and behavioral activity are measured against standards that the readings call ideals—

which are the choice of each individual as part of the soul development process.

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## 3.2 Normative Ethics

Normative ethics concerns the principles by which people should act in any given situation. Approaches to normative ethics generally fall within three broad categories: teleology, which focuses on consequences; deontology, which emphasizes universal law or moral guidelines; and virtue theory, exemplified by the right action of a virtuous person (Driver, 2022). Not surprisingly, there are aspects of all of these approaches in the Cayce readings since they were given for so many people in diverse situations (including reincarnation scenarios affecting a current life).

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### 3.2.1 Teleological Aspects

Considering the metaethical background provided above, the teleological aspects of ethics and morality in the readings are prominent with regard to the desired outcome—to facilitate soul development that culminates in producing fit companions for relationships (with the Divine and other entities). This is achieved by utilizing the will within each soul to choose and implement ideals in thought and behavior. *Ideals* are standards based on values, with the focus primarily on choosing a spiritual ideal and living it in daily life.

Traditionally, teleological ethics often emphasize consequences that are utilitarian—such as achieving the most good for the most people. Good may be defined in terms of happiness or pleasure. Modern utilitarianism is teleological in that it defines right conduct as whatever promotes the best consequences (Korsgaard, 1998).

The readings are pragmatic and certainly favor goodness, but long-term consequences are emphasized. Soul development of everyone concerned (in any interaction) is the highest value to be achieved. It may not necessarily involve feelings of pleasure or goodness in the process. At times it may even seem that suffering may be required to produce longer-term goodness. This is where the transpersonal metaethical perspective of the readings comes into play, involving cause and effect over lifetimes called karma. Meeting karma constructively can be achieved by making one's will one with the Divine to assure optimal good for all over the long-term process of soul development (involving multiple lifetimes).

*(Q) Have I any karma, and how can it be made good?*

*(A) This is as has been given in the various experiences, that to be met. As is seen in those when there were aggrandizing of selfish interests, or when there's that that makes for that which will make for little differences arising... Then let thy will be one WITH CREATIVE FORCES, NOT for self's own desire. (301-5)*

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### 3.2.2 Deontological Ethics

Deontological ethics focuses on universal principles that underlie or govern moral acts, placing special emphasis on the relationship between duty and the morality of human actions. Thus an action is considered morally good because of some characteristic of the action itself, not because the product of the action is good (as in teleological approaches). Deontological ethics tend to be formal because the central principle lies in the conformity of an action to some rule or law (Britannica, 2024).

Deontological considerations are often found in the life readings, where the individual is provided information about past life activities that are relevant to their current situation. For example, a life reading for a man said to have had a past life as the apostle Andrew emphasized the

expression of the “real self” in bringing to others a greater consciousness of their duty and obligation to their fellow humans, especially with regard to equality:

In these manners, in these ways, may there be at this time the greater expressions of self, of the real self, of those forces that brought many souls to the greater consciousness of their duty to their fellow man, their opportunity to their loved ones, to their obligation, to their privilege of relationships to the Creative Forces in their experience ... to bring into their experience the greater joys in an active service towards the fellow men in ALL walks of life; that is: An equal footing, equal consideration before the moral law, the penal law, the spiritual law. (341-44)

Some readings point out the lawful nature of morals and moral codes, using the expression “natural law” to emphasize the universal quality of such activity. In a life reading given in 1938 for a male college student, a past life in Rome is described when Romans were seeking to emulate Grecian culture, especially regarding games and physical prowess. This intense focus also resulted in mental and spiritual development due to the “higher moral and mental influences” of applying a spiritual ideal, which is the *natural law of spiritual influences*:

In the experience the entity gained, for there were those applications, there were those tenets proclaimed that the preservation of the body – in its beauty, in its activity – was not only for the material gain but for that MENTAL condition which it produced within the experience of the individual; which becomes so akin to the constructive forces as of the building within the experience of each and every soul. Some call such GOODNESS, some call such GODLIKE, some call such SELF-PRESERVATION; but it is rather the natural law of the spiritual influences within the higher moral and mental influences among the children of men! and comes from without – and by having an ideal that is not material but

spiritual in its essence, and being and living true and sincere to same. (1528-1)

Roman law is a distinguishing feature of that culture, here associated with applied “natural law” that has a spiritual basis. A date is not provided for this historical period, but perhaps it was during the earlier formative stages of Roman cultural development seeking to emulate Greek ideals. Such an environment can be a constructive, building influence for each soul, for it is noted that the “entity gained” through application of a spiritual ideal to such matters as physical hygiene and aesthetic appreciation.

The readings do sometimes focus on biblical passages as a source of moral law, especially that attributed to Moses in the book of Deuteronomy:

For as has been pronounced by the giver of the moral as well as the penal code of man’s relationship to man, man’s relationship to God, man’s relationship to parents, man’s relationship to friend and foe alike, it is not who will come down from heaven that ye may have a message, or who would come from over the sea that ye may hear or interpret; for Lo, judgment, Lo, the spirit lies within thine own heart; thine own body, thine own mind... then turn to the 30th of Deuteronomy and ye will read “Today there is set before thee good and evil, life and death, choose thou.” (3506-1)

As an example of *divine command theory*, this excerpt suggests that morality is somehow dependent upon God, and that moral obligation requires obedience to God’s commands (Austin, 2024). The readings tend to approach all such questions from the framework of the individual (or groups, as the case may be) seeking the information. For those firmly established within a religious tradition (as was the case in this instance), utilizing scripture from such sources may be helpful in assisting the individual to be true to their own beliefs. The use of divine command

theory for ethical and moral guidance was not the primary approach of the readings. However, the archetypal quality of basic moral codes found in most major religions resonates with the use of spiritual ideals that form the basis for most ethical guidelines in the readings.

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### 3.2.3 Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics emphasizes virtues, moral character, and practical wisdom. This is not to say that only virtue ethicists attend to virtues, any more than it is to say that only consequentialists attend to consequences or only deontologists to rules. Each of these approaches can make room for virtues, consequences, and rules. Any plausible normative ethical theory will have something to say about all three (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2023). Many virtue ethics theories take their inspiration from Aristotle who declared that a virtuous person is someone who has ideal character traits derived from natural tendencies that need to be nurtured. Virtue ethics theories tend to deal with broad questions, such as “How should I live?”—“What is the good life?”—“What are proper family and social values?” (Athanasoulis, 2024).

The readings do strongly endorse virtuous living, including an entire lesson in the A Search for God series (Lesson 5: Virtue and Understanding). In that context virtue is defined using terms and concepts such as faith, cooperation, knowing thyself, and practicing ideals in daily life. Numerous readings contain encouragement to “minimize the faults, magnify the virtues” in dealing with others. Manifesting Christian virtues such as the fruits of the spirit is also very common in the readings, for example:

And thus we see cooperation, brotherly love, patience,  
longsuffering, gentleness, kindness, coming as MANIFESTED  
experiences into the hearts and minds and lives of others. And  
these are the fruits of the spirit of truth. Then as ye mete these

day by day, ye find them becoming not only as stepping-stones for thine own self but the ladder of truth upon which others may climb. Ye cannot ask others, then, to do that ye would not do thyself. What ye propose, then, ye must DO – in body, in mind, in spirit. (165-26)

Virtuous living may have a strong deontological quality—that is, doing something for its own sake on principle.

Hence the directions as indicated in the training and the giving of reasons for development and activity, and the necessity for a great deal of spiritual development – but practical; not rote nor merely writ, but PRACTICAL application of virtue for Virtue’s sake, love for Love’s sake, and that like begets like in its dealings and activities with others. (1638-1)

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### 3.3 Applied Ethics

Applied ethics is the practical aspect of moral philosophy with respect to real-world actions and their moral considerations. From Plato onward, Western moral philosophers have concerned themselves with practical questions, including suicide, the exposure of infants, the treatment of women, and the proper behavior of public officials (Singer, 2023). Currently, applied ethics encompasses the full spectrum of human activity: private and public life, business, health, technology, law, environment, and leadership.

The applied philosophy of the readings addresses many common moral questions that troubled the individuals who sought Cayce’s help. For example, there are over 700 business readings where ethical concerns were pursued, such as reading 1634-1 given for a medical doctor seeking advice on the distribution of health products. This reading explores the logic of

“like begets like” and “sowing and reaping” as the spiritual foundation for applied business ethics:

In giving advice and counsel regarding the dealings and relationships with others, we would give the entity these as a premise – on and from which reasoning may be drawn: Know, in thy forming of policies and attitudes towards others, that there are immutable laws; and that what ye would give out – if ye would have any semblance of success, or a growth within thy own experience – must be constructive in its nature. Also know that what ye sow, in mental, material and physical relationships, will be measured back to thee again. This should be the basis of thy policies, of thy attitudes, of thy dealings with others. Then, that as ye would prepare for distribution among thy fellow men must in itself have a place in bringing greater hope and help in the experience of the users of such. There must be, naturally then, the same consideration given those who would act in the capacity as the distributors of such products. Know that there are very, very few individuals who do not by nature respond to constructive thought, constructive application. Then, have that policy to do unto others as ye would have others do to you. EXPECT that! LIVE that in thy dealings! And ye will find that He who is the Giver of all good and perfect gifts will bring to thy experience not only harmony and peace but greater opportunities, with material, social and financial success. (1634-1)

Current approaches to applied morality tend to focus on problems and issues that were not prominent during the era when the readings were given (e.g., environmental concerns, bioethics, inequality between the sexes, animal rights, etc.). However, the readings have an inherent approach for addressing every conceivable human ethical or moral concern—ideals.

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## 3.4 Ideals

Applied ethics in the readings is based primarily on the application of ideals. Ideals, in this sense, are standards by which one measures soul development (or lack thereof). The application of ideals in daily living facilitates self-analysis (i.e., know thyself) and ethical activity (at all levels) in all circumstances. This concept of ideals follows the triune pattern of reality creation described in the readings as “spirit is life; the mind is the builder; the physical is the result” (394-1). This triune model is also the basis for making ideals practical in human relations involving morality:

First, find thy ideal, – spiritually; and hold to that. For, with same there is found the pattern of the conduct as to the relationships in a moral, religious and material way with the fellow man; knowing that the laws pertaining to such ideals are eternal. They are spiritual, then; also they are mental; and the results in the material are sure. (1664-2)

The concept of a spiritual ideal as a “pattern of conduct” following “laws” that are “eternal” resonates with Platonic eternal forms which may be expressed as moral ideals:

... Plato’s moral ideals appear both austere and self-abnegating: The soul is to remain aloof from the pleasures of the body in the pursuit of higher knowledge, while communal life demands the subordination of individual wishes and aims to the common good. (Frede & Lee, 2023)

Less restrictive (and more expansive) neoplatonic thinking on ideals and morality is present in Whitehead’s process philosophy, which strongly endorses the concept of ideals as grounded in the concept of God:

Given this conviction – that ideal entities, including moral and aesthetic ideals, can be effective in the world in general, and therefore in human experience in particular, only by virtue of

being actively envisaged by an omnipresent actuality – our experience of ideals became evidence for the existence of such an actuality. In Whitehead’s words: “There are experiences of ideals – of ideals entertained, of ideals aimed at, of ideals achieved, of ideals defaced. This is the experience of the deity of the universe.... The universe is thus understood as including a source of ideals. The effective aspect of this source is deity as immanent in the present experience”. To give an accurate account of our moral experience, therefore, a moral philosopher needs to speak of God. (Griffin, 2007, p. 162)

In practice, the readings recommend a three-step process for identifying ideals:

- Choose a spiritual ideal that represents the highest standard that one can imagine.
- Choose mental ideals (attitudes and thought patterns) that are consistent with the spiritual ideal.
- Choose physical ideals (behaviors and actions) that are consistent with the spiritual ideal.

The word “choose” indicates a conscious, willful action. Ontologically, will is itself a spiritual attribute (Section 2.1.1.2). The readings encourage the identification of ideals as an exercise to be done on paper using a pencil with an eraser, indicating the process will require patience and flexibility. Writing down ideals brings them closer to physical manifestation while making them clearer and more definite in terms of application. It is an ongoing process requiring course correction—that is to be expected. Then, most importantly, the identified ideal must be practiced in the midst of life, in relationships, and in every aspect of life (spiritual, mental, and physical).

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### 3.4.1 The Spiritual Ideal

An ideal is not a goal. Rather, it relates to motive, purpose, and intention—in sum, the spirit in which something is done. A spiritual ideal awakens the spirit within that motivates toward the highest that can be aspired, keeping in mind that all physical manifestations have their origins in mental patterning activated by spiritual impulse. In setting the spiritual ideal:

... we are providing for ourselves that which for a house is the foundation, for a ship is the rudder, for a navigator is the North Star, and for the mason is the plumb line. The ideal gives us a sense of stability, guidance and orientation, as well as a criterion for judgments. (Puryear & Thurston, 1987, p. 95)

First KNOW thy ideal, and that it must be founded in spirit and not in materiality; that the expressions in materiality must be ever constructive in the lives and the influences that same has upon those who are affected by such activity. (1354-1)

The choice of a spiritual ideal can be based on the life of an exemplary individual or concept “whether it be Jesus, Buddha, mind, material, God or whatever is the word which indicates to self the ideals spiritual” (5091-3). It is strictly a personal preference for what to use as a standard for every area of life.

Using a notable historical person as a spiritual ideal is very practical because it provides a living example of how to think and act. In other words, what would Jesus or Buddha think and do in any given situation in life? According to the readings, Jesus traveled to India as a young man and very likely would have encountered and been influenced by the teachings of Buddha, who lived a few centuries earlier (749-2).

Rather than focusing on an individual who may have started a religion, some people have God as a spiritual ideal. Thus a focus on religious practice (rituals, revealed truth in scriptures, etc.) is the organizing

principle in their lives with regard to spiritual, mental, and physical activity.

The readings insist that life is purposeful and the universe has a self-corrective function to encourage progress in soul development. Hence the suggestion to do the ideals exercise using a pencil with an eraser—it is a process that requires adjustments. In contemporary practice, individuals may prefer to work through the ideals exercise digitally, though the essential requirement remains practical application in daily life.

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### 3.4.2 The Mental Ideal

The mental ideal is a standard for thoughts and attitudes based on the spiritual ideal. Therefore when identifying the mental ideal one should choose:

... the ideal mental attitude, as may arise from concepts of the spiritual, in relationship to self, to home, to friends, to neighbors, to thy enemies, to things, to conditions. (5091-3)

Thus a mental ideal is a mindset that directs mental activities in the various areas of life. The list provided in this excerpt covers most areas of concern in applied ethics and moral philosophy. However, philosophical approaches tend to focus more on actual physical behaviors rather than the mental activity that precedes them. In this regard the readings' approach parallels the teachings of Jesus wherein what one thinks (e.g., with regard to adultery, Matthew 5:27–28) is equivalent to the act itself. Thus if one's spiritual ideal is Jesus, this particular teaching might be reflected in a mental ideal of purity or respect for others—a mental pattern or attitude consistent with the example of Jesus. For Buddha as a spiritual ideal, the corresponding mental ideal might be compassion, or simply right thinking as taught in that tradition. Thus while most ethical philosophies tend to

focus heavily on overt behaviors as moral acts, the readings go further by insisting that mental activity must also be considered as part of right living: “Thoughts ARE deeds, and as their currents run bring either those of MIRACLES or crimes” (281-7).

With regard to metaethics, soul development is inherently associated with morality in relation to others and the world at large because mind is the builder and working with ideals is about reality creation. Having a spiritually oriented mind makes it much more likely that the physical manifestation of the mental ideal will result in behaviors and actions that are ethically and morally sound—and not just an idea in the mind.

*(Q) What ideal is meant in the statement, “by keeping an IDEAL, not an idea, an ideal, before self”?*

*(A) An ideal means that to which the entity may, itself, ever look up, knowing itself to be gradually becoming a portion, but NEVER may it be the whole. Something to look up to, or to attempt to ATTAIN to; not an idea, that I may do this or I may do that, that I may accomplish such and such through such modes of operation! for then one reaches the goal! An ideal is that as is sought by, and developed to be, at an at-onement with same, a portion of same, but never the whole. (256-2)*

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### 3.4.3 The Physical Ideal

The physical ideal relates to behavior that will “bring into manifestation the spiritual and mental ideals” in relationship to things, individuals, and situations (5091-3). This relates to common activities of daily living such as washing dishes, writing letters, saying “thank you,” driving courteously and safely, or meditating regularly (Puryear & Thurston, 1979, pp. 100–101).

Of course, when considering applied ethics, this might include business, medical, and social justice practices; environmental activity involving

consumption, recycling, and treatment of wildlife and natural resources, etc. All human behavior is covered within the framework of ideals—applied ideals.

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### 3.4.4 Application

The applied ethics inherent in the readings' approach to ideals can be practical and effective in the midst of life in every conceivable situation that a human can imagine—even when analyzing a past life or contemplating a future incarnation as part of a comprehensive life review. Thus the broader metaethical issues of a transpersonal approach are built into the process through application.

For as ye apply them they become thy ideals. To be just as theories they do not belong to thee, they are still theories so far as thy personal being is concerned. It's the application of same that counts. What do they bring into thine experience? These are well if ye will apply them. (5091-3)

From the perspective of the Cayce readings, applied ethics is putting one's ideals into practice in all the circumstances of life—home, work, recreation, service, etc. Each situation of life is an opportunity to do good and avoid evil. However, this approach requires flexibility and humility:

That that is Truth is growth! For what is truth today may be tomorrow only partially so, to a developing soul! So, the ideal is that which – as truth – grows towards a constructive nature in the experience of each soul; not self-indulgence, not self-glorification, not self-gratification, but that which BEING the basis for expression may be glorified, may be kept as a standard – NOT self! (1297-1)

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## Summary

This chapter has explored ethics and moral philosophy from within a standard philosophical framework of normative ethics, applied ethics, and metaethics. The readings' approach is inclusive of all of these domains, emphasizing application of ideals as the basis for making decisions and taking action in all areas and circumstances of life. The expansiveness of the readings' perspective extends to past life implications in present experiences, all as part of the soul's journey toward oneness with God while fostering individuality when addressing questions of what is good or bad—right or wrong.

## 4. Aesthetics

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that addresses the nature and experience of beauty and art—from both natural and human-made sources. Thus an aesthetic experience may involve perception of the beauty of an object like a work of art or an aspect of nature. However, some philosophers recognize other varieties of aesthetic experience:

You might, for instance, have an aesthetic experience by witnessing not a beautiful but a *sublime* storm. You might have an aesthetic experience not by having a perceptual but rather by having an (imagined) emotional experience of the deep suffering of Sethe expressed in Toni Morrison's great novel *Beloved*. Perhaps you might even have an aesthetic experience by appreciating the way in which an elegant theorem reorganizes your thought about a mathematical structure. (Peacocke, 2023, para. 1)

The Cayce readings explore both the mundane and more expansive dimensions of aesthetics with regard to **creative expression** in all of its manifestations. Of particular interest is the role of aesthetics in facilitating relationship with the Divine by engaging in creative expression and its effects—especially in the experience of the *sublime* that bridges the finite and the infinite. In certain situations, this takes the form of theological aesthetics where religious art may portray the glory and beauty of God as part of worship. The direct experience of the Divine through the act of creation (e.g., as an artist), or vicariously through the appreciation of art (e.g., music, visual art, literature, architecture, etc.) is another avenue of aesthetics described in the readings. The readings also recognize the aesthetics of conceptual beauty expressed as transcendent thoughts and imaginings. In this direction, the aesthetic implications of past lives

(reincarnation) and other transpersonal experiences of the soul add greater context to philosophical aesthetic considerations.

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## 4.1 Artistic Expression

As stated in the readings, the reason for creation is “God’s desire for companionship and expression” (5749-14). The universe (or multiverse, for the readings do sometimes speak in the plural) is the result of divine creative expression (i.e., nature). Humans, echoing the same pattern of desire, exhibit the impulse for creative expression in diverse artistic forms, some attaining genuine beauty. The philosophy of aesthetics is dedicated to the study of such beauty with all of its implications in human perception and emotion. Sometimes such creative expression transcends merely physical or material emotion, allowing a deeper mental and spiritual experience that spans the gulf between the finite and the infinite within the soul of each and every individual. Life readings were especially emphatic about such possibilities, as noted in a life reading describing a past life in France:

... the decorative arts ... music associations ... and the preservation of those things pertaining to the finer arts of man’s experience, were the activities of the entity ... Hence those activities in the Louvre, the arts, are of special interest; music of the varied periods. Not so much the martial music, though this – to be sure – has its place in the moods, as it may be said; yet those that depict the development of individuals towards an activity in their better selves. (1042-1)

When this woman asked what particular talents she should develop in her present life, she was told:

Those as indicated, in preserving for others those things that make for the better things in the experience of the sons of men

towards their understanding of the Creative Forces. For individuals either through carvings, paintings, music, preserve not a BODILY emotion or the material things but the spiritual and mental emotions that make for the bridging or spanning between the finite and the infinite within the soul of each and every individual. (1042-2)

The beauty of spirit as expressed especially in music, but also reflected in the harmony of color and motion, resonates in the soul-self in the harmony of mental and spiritual attunement.

Do learn music. It is part of the beauty of the spirit. For remember, music ... may span that space between the finite and the infinite. In the harmony of sound, the harmony of color, even the harmony of motion itself, its beauty is all akin to that expression of the soul-self in the harmony of the mind, if used properly in relationship to body. (3659-1)

... as indicated, music is that which appeals to the latent and creative force within the entity. For music ... may span that sphere from the sublime to the ridiculous, to the finite to the infinite, from the spheres of activity to the realms of the divine. (3509-1)

For the entity may attain or attune self to the infinite more in music than in any other form or manner of activity. (3271-1)

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## 4.2 The Sublime

The sublime, in aesthetics (from the Latin *sublimis*, [looking up from] under the lintel, high, lofty, elevated, exalted), is the quality of greatness or vast magnitude, whether physical, moral, intellectual, metaphysical, or artistic. The term especially refers to a greatness with which nothing else can be compared and which is beyond all possibility of calculation,

measurement, or imitation. This greatness is often used when referring to nature and its vastness. (New World Encyclopedia, 2023)

In philosophy, the term *sublime* indicates greatness which may involve the realm of the aesthetic, spiritual, and artistic. When used as a category within aesthetics, its main property is that it exceeds the merely beautiful, often extending to the sacred and awe-inspiring. Numerous Cayce readings discuss the sublime in contrast to the ridiculousness of an overly materialistic focus that can lead to confusion within self and in relation to others:

For as has been oft indicated, there is such a thin veil existing between the ridiculous and the sublime, the spiritual and the divine, the material and the mental, that there is little wonder that man oft in his groping misinterprets, misconstrues, misunderstands those influences in the experiences of others. (1391-1)

The readings strongly emphasize the role of music in facilitating experiences of the sublime, lifting and elevating consciousness of the divine within one's own self:

Music, as it has been well said, is that expression that spans the distance between the sublime and the ridiculous, that which appeals to the physical, the spiritual, the mental emotions of individuals. Then, whatever field of direction the entity may take depends much upon whether those emotions are awakened or aroused for the gratifying of material desires, or whether there is the spanning of that realm between the material and the sublime. (2584-1)

For, oft ye will find the music alone may span the distance between the sublime and the ridiculous. So it is in the search for God, that haply ye may find Him, for He is within thine own self. (3188-1)

Whether through music or other human artistic creative expressions, the experience of the sublime is an accessible means of transcendence to higher levels of being. Of course, nature (as an expression of divine creativity) also provides access to powerful aesthetic experiences of sublime transcendence.

... he who understands nature walks close with God. (1904-2)

God seeks all to be one with Him. And as all things were made by Him, that which is the creative influence in every herb, mineral, vegetable, or individual activity is that same force ye call God – and seeks expression! (294-202)

One that fills the mind, the very being, with an expectancy of God will see His movement, His manifestation, in the wind, the sun, the earth, the flowers, the inhabitant of the earth ... (341-31)

For the love of nature grows, and is akin to God. For all nature manifests life, and life IS the manifestation of God. (1968-1)

The experience of the sublime in nature is wonderfully expressed by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece ... Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years... Standing on the bare ground – my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. (Emerson, 2000, p. 6)

Emerson's recognition of both the comic and the mournful inherent in nature is similar to the readings' pairing of the sublime and the ridiculous in human experience. The loss of the sense of a separate self (ego) and

emptying of self is common in the readings that describe mystical experience—as is the circulation of Universal Being through the self and the sense of being part and parcel of God. Naturally one wonders whether Cayce or his readings were influenced by Emerson and his associates—or perhaps all are in some manner connected to a Universal source.

Philosophically, the experiences and writings of Emerson exemplify the mid-nineteenth century New England movement of transcendentalism. As Brannon (2006, p. 1) observes, “Transcendentalism was a uniquely American form of Kantian Idealism which imbued the world with congruence between a higher realm of spiritual truth and a lower one of material substance.”

Cavanaugh has coined the term “connective sublime” to convey the sense of unity emphasized in the transcendental movement:

Wordsworth described an idea common to many transcendental writers such that within everything is an underlying, unifying force, and to Emerson and Wordsworth, this force is sublime. Both writers devoted much of their effort to this feeling of union with nature, and the sublime represented the ultimate emotions of awe and unity. (Cavanaugh, 2014, p. 61)

Cavanaugh coined another term (“extreme sublime”) to describe another perspective on the sublime in the writings of two philosophers (Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant) who expressed feelings of reverence toward the power of nature in events like hurricanes or in the vastness of space. This is in contrast to the mundaneness of the simply aesthetically beautiful, or even the transcendental connective sublime discussed above. Rather, both Kant and Burke focused on terror in the sublime and explored our attraction to it:

While the extreme sublime begins as horror mingled with fascination, according to Kant it finishes with a humbling sense of knowing one's place in the world. For example, there is something both beguiling and frightening in the infinity of space that ultimately leaves the viewer with a sense of being definitively small. This is the sublime of Kant, the sublime that gives us a sense of our human worth ... (Cavanaugh, 2014, pp. 59–60)

The emotion of fear, in the context of experiencing the Divine, is not uncommon. The fundamental revelations to the founders of the three monotheistic religions, among many other revelation experiences, include the experience of feeling fear (Arzy et al., 2005) associated with the extreme sublime.

The Cayce readings make the same observation, even citing (and at least partially explaining) the biblical association of the fear of the Lord and the beginning of wisdom when entering into deep meditation:

Then, as ye begin with the incantation of the [Har-r-r-r-r-aum] Ar-ar-r-r-r – the e-e-e, the o-o-o, the m-m-m, RAISE these in thyself; and ye become close in the presence of thy Maker – as is SHOWN in thyself! They that do such for selfish motives do so to their own undoing. Thus has it oft been said, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom, then, is fear to misapply knowledge in thy dealings with thyself, thy fellow man. (281-28)

This reading is part of the 281 series for a group studying spiritual healing (through prayer and laying on of hands). An essential component of that process is to learn and practice *deep meditation*, which closely parallels the eastern tradition of kundalini yoga. The use of chants (as illustrated in this excerpt), alternate nostril breathing, affirmations, and other techniques of attunement were suggested to facilitate the awakening of the kundalini (symbolized as a coiled serpent at the base of the spine). The literature on

kundalini phenomena documents that such experiences can at times be intensely alarming (e.g., Grof & Grof, 1990). To misuse this process (or even go about it clumsily) can be dangerous (e.g., kundalini crisis). So even spiritual practices for elevating consciousness to higher, sublime levels for service or communion with the divine can involve the experience of fear (or even terror as noted by Burke and Kant). Likewise, development of psychic ability may be associated with danger and fear:

*(Q) Have I ever caught glimpses of past lives, or are these things more dreams and fancy? (A) The entity has caught glimpses of past lives when it has gone out of itself or has allowed the energies of the Kundalini force to pass along the centers of the body. Beware, unless ye are well-balanced in purposes ... (5399-2; see also Section 2.4.6)*

One might easily wonder why the experience of higher consciousness or sublime psychic or mystical states sometimes involves the emotions of danger or fear. It may have something to do with one's concept of God. Is God to be conceptualized as a totally personal, loving parent (as sometimes portrayed in religious scripture)? Or perhaps are there aspects of the divine that may be dangerous and fearful, even for those seeking a companionable relationship? A simple explanation provided in the Cayce readings is that God is both personal and impersonal, God within and God without (1158-12). The impersonal aspect of the divine experienced outwardly in the world of nature is often portrayed as the Creative Force or Creative Energy. Human engagement of this extreme sublime aspect of the Divine (especially in the raw power of nature as described by Burke and Kant) can be overwhelming and fearsome, while simultaneously a valid aesthetic experience.

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## 4.3 The Aesthetics of Truth

Aesthetic criteria are enormously valuable in forming our judgments ... A beautiful idea has a much greater chance of being a correct idea than an ugly one. (Penrose, 1989, p. 421)

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. (Keats, 1819, lines 49–50)

Does beauty have a role to play in the search for truth? Specifically, can aesthetic values such as symmetry, simplicity, and unity aid in the quest for understanding nature (science) and life in its broader sense (philosophy)?

Scientists often use aesthetic values in the evaluation and choice of theories. Aesthetic values are not only regarded as leading to practically more useful theories, but are often taken to be indicators of the truth of a theory. (Ivanova, 2017)

Within science, beauty (when associated with a concept or theory) is sometimes called elegance. Of particular note in this regard is the scientific quest for a unified theory (sometimes called a theory of everything) that unites all of the forces recognized by physicists (Green, 2003). Such theories fall within the domain of the beauty of understanding as described by Vaidyanathan:

The beauty here lies in grasping the hidden order behind phenomena, or the mechanism or inner logic that explains how some system works ... This type of beauty is about insight into the deeper structure of reality: the hidden order beneath appearances, and the inner causal logic of systems. (Vaidyanathan, 2023)

Numerous Cayce readings exemplify the *beauty of understanding* by providing insight into the “hidden order beneath appearances” and

“deeper structure of reality”—usually within the context of oneness. An entire reading is dedicated to an explanation of the “Oneness of all Force” (262-52). This reading provides the outline of a metaphysical explanation of creation and evolution based on the concept of unity as the source of diversity—even addressing the problem of evil from the view of good and evil being manifestations of the same One Force. The entirety of reading 262-52 is analyzed in Section 5.2 with regard to the use of logic in the readings. Here is an excerpt from another reading that addresses an aspect of the same concept, associating beauty with unity as expressed in terms of the materialization of mind and spirit in the physical reality of human experience:

What is the more real, the book with its printed pages, its gilt edges, or the essence of that told of in the book? Which is the more real, the love manifested in the Son, the Savior, for His brethren, or the essence of love that may be seen even in the vilest of passion? They are one. But that they bring into being in a materialized form is what elements of the one source have been combined to produce a materialization. Beautiful, isn’t it? How far, then, is ungodliness from godliness? Just under, that’s all! (254-68)

An emphasis in the readings (and particularly the life readings) is to help “others to understand the beauty of the soul and spirit forces of themselves” (779-5). Such *beauty of understanding* is the essence of the concept of “know thyself” in the readings. With this understanding, “great truths resound ... through the life, through the whole being of the entity, see? Beautiful!” (900-152)

For example, a reading for a man suffering from a wide range of troubling symptoms was told to make a close study of the book of Revelation (the last book of the Christian Bible), “comparing same to the physical body – and we will find a beautiful awakening” (311-4). Numerous readings

discuss the meaning of the Revelation as a symbolic psychological/spiritual treatise, “the revelation of self” (e.g., 1173-8). When asked for reading material that explains both “physical and metaphysical activities of the organs of the body” in human experience, a reading recommended the book of Revelation “as applied to Gray’s Anatomy” (264-15). Thus the “beautiful awakening” promised in reading 311-4 signals an aesthetic of truth related to soul development described in many readings dealing with truth and beauty.

However, in some readings the beauty of understanding is neither simple nor painless. Consider the case of a six-year-old girl with terminal illness (diagnosed as incurable by seven physicians, three of whom were specialists at the Mayo Clinic). Her reading spoke of “karmic forces” and the larger context of the soul’s purpose for incarnating into such a tragic situation. The reading sought to help the child (and those close to her) to understand the “BEAUTY of transition” and its role in “spiritual evolution” while providing comfort and symptomatic relief until the transition.

So, only to keep the body as easy as possible, and to maintain about this developing mind the BEAUTY of transition, is the help as we find that may be given. A great deal might be given from the attitudes or phases of karmic forces, but for the material physical – to only make to the understanding mind the beauties of transition in the spiritual evolution of the mental and soul forces offers for the body and those about same that help, that stamina, that makes for a greater comprehending of the purposes of a soul’s entrance into materiality, even though to suffer under those experiences and to bring – as it appears – little opportunity of material help. Yet these experiences build into the warp and woof of each soul that which is a CONTINUED development for those that seek to know the ways of Divinity in its dealings with man. Hence let each study to show THEMSELVES approved unto the Creative

Forces. While these appear from the material view as very little, the hope and the promise that have been given are sure – if we hold to those and claim them by our dealings with others as our very own. (1270-1)

As challenging as it may seem to seek the beauty of understanding in such cases (where truth involves difficult soul lessons), this is the position taken in the readings—an aesthetic based on the beauty of soul development, however it may occur. Furthermore, in the thousands of physical readings (many of which were provided for individuals with extremely difficult medical conditions) the beauty of understanding takes a different turn by describing in detail the causes and treatment of virtually the entire scope of human illness including cancer, asthma, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis, schizophrenia, depression, epilepsy, etc. And of course, there are also mental-spiritual and life readings that engage the beauty of understanding the soul's journey, through past lives (on earth) and sojourns in other (cosmic) realms of consciousness—all of which hold the potential for insight into the hidden order beneath appearances and the deeper structure of reality associated with the aesthetics of truth presented in the readings.

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## Summary

Philosophical aesthetics, in its most mundane and expansive expressions (as portrayed in the readings), includes the experience of the sublime through human artistic expression as well as the beauty and magnificence of nature. In particular, music may span the gulf between the sublime and the ridiculous, between the finite and the infinite. The sublime may entail powerful manifestations of the Divine that are fearsome and overwhelming (whether in the natural environment or in direct human experience of a psychic or mystical nature). The readings also discuss the

beauty of understanding associated with soul development, even in circumstances of dreadful karmic conditions that hold the potential for growth for all involved. Such is the aesthetics of truth in which the hidden order beneath appearances and the deeper structure of reality are revealed.

## 5. Logic

Logic has been characterized in two related ways that are both relevant to understanding the applied epistemology of the Cayce readings. First, in its formal philosophical sense:

Logic may be characterized as the study of truths based completely on the meanings of the terms they contain. In philosophy it includes both formal and informal logic. (Hintikka, 2019)

Second, in its applied sense:

Applied logic, [is] the study of the practical art of right reasoning. This study takes different forms depending on the type of reasoning involved and on what the criteria of right reasoning are taken to be. The reasoning in question may turn on the principles of logic alone, or it may also involve nonlogical concepts. The study of the applications of logic thus has two parts—dealing on the one hand with general questions regarding the evaluation of reasoning and on the other hand with different particular applications and the problems that arise in them. (Hintikka, 2020)

The Cayce readings make use of applied, informal logic to assist individuals seeking help with the various challenges of life. Usually the logic is embedded in conversational advice and counsel to address specific problems or conditions. At times the reasoning is more general (and even universal), yet always provided with the underlying assumption of application. When the logic is explicit, it typically calls attention to *premises and reasoning*. Essentially, this entire manuscript is an elaboration on two core premises in the Cayce readings:

- The *reason for creation* of the universe is: “God’s desire for companionship and expression.” (5749-14)
- The *purpose and cause of being* is for the soul to: “... KNOW itself to BE itself and part of the Whole; not the Whole but one WITH the whole; and thus retaining its individuality, knowing itself to be itself yet one with the purposes of the First Cause that called it, the entity, into BEING, into the awareness, into the consciousness of itself. That is the purpose, that is the cause of BEING.” (826-11)  
Conceptually, this premise provides the means for companionship and creative expression for the soul in relation to the Whole, fulfilling the reason for the creation of the universe stated in the first premise.

These premises are explored in this chapter through case studies of applied logic drawn from personal and special readings, with emphasis throughout on practical application. The readings also contain some very simple and direct logic based on conditional propositions. Here are two examples for the premise of “like begets like” (i.e., the biblical principle of sowing and reaping):

For in the manifestation of spirit and mind and matter, like begets like – if the entity shows itself friendly, there will be friends – if the entity manifests itself in those things pertaining to a universal consciousness, that is the good for all rather than the individual or individual group. (3226-1)

Whatsoever an entity, an individual sows, that must he reap. That as law cannot be changed. As to whether one meets it in the letter of the law or in mercy, in grace, becomes the choice of the entity. If one would have mercy, grace, love, friends, one must show self in such a manner to those with whom one becomes associated. For like begets like. (5001-1)

Note the conditional word “if” in these excerpts. If applied, the premise will produce results that support the premise. This is the basis for the applied logic of the readings. It is up to each individual to test the logic in the experience of daily life.

Similarly, in the midst of a physical reading dealing with general debilitation, diet deficiencies, and immune system problems, the psychosomatic aspect of the condition is addressed: “This man is not nervous all the time, but sometimes, he seems to lose confidence in himself; in other words, he becomes afraid of himself” (87-1). This observation is followed by a simple bit of applied logic based on the premise that mind is the builder:

The mind governs the body more or less; consequently, the mind should dwell on beautiful things if we would have a healthy body. (87-1)

These three consecutive sentences are embedded in a rather long paragraph without calling attention to the logical basis for the premises and conclusion. However, numerous readings do provide a more structured approach to logic, often in the opening paragraphs that lay out the premises and reasoning for evaluating the material that follows.

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## 5.1 Logic of Personal Reasoning from Premises

When a personal reading uses the language of logic, the intent is simply to engage the mind of the recipient to point out the need for “a premise – on and from which reasoning may be drawn” (1634-1). This is often a reading for an individual (e.g., doctor, attorney, accountant, etc.) who expects the information to make sense and be reasonable. By declaring a premise from

which to reason, a reading can be preemptive in addressing concerns that the individual might have about the information that is provided. Perhaps the individual is skeptical about the premise of holistic healing, or the possibility of reincarnation (much less interim astral sojourns described in most life readings). Certain expansive spiritual concepts concerning companionship with God may seem implausible. The readings seem to take this into consideration and, when helpful, include a section utilizing the logic of personal reasoning from established premises to make the content more applicable. That is always the purpose of any reading—application by persons obtaining the information. The criteria for the logic are also personal. If an individual is a devout Christian, the logical propositions may be enmeshed in King James biblical language and concepts familiar to those living in the “Bible Belt” of America (where most of the readings were provided). In any case, the logic must be reasonable to the person requesting the reading. A later section considers the logic of “special readings” of a more broad (and even universal) nature. For now, the emphasis is on personal readings intended for personal application.

For example, physical reading 2528-2 was given on July 5, 1942 for a fifty-seven-year-old man suffering from general debilitation resulting from an injury. After a comprehensive explanation of anatomy and pathophysiology focusing especially on spinal and digestive issues—followed by a general treatment plan—he asked: “Should any special treatment or attention be given to cramps in legs, aches in shoulders, aches in toe joints, ill feeling in stomach, nausea, dizziness, and nerves ... physical vigor and mental alertness?” The treatment plan included hydrotherapy, massage, and mental healing through the use of the will and application of ideals. The holistic approach encouraged in this reading (physical, mental, spiritual) is noteworthy as the hallmark of the physical readings—and the reason Edgar Cayce is sometimes called the “father of holistic medicine” (e.g., Brookshire, 2004). As with all the cases in this

section, a simple logical explication is provided after the statement of premise for each reading excerpt.

In considering the physical, mental and spiritual relationships, – it would be necessary that the premises be declared from which any reasoning or application of measures would be taken, that the body may gain the better concept of the relationships that the mental and the physical bear with the spiritual forces, in relationship to healing of any nature. The body finds itself in a material world of three-dimensional proportions. That which manifests in the mental is from or of a spiritual nature, but the results in the material or physical manifestation depend upon the spirit with which the activity is prompted.... [Nine paragraphs of pathophysiological explanation and treatment recommendations are provided here.] These are the premises, then, from and through which the application may be made to self, as for physical, mental and spiritual direction for healing. (2528-2)

**Explication:**

1. Each individual is a triune entity involving physical, mental, and spiritual relationships.
  2. Healing measures necessarily address all three aspects—physical, mental, and spiritual.
  3. Physical manifestation is the result of spiritual and mental activity.
- 
4. / ∴ Healing of the physical body is dependent upon the spirit with which therapeutic applications are undertaken.

Business reading 877-21 was given on September 8, 1937 for a forty-six-year-old corporate attorney. This man received many paragraphs of

practical business advice before he posed the question: “For what purpose did I incarnate this time?” The reply contains practical advice on how to be a companion to Creative Forces in daily life—to know oneself as a unique individual and yet be one with God—which is the essence of the applied philosophy of the readings.

Let’s begin from that premise from which ALL of these may be reckoned: God hath not willed that any soul should be separated from Him, but hath with every trial, every temptation, and every ERROR, prepared a way of escape. That the soul of man enters, then, or incarnates, is that there is needed in the lives of those whom the entity contacts that ability of that entity to present those influences of Creative Energies as there needs be for the production of helpful, hopeful experience; or the fruits of the spirit. Hence each entity then, in its entrance, is to fulfill that which has been given, “As ye do it unto the least of thy brethren, ye do it unto thy Maker.” Know these, too, present then to every entity, every soul manifesting or incarnating, the basis from which that soul must become active. That the EXPERIENCES of the soul in each appearance or activity in the earth, then, makes for either the stepping-stones or the stumbling-stones, is as is shown in the book of remembrance [akashic record]. Then, that ye may be a light in HIS name; that ye may become one with Him by giving to others that hope, that faith, by those activities to them that may bring a brighter and brighter outlook, and more adaptable for the companionship with, the work with, that Creative Force. For we all – and ye are as others – are gods in the making; not THE God, but gods in the making! For He would have thee be one with Him. Then when ye reason from these activities in thy daily associations ye find it becomes as was given of old, not as a formula or ritual, or that ye should cry “Who shall go over the earth and bring a message, or who shall descend from heaven or arise from hell that I may know – for Lo, He is with thee!” (877-21)

**Explication:**

1. God desires companionship.
  2. Souls (as “gods in the making”) have the potential to be equal companions with God.
  3. Incarnation in the earth provides souls with the opportunity to develop into fit companions with God.
  4. God is within all beings.
  5. How one treats others is how one treats God.
  6. A record is kept of how one treats others.
  7. Being helpful to others creates steppingstones on the path to oneness with God within.
- 
8. / ∴ One may experience companionship with God by attuning within and showing compassion to others (by applying the “fruits of the spirit”).

Business reading 1634-1 was given on July 11, 1938 for a fifty-year-old medical doctor seeking advice on the distribution of health products. This reading explores the logic of “like begets like” and “sowing and reaping” as spiritual premises for making business decisions:

In giving advice and counsel regarding the dealings and relationships with others, we would give the entity these as a premise – on and from which reasoning may be drawn: Know, in thy forming of policies and attitudes towards others, that there are immutable laws; and that what ye would give out – if ye would have any semblance of success, or a growth within thy own experience – must be constructive in its nature. Also know that what ye sow, in mental, material and physical

relationships, will be measured back to thee again. This should be the basis of thy policies, of thy attitudes, of thy dealings with others. Then, that as ye would prepare for distribution among thy fellow men must in itself have a place in bringing greater hope and help in the experience of the users of such. There must be, naturally then, the same consideration given those who would act in the capacity as the distributors of such products. Know that there are very, very few individuals who do not by nature respond to constructive thought, constructive application. Then, have that policy to do unto others as ye would have others do to you. EXPECT that! LIVE that in thy dealings! And ye will find that He who is the Giver of all good and perfect gifts will bring to thy experience not only harmony and peace but greater opportunities, with material, social and financial success. (1634-1)

**Explication:**

1. In dealings and relationships with others, you reap what you sow.
2. Individuals by nature tend to respond to constructive thought in a positive manner.
3. Good business practice is likely to result in material, social, and financial success.

- 
4. / ∴ Treating others with the same consideration that you would hope and expect to receive yourself is good business practice.

Mental-Spiritual reading 622-7 was given on May 26, 1943 for a thirty-five-year-old government clerk and bookkeeper. The hypnotic suggestion to Cayce requested “specific and definite suggestions for corrective measures” regarding “physical and mental conditions surrounding him at work and the various social contacts ...”

In answering, or in giving advice and counsel to the entity as respecting such relationships or associations sought here, it is well that first there be given the premise from which such reasoning or such counsel would be drawn. For, there are ideas and there are ideals. To some individuals, some individual ideals are mere ideas. To others we find that ideas, or to that individual, are ideals. Thus in the individual entity's reasoning, or analyzing of problems, of conditions, of associations, first determine in self what is thine OWN ideal; spiritual, mental and material. Know that which is the ideal manner of relationships in a social or in a business manner must be founded upon spiritual ideals; else they may have attained their growth before – or by the time they have begun. But that which is of a spiritual nature GROWS. For, as is the law, ye grow in grace, in knowledge, in understanding. And thus it is from such premise that all such reasoning, or such advice or counsel, would be drawn. (622-7)

**Explication:**

1. Ideals are more than ideas.
  2. Ideals are the standard for measuring all spiritual, mental, and material activity, including social and work-related relationships.
  3. Determining one's own spiritual ideal is necessary for optimal growth and development in all areas of life.
- 
4. / ∴ Apply a spiritual ideal as the basis or standard for social and work relationships.

Life reading 1423-1 was given on August 14, 1937 for a forty-five-year-old attorney. His reading encouraged him to become aware of innate mental urges from planetary sojourns and emotional urges from material (earthly)

sojourns. Astrologically, “the entity under a ruling influence of Venus has an indomitable will, and if the purpose is once set it must be carried through or know the reason why!” Venus’ influence was also associated with “the love of wit – that almost at times becomes sarcasm ... and this is natural or innate from those very applications of the entity’s mental self ...” Four past earthly lives were also described. The one with the strongest emotional connection was in Rome during the transition from Emperor Claudius to Nero. Mr. [1423] had been an emissary who became “averse to the non-activity of the rule of the new emperor [Nero], and averse to the influences that arose in the affairs owing to the interference of Claudius’ wife [Agrippina]. Hence we find those doubtings that oft arise as to the experiences of women in high places; and the aversion to their being in authority where their activities are to control the affairs of men in service. These as we find arise from experience, and hence become innately as a portion of the entity’s EMOTIONAL natures in these directions.” The concluding section of this reading provided specific advice encouraging application of the information provided: “... but know there is the world without, the world within, and that knowledge only does not bring the closer relationship [with Creative Forces] but the application.” Thus application is a primary theme in every reading.

In giving the interpretations of those records as we find here, it is well that the premise from which these [akashic] records are read be given the entity... The astrological aspects are from those periods of interim between an entity’s sojourns in the material or earth plane, and arise in manifested form in the experiences as innate – or mental influences ... As to the material [earthly] sojourns, these become the emotions of the entity – or those that arise from innate urges from what may be termed at times the hereditary forces, or those that become as the senses or the sensing of an individual. While the entity is of an analytical mind, these urges as we find arise through the sensory forces from experiences of the entity in the earth! ...

remember that ye are showing forth that which is the first law,  
“As ye do it to these, the least of thy brethren, ye do it unto thy  
Maker.” (1423-1)

**Explication:**

1. Astrological influences from sojourns outside the earth tend to be experienced as mental urges.
  2. Earthly past life influences tend to be experienced as emotional urges.
  3. Practical self-knowledge (of mental and emotional tendencies) can be accessed through a life reading.
- 
4. / ∴ Apply the information provided in the life reading for self-knowledge and a closer relationship with God and others.

Life reading 1671-2 was given on February 16, 1939 for a twenty-year-old man. Of the planetary (astrological) influences noted in this reading, Mercury was emphasized as the source of high mental reasoning abilities which are sometimes expressed as judgments of others. From Neptune, intuitive abilities and an interest in mystical unseen forces are innately present. How these tendencies are expressed will be dependent upon the ideal that he chooses as a standard for thinking and behaving. He was advised to: “Make sure it is founded in that which is eternal.”

An important past life in America following the French Revolution was described. His parents had left France for America and chose to remain when others from their group had returned to France. He excelled in social and educational fields in the region known as Catawba. He was told that records of that old settlement would bear out his activities as a leader and

director in the early settling there. He carried over abilities in using natural resources for material welfare which he could put to good use. A past life in Greece was noted where he had been influenced by Socrates. From that experience he gained in understanding of self but lost in the “overjudgements and the holding of grudges and belittling” those who didn’t understand him. He was encouraged to keep a balance in his current life. A past life in ancient Persia was also noted where he was in charge of “weights, of measurements; setting standards for the exchange of the goods of one land and another.” Concluding comments in his readings encouraged him to avoid judgment of others while pursuing work “in any field where there are the needs for detail work, – whether in facts, in figures, in formulas or in what – these are the fields for thy activity, – rather than in the open or in fields or the like.” The logical premise for his reading explained:

In choosing those interpretations from the records as are given here, these are chosen with the desire that the experience may be applied in the activities of the entity in such a manner as to make this sojourn in the material plane one of development. To be sure, these are drawn from the premise that each entity enters with certain abilities and faculties for activities in given endeavors, that would make for or mar the development not only in the material but aid in bringing through the mental experience and association a greater oneness with the universal energies or spiritual influences – which is the purpose for the entering of each soul into material manifestations. Hence these are from that premise that the mental and spiritual is that portion that must be the directing force, and that material successes – so called – will be the result of well-applied spiritual and mental purposes and desires by the entity. For without a knowledge of spiritual and mental things, little of growth or advancement may be made by an entity. (1671-2)

**Explication:**

1. Each entity incarnates on earth with certain abilities and faculties based on previous sojourns.
  2. The purpose of earthly sojourns is development toward oneness with universal or spiritual influences.
  3. Mental and spiritual influences must be the directing force for material success and soul development.
  4. Knowledge of mental and spiritual things may be gained through a life reading.
- 
5. / ∴ Learn and apply the information provided in the life reading for growth and advancement in this earthly experience.

Life reading 2599-1 was given on October 7, 1941 for a thirty-nine-year-old sales manager. Based on astrological influences from planetary sojourns, three patterns were noted: from Venus, an appreciation of the beautiful as related to art; from Jupiter, the urge for association with groups and masses; and from Uranus, a tendency to go to extremes with an innate interest in the psychic and occult. Three earthly past lives were also described. During the American Revolution he was effective in statecraft and politics which carried over into his current incarnation as abilities as a salesman and evaluator of natural products, particularly as related to financial institutions, both national and international in scope. Based on these experiences his reading suggested that he consider seeking employment with “financial institutions such as those of the American Maryland Finance Corporation, or the like.” In a similar vein, these innate tendencies correlate with urges from a past life in Rome when the empire expanded and he was an emissary to what is now Abyssinia and Egypt

where he facilitated “the financial or material welfare of the empire.” Again, the innate abilities carried over from that past life as the “capacity of an emissary for large institutions, or financial standards,” particularly in foreign lands. The third past life cited in this reading was in ancient Egypt where he was active in dealing with “ores, precious metals, stones” for creating beautiful works of art. The reading noted a “latent urge” that could be utilized in his current experience “as a representative of firms that may have the various products” associated with other lands. In concluding the reading, specific advice was provided for utilizing the innate urges from planetary sojourns and past earthly lives by “representing large financial institutions ... corporations ... not merely banks but rather the financial organizations for financing those opportunities.” This could be an expression of self for the “greater good [that] may be accomplished, materially, mentally, spiritually. DO NOT leave out spirituality in thy dealings with others.”

All of this diverse information could be useful and practical if applied in this man’s life. Yet it would have to be viewed as sensible, reasonable, and even logical for it to be given serious consideration. Thus near the beginning of the reading, the premise for judging the value of the information was advanced:

Then let it be from this premise that the judgments and the activities of this entity in this material experience may be drawn as a helpful force in its journey through this particular sojourn. From the sources of the previous sojourns we find urges arising materially in the experience of the entity, – that is, from the previous earthly sojourns as well as the astrological sojourns during the interims between earthly manifestations. Not that there are influences from the position of stars, planets or the like that may not be met; but these are as urges – just as the environs of an individual in the material plane produce urges, because of studies or activities in a given direction, and because certain material abilities are innately a

part of the entity's experience. Yet urges oft arise in the experience of an entity for this or that, the source of which the entity itself may not understand or comprehend – for no one in the family thought or acted in that direction. Then, this – the environ of the entity, the soul manifesting in the earth – may be called by another name, as with this entity – a part of the present name in the experience before this; and the abilities as an individual to meet others, to influence them in the activities in which certain interests might be magnified, come from the entity's activities in the previous sojourn. Thus the earthly sojourns make for manifested urges in the present experience. Also those planetary sojourns, in this present solar system, make for urges that are accredited to those particular planets as states of consciousness – that become innately manifested in the present entity. (2599-1)

**Explication:**

1. Mental and emotional urges arise from previous earthly sojourns as well as the planetary sojourns during the interims between earthly incarnations.
  2. Just as urges in the earth plane are produced by this planet's environment, astrological urges are produced by the environment of each planetary sojourn.
  3. Urges from past earthly lives and planetary sojourns may result in individual distinctiveness that cannot be easily explained by current environmental influences (familial heredity or upbringing).
  4. A life reading can provide information about innate and latent urges that influence one's life.
-

5. / ∴ A life reading may therefore be helpful in gaining self-knowledge and engaging in constructive interpersonal relations including work opportunities in the present life.

Mental-Spiritual reading 1650-2 was given on October 7, 1938 for an accountant and a woman friend as a follow-up to life readings that described karmic patterns manifesting in their current relationship. A report associated with this reading contains a portion of a letter from Ms. [1523]: "...[1650] and I have gotten along perfectly since our joint reading, and from all indications, we'll continue to do so. We've started going to Sunday School (Mr. Cayce's class) and [1650] is doing some book reviews for Hugh Lynn. I can see such a change in him, and naturally I have changed too." Here is the hypnotic suggestion and introductory paragraphs laying out the logic for this reading:

*GC: You will have before you the entities present in this room, [1523], born December 2, 1908 in Oceana, Va., and [1650], born December 13, 1900; also the information which has been given them through this channel. In the light of what has been given, what have they to work out individually or together, in the immediate future or in this experience? You will answer the questions they each have submitted, as I ask them:*

Yes – we have the records of the entities here; [1650] and [1523]. In analyzing the experiences of these entities, it is well that there be given that premise from which such might be or is reasoned; that there may be an answering to each from within. For unless that as may be given answers to something within, it can be of little help or value to either of these. Know that each enters the experience into materialization for a purpose. That purpose is that each soul may be aware of its relationship to the Creative Forces – or God. Know that each enters with those activities in which each has lived and manifested, as a part of its natures, as a part of its MENTAL environs. Also know that the meeting, the association, the

activity in the material experience in the present is NOT of chance but a purposeful experience for each; and that each may be a helpmeet one to the other in attaining and gaining such an understanding of the purposes for that meeting, that association, as to ATTAIN the correct concept of the PURPOSE of their incoming or entrance into this material experience. Know that this has not been completed in the present, and thus is to be MET IN EACH! Then why not now? It is a practical, it is a purposeful experience – for each. For the associations in the past experience in the lands about the present environs, or a portion of the same land and those environs about the Dearborn land, are those problems that form the present disturbance in the mental selves. Do not then justify SELF by condemning one another! Justify self rather by living, being that which will be a constructive experience in the life of ONE ANOTHER! For that is the INNATE, that is the real desire, that is the real purpose in each; else there would not have been that attraction one for the other. (1650-2)

**Explication:**

1. Each soul enters material experience (on earth) for a purpose.
2. That purpose is that each soul may be aware of its relationship to the Creative Forces—or God.
3. Each soul enters with those influences from activities in which each has lived and manifested (in past sojourns).
4. The meeting of souls on earth (through attraction) is not by chance.
5. Such meetings provide opportunities to work out karma from interactions in past sojourns.
6. A past life interaction in Dearborn (near present Chicago, Illinois) has resulted in unresolved issues to be worked out in the present life of each.

7. / ∴ Do not condemn one another—rather work out your issues in a constructive manner during the present experience for your mutual soul development (so that you may become more aware of your relationship to the Creative Forces—or God).
- 

## 5.2 Logic in Special Readings

Over 900 readings fall within the category of “special,” usually indicating that the information is not for a particular individual. Rather, the focus of such special readings is more general (or even universal) in scope. Thus when logic and reasoning are specified, the intent may be to make the information relevant to a larger, more diverse audience.

For example, special reading 262-52 was requested for the purpose of explaining the “Oneness of all Force.” The hypnotic suggestion given at the beginning of the session by Mrs. Cayce included the phrase: “furnish us with some basic, logical, systematically arranged statements which can be given out as fundamental truths.” One might expect the information to be as logical as possible, considering the source. Because the reading is fairly long, the original formatting (of numbered paragraphs) is maintained for clarity:

1. GC: You will give at this time a discourse which will sum up and correlate the data already given through this channel on the fundamental truths regarding the Oneness of all Force, and will furnish us with some basic, logical, systematically arranged statements which can be given out as fundamental truths to students of this work. You will answer the questions on this subject which will be asked.
2. EC: Yes. In giving that which may be given out as basic truth, and correlating the statements that have been made from

time to time, it would have been better to have gathered from that given the basis for expansion through these channels.

3. Yet, we may give that which may be the basis or the foundation of truth that may be gathered here and there.

4. As to the correlation and the setting out of paragraphs, at least you should do something!

5. The basis, then: “Know, O Israel, (Know, O People) the Lord Thy God is One!”

6. From this premise we would reason, that: In the manifestation of all power, force, motion, vibration, that which impels, that which detracts, is in its essence of one force, one source, in its elemental form. As to what has been done or accomplished by or through the activity of entities that have been delegated powers in activity is another story.

7. As to the one source or one force, then, are the questions presented in the present.

8. God, the first cause, the first principle, the first movement, IS! That’s the beginning! That is, that was, that ever shall be!

9. The following of those sources, forces, activities that are in accord with the Creative Force or first cause – its laws, then – is to be one with the source, or equal with yet separate from that first cause.

10. When, then, may man – as an element, an entity, a separate being manifested in material life and form – be aware or conscious of the moving of that first cause within his own environ?

11. Or, taking man in his present position or consciousness, how or when may he be aware of that first cause moving within his realm of consciousness?

12. In the beginning there was the force of attraction and the force that repelled. Hence, in man's consciousness he becomes aware of what is known as the atomic or cellular form of movement about which there becomes nebulous activity. And this is the lowest form (as man would designate) that's in active forces in his experience. Yet this very movement that separates the forces in atomic influence is the first cause, or the manifestation of that called God in the material plane!

13. Then, as it gathers of positive-negative forces in their activity, whether it be of one element or realm or another, it becomes magnified in its force or sources through the universe.

14. Hence we find worlds, suns, stars, nebulae, and whole solar systems MOVING from a first cause.

15. When this first cause comes into man's experience in the present realm he becomes confused, in that he appears to have an influence upon this force or power in directing same. Certainly! Much, though, in the manner as the reflection of light in a mirror. For, it is only reflected force that man may have upon those forces that show themselves in the activities, in whatever realm into which man may be delving in the moment – whether of the nebulae, the gaseous, or the elements that have gathered together in their activity throughout that man has chosen to call time or space. And becomes, in its very movement, of that of which the first cause takes thought IN a finite existence or consciousness.

16. Hence, as man applies himself – or uses that of which he becomes conscious in the realm of activity, and gives or places the credit (as would be called) in man's consciousness in the correct sphere or realm he becomes conscious of that union of force with the infinite with the finite force.

17. Hence, in the fruits of that – as is given oft, as the fruits of the spirit – does man become aware of the infinite penetrating,

or inter-penetrating the activities of all forces of matter, or that which is a manifestation of the realm of the infinite into the finite – and the finite becomes conscious of same.

18. As to the application of these as truths, then:

19. It may be said that, as the man makes in self – through the ability given for man in his activity in a material plane – the will one with the laws of creative influence, we begin with:

20. “Like begets like – As he sows, so shall he reap – As the man thinketh in the heart, so is he.”

21. These are all but trite sayings to most of us, even the thinking man; but should the mind of an individual (the finite mind) turn within his own being for the law pertaining to these trite sayings, until the understanding arises, then there is the consciousness in the finite of the infinite moving upon and in the inner self.

22. So does life in all its force begin in the earth. The moving of the infinite upon the negative force of the finite in the material, or to become a manifested force.

23. Ready for questions.

24. (Q) Explain how so called good and evil forces are one.  
(A) This has just been explained. When there is delegated power to a body that has separated itself from the spirit (or coming from the unseen into the seen, or from the unconscious into the physical consciousness, or from God’s other door – or opening from the infinite to the finite), then the activity is life; with the will of the source of that which has come into being. As to what it does with or about its associations of itself to the source of its activity, as to how far it may go afield, depends upon how high it has attained in its ability to throw off both negative and positive forces. Hence we say, “The higher he

flies the harder the fall.” It’s true! Then, that which has been separated into the influence to become a body, whether celestial, terrestrial, or plain clay manifested into activity as man, becomes good or bad. The results to the body so acting are dependent and independent (inter-between, see) upon what he does with the knowledge of – or that source of – activity.

25. (Q) In relation to the Oneness of all force, explain the popular concept of the Devil, seemingly substantiated in the Bible by many passages of scripture. (A) In the beginning, celestial beings. We have first the Son, then the other sons or celestial beings that are given their force and power. Hence that force which rebelled in the unseen forces (or in spirit) that came into activity, was that influence which has been called Satan, the Devil, the Serpent; they are One. That of REBELLION! Hence, when man in any activity rebels against the influences of good he harkens to the influence of evil rather than the influence of good. Hence, will is given to man as he comes into this manifested form that we see in material forces, for the choice. As given, “There is set before thee (man) good and evil.” Evil is rebellion. Good is the Son of Life, of Light, of Truth; and the Son of Light, of Life, of Truth, came into physical being to demonstrate and show and lead the way for man’s ascent to the power of good over evil in a material world. As there is, then, a personal savior, there is the personal devil.

26. We are through.

**Explication of the basic premise of “Oneness of all Force”:**

1. God (the first cause, the first principle, the first movement) is One Force.
2. All power, force, motion, and vibration are manifestations of the One Force.

3. The One Force manifests as a polarity of attraction and repulsion (positive and negative forces).
4. Polarity resulted in self-conscious souls (capable of both separation from and oneness with the One Force).
5. The experience of time and space is the consciousness of the polarity of the finite and infinite.
6. Polarity manifests at the atomic level as a nebulous activity.
7. Magnification of the force of polarity produced the finite material cosmos.
8. Soul consciousness of the infinite One Force manifesting in finite matter produces the experience of time and space.
9. In patience (fruits of the spirit) the soul experiences development in time and space.
10. Soul development is made possible by the immutable law “like begets like” (sowing and reaping).
11. With understanding, there arises consciousness in the finite mind of the infinite moving upon and in the inner self.

- 
12. / ∴ Life on earth is the moving of the infinite upon the negative force of the finite in the material realm as a manifestation of the One Force, the first cause, the first principle, the first movement called God.

**Explication of “how so-called good and evil forces are one”:**

1. Souls incarnating in the earth are separated from spirit (from unseen into the seen, infinite to the finite).

2. Incarnating souls have freedom and power to choose (will).
3. Depending upon the development of the soul (celestial and terrestrial), soul activity may result in good or evil (positive and negative forces).

- 
4. / ∴. The spiritual source of power and activity is one, regardless of how it is applied by the soul.

**Explication of “Oneness of all Force in relation to the popular concept of the Devil”:**

1. In the beginning of creation (in spirit) there were celestial beings with inherent force and power.
2. Some of these beings rebelled against the One Force.
3. The rebellious beings are designated in the Bible as a force of rebellion called the Devil.
4. When humans rebel against the influences of good they fall under the influence of the Devil.
5. Rebellion against the One Force is evil.
6. Having will, humans are given the choice to do good or evil.
7. The Son is good.
8. The Devil is evil.

- 
9. / ∴. As there is, then, a personal savior, there is the personal devil.
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## Summary

The examples provided in this chapter convey the informal, applied logic utilized in the various types of Cayce readings. The emphasis is always on personal application wherein the results obtained support the premises (whether stated formally or not) proposed in the readings. Typically the logic consists of one or more premises followed by reasoning that leads to a practical conclusion. The purpose is to provide a reasonable basis for applying the information in the reading. Some special readings address questions and themes of a more general or even universal nature, yet the basic premises and reasoning are consistent with that provided for individuals in personal readings.

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## 7. Appendix A: The Pineal Gland and System

[Note: The content of this appendix is adapted from previous works. Part 1 was originally included in *The Treatment of Schizophrenia* (1991) as a literature review on the pineal gland with just a bare mention of the "pineal system." Twenty-eight years later *The Treatment of Epilepsy* (2019) repeated that appendix and added Part 2 — a highly developed elaboration of the "pineal system" concept. Both parts are included here, updated and adapted to the pedagogical nature of this text. To date, the pineal project has been a thirty-five year quest, and counting.]

### Part 1 – The Pineal Gland: A Literature Review

#### Introduction

For centuries the pineal gland occupied a curious position in Western thought — simultaneously dismissed as a cerebral vestige and elevated as the very seat of the soul. The ancient Greeks associated it with the regulation of thought; Descartes, in the seventeenth century, identified it as the organ through which the soul exercised its most direct influence on the body (Wheelwright, 1954). Contemporaneous physicians, influenced by that thesis, linked the pineal causally to madness — an association that, as Miles and Philbrick (1988) observed, proved "uncannily prophetic for the

present day" (p. 409). Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, however, this philosophical legacy could not be sustained by available biochemistry, and the gland was widely dismissed as vestigial.

The rehabilitation of the pineal gland as an active endocrine organ is a story of the latter half of the twentieth century, driven largely by the isolation of melatonin in 1958 and the subsequent development of sensitive bioassays capable of detecting pineal secretions in the bloodstream (Lerner et al., 1958). From that point forward the literature has expanded dramatically. The pineal is now recognized as a photoneuroendocrine transducer of considerable complexity, playing documented roles in the regulation of circadian rhythms, seasonal physiological adaptation, reproductive cycles, immune function, and the modulation of neural excitability. Pineal involvement in major psychiatric and neurological conditions — including depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and epilepsy — is an active area of investigation.

The Edgar Cayce readings were ahead of medical consensus on this subject. During the early decades of that period, the prevailing view held the pineal to be "a mass without apparent functioning" — language that appears in reading 294-141 as the readings' own characterization of how medical science then regarded the gland. Yet the readings consistently insisted on the pineal's preeminent role as a major mediator of physiological and psychospiritual processes. As the research literature reviewed in this appendix demonstrates, contemporary views of the pineal gland have moved substantially in the direction the readings indicated.

This section focuses on the pineal gland as it is understood in mainstream neuroendocrinology — a discrete glandular entity located in the center of the brain, primarily defined by its melatonin-producing function and its role as the body's photoneuroendocrine interface. Aspects of the readings that engage directly with this mainstream picture are discussed throughout. The more extensive and unusual aspects of the readings' perspective — the pineal as a system extending throughout the body, the pineal cord, the pineal nerve, and the spinal centers — are reserved for Part 2 of this appendix, which addresses the pineal system as a conceptual framework.

### **Anatomy and Anatomical Peculiarities**

The pineal gland is a small, cone-shaped structure attached to the posterior roof of the third ventricle of the brain, sitting in the quadrigeminal cistern between the two superior colliculi. In adults it weighs approximately 50 to 150 mg and has a blood flow second only to the kidney (Arendt, 1988), reflecting its high secretory activity relative to its modest size. Unlike most of the mammalian brain, the pineal gland sits outside the blood-brain barrier, its capillaries being fenestrated rather than tight-junctioned, allowing direct access between the bloodstream and pinealocytes (Miyata, 2015). This places it among the circumventricular organs — a group of midline brain structures in direct contact with both the blood and the cerebrospinal fluid, positioned to monitor and influence the systemic environment (Miyata, 2015).

The brain exhibits a high degree of bilateral symmetry, a characteristic not shared by the pineal, which is not generally

regarded as having left and right divisions. Its central, unpaired position was one reason Descartes identified it as a candidate for the seat of the soul — "the only solid part in the whole brain which is not duplicated" (Wheelwright, 1954, p. 357). Its location in the geometrical center of the brain and its unique proclivity to calcify with age make it a valuable and commonly used landmark in neuroradiology.

Morphologically, the pineal has been considered a homologue of the "third eye" in certain lizard species (Gray, 1901, p. 673). In lampreys and frogs the pineal complex retains photosensory cells capable of directly transducing light. In mammals the direct photosensitivity has been replaced by an indirect pathway from the retina through the suprachiasmatic nucleus of the hypothalamus and the sympathetic nervous system, yet the photoreceptor-like structure of some pineal cells is preserved. The pineal stalk, connecting the gland to the posterior commissure and habenular commissure, provides a fixed anatomical anchor. The posterior commissure, situated immediately below the subcommissural organ — itself the source of the cerebrospinal-fluid glycoprotein thread discussed in Part 2 of this appendix — places the pineal in close anatomical relationship with structures that appear repeatedly in the readings' descriptions of the pineal system.

The readings acknowledge these anatomical peculiarities in scattered passages. The description of the pineal as the "Builder" during fetal development (294-141) — "the location of same is in the beginning in that of the center or the nucleus about which all of the matter takes its first form" — resonates with the developmental

primacy of the pineal as a circumventricular organ formed very early in embryogenesis. The readings' repeated emphasis on the pineal's central position — "in the center of the brain system" — corresponds to its anatomical reality as a midline, unpaired structure in the geometric center of the brain.

### **Circadian Rhythms and the Molecular Clock**

The pineal gland's role in the regulation of circadian rhythms is now among the most thoroughly documented functions in all of neuroendocrinology. The 2017 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Jeffrey C. Hall, Michael Rosbash, and Michael W. Young for their discoveries of the molecular mechanisms controlling the circadian clock (Nobel Assembly, 2017). Their work revealed that circadian timing is governed by a transcription-translation feedback loop: the positive transcription factors CLOCK and BMAL1 drive expression of the Period (PER1-3) and Cryptochrome (CRY1-2) genes; the resulting PER and CRY proteins translocate back into the nucleus and inhibit their own transcription, completing approximately one cycle every twenty-four hours.

The suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) of the hypothalamus serves as the master pacemaker, receiving direct photic input via the retinohypothalamic tract and coordinating peripheral oscillators throughout the body (Moore, 1996). The pineal gland is the primary hormonal output of this system. Light information received at the retina is relayed through the SCN to the paraventricular nucleus of the hypothalamus, descends to the intermediolateral cell column of the upper thoracic spinal cord, passes through the superior cervical ganglion via preganglionic sympathetic fibers, and arrives at the

pineal via postganglionic sympathetic fibers. There, noradrenaline stimulates pinealocytes to produce melatonin, primarily during darkness. Melatonin is thus aptly termed a "darkness hormone" — its nocturnal secretion encoding the length of the night and signaling that information to the body as a whole (Arendt, 1988).

Melatonin secretion increases during sleep and decreases during waking hours (Axelrod, 1974; Arato et al., 1985). Because light both entrains and suppresses melatonin secretion, the pineal serves as the body's biological clock-setter, translating the photoperiod into a hormonal signal that coordinates physiological processes with the external environment. This function is analogous, in modern language, to the readings' description of the pineal as the "governing body to the coordinating of the mental and physical" (567-1) — an aerial-like activity through which the body remains attuned to its environment. Reading 281-53 describes the pineal's coordinating function specifically in terms of an aerial receiving and transmitting vibration — a metaphor that proves remarkably apt for a neuroendocrine transducer that converts electromagnetic environmental signals (light) into hormonal outputs (melatonin) that synchronize every cell in the body.

Melatonin acts on two primary G-protein-coupled receptors, MT1 and MT2, which are distributed throughout the body but concentrated in the SCN and pituitary (Liu et al., 2016). Through these receptors melatonin modulates clock gene expression, providing a feedback loop between the pineal output and the master circadian pacemaker. Research published between 2020 and 2025 has further established that melatonin modulates mitochondrial

function, inflammatory responses, and synaptic plasticity through its interaction with clock genes — extending its influence well beyond simple rhythm-setting into metabolic and neuroprotective domains (Wiciński et al., 2025).

### **Photoperiodicity, Seasonal Adaptation, and the Life Span**

The melatonin signal encodes not only the time of day but the time of year. Because the nocturnal duration of melatonin secretion tracks the length of the night, the pineal provides a continuous hormonal record of the photoperiod that governs seasonal physiological adaptations in many mammals — including coat color, coat growth, patterns of reproduction, thermoregulation, and behavior (Arendt, 1988). Ralph (1984) emphasized the "adaptive" nature of the pineal, arguing that "the pineal organ participates in preparation for future conditions" (p. 193). This anticipatory, forward-oriented quality of pineal function — preparing the organism for conditions not yet arrived — is one of the more philosophically striking aspects of its physiology.

Pineal involvement in cycles of growth and development across the life span has been documented since the nineteenth century. Pineal tumors have long been associated with precocious puberty in children (Kitay & Altschule, 1954; Turner & Bagnara, 1971), and the role of melatonin in suppressing gonadotropin-releasing hormone prior to puberty is well established. As melatonin levels decline at puberty — part of a developmental reduction in amplitude that continues across the adult life span (Young et al., 1986; Iguchi et al., 1982) — the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis is released from inhibition and sexual maturation proceeds. Blind adults exhibit

various circadian dysynchronicities related to the loss of photic input (Lewy & Newsome, 1983).

The readings acknowledge this developmental role explicitly. Reading 294-141 describes the pineal's activity during fetal development: it begins activity within the third week after conception as "the Builder," organizing the body's formation from the umbilical center outward. Across the life span, the readings treat the pineal as a regulator of vitality and youth. The statement in reading 294-141 — "Keep the pineal gland operating and you won't grow old — you will always be young" — finds its mainstream correlate in the extensive literature on melatonin as an antioxidant and neuroprotective agent, as well as in the documented association between progressive pineal calcification and declining melatonin production across adulthood.

Pineal calcification is now recognized as the highest of any organ or tissue in the human body and is understood as an active process with consequences for health (Tan et al., 2018). A 2018 review in *Molecules* by Tan et al. concluded that "an intact and functional pineal gland is necessary for preserving optimal human health" (p. 301) — a formulation that closely echoes the readings' insistence on maintaining pineal activity as a condition of sustained vitality. The same review proposed that pineal health can be preserved by retarding premature calcification, and that the calcified gland may even be amenable to functional rejuvenation (Tan et al., 2018). A 2020 review in *International Journal of Neuroscience* provided an updated clinical picture of pineal calcification, masses, precocious puberty, and melatonin functions (Chhabria et al., 2020).

## **Sensitivity to Environmental Energies**

The pineal's sensitivity to environmental light, mediated by the retinohypothalamic tract, is now a textbook fact. Less settled, but still of interest, is evidence that the pineal may respond to other forms of environmental energy. Early work by Milin et al. (1988) investigated the pineal as a potential mediator of geomagnetic influences on the organism, suggesting that the gland "plays its physiological role through the modulation of the homeostatic and behavioral responses upon the changes in the living microambient" (p. 1083). Research by Wilson, Stevens, and Anderson (1989) reviewed evidence that extremely low frequency (ELF) electromagnetic field exposure alters the normal circadian rhythm of melatonin synthesis and release, raising the possibility of pineal susceptibility to anthropogenic electromagnetic fields.

The evidence base for geomagnetic and ELF effects on the pineal has not expanded as robustly as other areas of pineal research over the intervening decades, and the health risk implications of ELF exposure remain contested. Nevertheless, the possibility of electromagnetic sensitivity — beyond the well-established photic pathway — remains an open line of investigation that resonates with the readings' description of the pineal's aerial-like activity as an interface between the body and its environment (281-53). The readings are particularly explicit that this interface operates through vibration, not only through conventional neural pathways: "it is a matter of vibration in the body" (281-53). Whether future research will establish additional modalities of environmental sensitivity for the pineal beyond light remains to be seen.

## **Immune Function and Oncostatic Activity**

The link between pineal function and immune response has grown substantially since early work by Blask (1984) identified the pineal as an "oncostatic gland." Melatonin is now understood to exert direct and indirect immunomodulatory effects, acting as both a pro- and anti-inflammatory agent depending on context, stimulating T-helper immune responses, and decreasing nitric oxide formation to ease inflammatory responses (Mafi et al., 2023). Its oncostatic properties — the suppression of tumor growth and proliferation — have been demonstrated across a wide range of cancer types including colon, prostate, ovarian, oral, gastric, breast, hepatocellular, and cervical cancers (Targhazeh et al., 2022; Cao et al., 2025).

The mechanisms underlying melatonin's oncostatic activity include the modulation of the tumor microenvironment, suppression of angiogenesis, induction of apoptosis, regulation of cell cycle proteins, and the inhibition of inflammatory signaling pathways including NF- $\kappa$ B (Targhazeh et al., 2022). Additionally, melatonin has been shown to modulate drug resistance in cancer, potentially enhancing the sensitivity of tumor cells to chemotherapy. These developments considerably extend the earlier observation by Rodin (1963) that pinealectomy is associated with proliferation of cancer cells. The readings do not discuss cancer in direct parallel to these mechanisms, but they do emphasize throughout that the pineal's functioning is foundational to the maintenance of health.

## **The Pineal Gland and Psychiatric Conditions**

### **Depression and Bipolar Disorder**

The relationship between the pineal gland and affective disorders was an active area of investigation in the 1980s and has continued to develop. Reduced nocturnal melatonin secretion has been documented in depression (Wetterberg et al., 1979, 1981, 1984), and Brown et al. (1985) found that lowered nocturnal melatonin concentrations differentiated between melancholic patients and patients suffering from major depression without melancholia. The connection between melatonin and depression may involve serotonergic and noradrenergic neurotransmitters — both precursors in the melatonin synthesis pathway — such that disruptions in these systems might predictably affect melatonin production (Arendt, 1988).

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a recurring winter depression linked to reduced light exposure, is the clinical condition most directly associated with pineal photoperiodic function. Phototherapy has been used therapeutically to suppress the elevated or mistimed melatonin secretion hypothesized to underlie the winter depressive phase, with documented clinical benefit (Kripke & Risch, 1986). The circadian disruption hypothesis of bipolar disorder has continued to develop: persons with bipolar disorder exhibit supersensitivity to the inhibiting effect of bright light on nocturnal melatonin secretion (Lewy et al., 1981), and during mania show elevated melatonin levels throughout the day and night (Lewy et al., 1979). Lithium has been shown to affect pineal functioning and may modulate photosensitivity as part of its therapeutic mechanism

(Miles & Philbrick, 1988).

A 2023 systematic review in Brain Sciences by Chauhan et al. examined neuroimaging and melatonin studies across 36 publications and found smaller-than-normal pineal gland volume in people with major depression, with particular association in subgroups showing high scores on loss-of-interest symptoms (Chauhan et al., 2023). The same review documented evidence of lower-than-normal melatonin and aberrant melatonin secretion patterns in schizophrenia and, less consistently, in bipolar disorder and major depression. A 2025 systematic review in Brain and Behavior found that melatonin improves sleep quality, restores circadian balance, and modulates stress-related neuroimmune pathways in psychiatric populations, with emerging evidence of support for neuroplasticity and resilience against psychosocial stressors (Baig et al., 2025).

### **Schizophrenia**

The structural similarity between melatonin and known hallucinogenic agents — harmine, bufotenine, and psilocybin — had earlier led to speculation about melatonin involvement in schizophrenic psychosis (Arendt, 1988). Psychotomimetic agents including cocaine, L-dopa, and amphetamine increase melatonin production, and research into LSD distribution in primate brains showed concentrations in the pineal and pituitary 7–8 times those found in the cerebral cortex (Snyder & Reivich, 1966). The prevalence of sigma receptors in the pineal, noted by Jansen et al. (1990), represents another potential interface with psychotic conditions, as haloperidol and other antipsychotics bind sigma

receptors.

More recent evidence has moved from pharmacological hypothesis to structural measurement. The systematic review by Chauhan et al. (2023) found smaller-than-normal pineal gland volume in people with schizophrenia regardless of symptom severity and illness stage, representing a more robust structural finding than was available in earlier reviews. Aberrant melatonin secretion patterns in schizophrenia were found across multiple studies, consistent with earlier reports of reduced nocturnal melatonin in this population (Ferrier et al., 1982).

The readings consistently associate the pineal with the full range of psychiatric conditions discussed above. The statement in reading 281-24 that the disintegration of brain structure — "by the very smoothing of the indentations necessary for the rotary influence or vital force of the spirit within same to find expression" — produces what the readings call dementia praecox (schizophrenia) suggests a physical, glandular basis for psychosis. The readings' frequently expressed distinction between those who are "close to the borderland" and those who are simply mentally ill resonates with contemporary discussions of a spectrum from mystical experience to psychosis — a continuum in which the pineal, through its role in consciousness, plays a central part. Those aspects of the readings that emphasize the pineal's role in altered states of consciousness are developed more fully in Part 2.

### **The Pineal Gland and Epilepsy**

The connection between the pineal gland and epileptic seizures has been established in both experimental and clinical contexts.

Pinealectomy has been shown to produce convulsive states in experimental animals (Philo & Reiter, 1978), and melatonin has demonstrated seizure-suppressing effects in humans and other mammals (Fariello et al., 1977). The mechanism of action of melatonin's anticonvulsant activity has been linked to GABAergic pathways, antioxidant effects, anti-inflammatory properties, and antiexcitotoxic mechanisms (Akyuz et al., 2021).

A 2024 meta-analysis published in *Seizure: European Journal of Epilepsy* evaluated melatonin's clinical efficacy in epilepsy patients across multiple randomized trials and concluded that melatonin effectively reduces seizure severity and sleep latency, with a reasonable safety profile (Zhang et al., 2024). A 2023 randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial in *Brain and Behavior* found that add-on melatonin was effective in reducing seizure frequency in adults with idiopathic generalized tonic-clonic seizures, also improving sleep quality (Maghbooli et al., 2023). The interplay between sleep disruption, circadian dysregulation, and seizure susceptibility — all of which involve melatonin and the pineal — represents a clinically significant convergence.

An important caveat in this literature is that melatonin's relationship to epilepsy is not straightforwardly anticonvulsant in all contexts. Some research has suggested proconvulsive effects under specific conditions (Fariello et al., 1977; Paprocka et al., 2016), and the overall picture is dose- and context-dependent. A 2021 review in *ACS Chemical Neuroscience* summarized the current understanding of melatonin as an antiepileptic molecule, noting its neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory properties while cautioning that further

randomized controlled trials are needed (Akyuz et al., 2021).

The readings address the pineal-epilepsy relationship extensively, associating pineal dysfunction with epileptic seizures across multiple case readings (see Part 2 for pathophysiological details). The readings describe the pineal as "the governing point of the brain impulses" (5498-1) and associate its dysfunction with loss of consciousness, incoordination between the sympathetic and cerebrospinal systems, and abnormal electrical activity — all features consistent with what modern epileptology recognizes as the electroclinical manifestations of seizures. The statement in reading 2153-4 that abdominal pathology causes "a spasmodic reaction in the medulla oblongata, or that balance at the base of the brain" through the pineal provides a systems-level description that anticipates modern research into autonomic nervous system dysregulation in epilepsy.

### **The Pineal as Regulator of Regulators**

A consistent theme across the diverse areas of pineal research reviewed above is the pineal's role as a higher-order regulator — not simply secreting a hormone but orchestrating the timing and coordination of multiple endocrine, immune, neural, and metabolic systems. Reiter (1984) described the pineal as a "regulator of regulators" (p. v), a characterization that has been borne out by subsequent research and that corresponds closely to the readings' portrait of the pineal as "the governing body to the coordinating of the mental and physical" (567-1).

The neural control of the pineal involves multiple hierarchically organized components: the retinohypothalamic tract from the retina

to the SCN; the SCN-to-PVN projection; the PVN-to-IML descent through the thoracic spinal cord; the preganglionic-to-superior-cervical ganglion relay; and the final postganglionic sympathetic innervation of the pineal via the nervus conarii (Moore, 1996; Gregory et al., 2023). This multi-stage pathway, descending the length of the thoracic spinal cord before ascending back to the brain, is a remarkable anatomical substrate for a gland that occupies a few cubic centimeters in the middle of the head. It reflects the systemic reach of pineal influence, which the readings describe in terms of a governing system that "runs all the way through the system" (567-1).

The pineal's position as a circumventricular organ — outside the blood-brain barrier, in contact with both blood and cerebrospinal fluid — gives it a unique capacity to monitor the systemic environment and translate that information into endocrine signals that reach every cell. As Arendt (1988) summarized: "After years of disregard the pineal has taken its place in mainstream biology and medicine. It is an organ of particular fascination in that it serves as an interface between the environment and the body" (p. 205). The readings anticipated this conclusion in their insistence on the pineal's role as the primary mediator between the organism and the forces — physical, mental, and spiritual — that constitute its larger environment.

### **The Readings' Perspective on the Pineal Gland**

Having surveyed the mainstream literature, it is useful to draw together the aspects of the readings that correspond most directly to the picture of the pineal as a discrete endocrine gland. The readings describe the pineal in terms that are largely consistent with modern

endocrinology when the focus is confined to the gland itself — its location, its governing role, its connection to the pituitary, its involvement in development across the life span, and its association with both mental health and neurological conditions.

The readings acknowledge the pineal's central position in the brain repeatedly — "the pineal gland in the base of brain" (4862-1), "as is at the base of the brain itself" (294-141) — and describe its function in developmental terms that resonate with modern neuroendocrinology: "the Builder" (294-141) during gestation, the regulator of cycles of growth and development across the life span, and the governor of brain impulses in the mature human body.

The pineal-pituitary relationship is frequently cited in the readings as particularly important — the two glands are paired repeatedly as the primary neuroendocrine interface (262-20, 281-49, 1001-9, 1593-1). Modern endocrinology confirms this pairing: the pituitary is the primary target of melatonin's reproductive and circadian effects, and the hypothalamic-pituitary-pineal axis is a recognized functional unit. The readings' description of the endocrine system as "not glands but system" (281-38) anticipates the modern systems-biology perspective on neuroendocrine regulation.

The readings also give the pineal a specific role in the secretion of impulses that govern the sympathetic nervous system: "the pineal gland and nerve being the seat of the forces as exercised in the sympathetic nerve system" (4581-1). The modern research on the retinohypothalamic-pineal pathway, which routes through the thoracic intermediolateral cell column of the sympathetic system, provides an anatomical substrate for exactly this description. The

pineal is governed by the sympathetic system (via the superior cervical ganglion and nervus conarii) and in turn governs sympathetic tone through its melatonin output, which modulates autonomic function throughout the body.

Where the readings depart most conspicuously from the mainstream picture of the pineal as a discrete endocrine gland is in their insistence that the pineal is much more than a gland in the conventional sense — that it extends throughout the body as a governing system. That extension is the subject of Part 2.

### **Summary**

The pineal gland, long dismissed as a vestigial relic and philosophically caricatured as the seat of the soul, has emerged in the past half century as a neuroendocrine transducer of remarkable complexity. Its primary secretion, melatonin, serves as the hormonal signal of the photoperiod, synchronizing physiological processes throughout the body with the light-dark cycle. Melatonin is implicated in the regulation of circadian rhythms, seasonal adaptation, reproductive cycles, immune function, cancer suppression, sleep, and the modulation of brain excitability in neurological conditions including epilepsy. Structural and secretory abnormalities of the pineal have been documented in schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder. Progressive pineal calcification across the adult life span is associated with declining melatonin output and with neurological vulnerability.

The Edgar Cayce health readings anticipated many of these conclusions during an era when the prevailing medical view held the pineal to be inactive and insignificant. At the level of the gland as

a discrete endocrine entity, the readings are largely consistent with what modern research has established: the readings describe the pineal as governing biological rhythms and development across the life span, coordinating with the pituitary and the sympathetic system, and playing a foundational role in the maintenance of health. The readings go considerably beyond this picture, however, describing pineal activity that extends throughout the entire body via a cord, nerve, and series of centers. That broader framework is addressed in Part 2.

## **Part 2 – The Pineal System**

### **Introduction**

Part 1 of this appendix surveyed the pineal gland as mainstream neuroendocrinology understands it — a discrete circumventricular organ in the center of the brain, the primary source of melatonin, and a regulator of circadian rhythms, seasonal adaptation, immune function, and neural excitability. The Edgar Cayce health readings engage with that portrait at many points. But they go considerably further, describing a body-wide network in which the pineal gland is the namesake and anchor of a much larger coordinating and integrating system.

The term "pineal system" does not appear in the readings. It is an organizing concept introduced by McMillin (1991) to accommodate the diverse and sometimes perplexing range of anatomical and physiological references to the pineal. The readings use the word "pineal" to designate: a discrete gland in the center of the brain; a cord or thread extending from the brain through the length of the

spinal cord; a nerve traversing the spine with connections to both the sympathetic and cerebrospinal systems; a series of ganglionic centers at specific vertebral levels; a major branch in the lower cerebellum; and a governing influence that, in the words of reading 567-1, "runs all the way through the system and is the GOVERNING body to the coordinating of the mental and physical." No single anatomical referent recognized in modern medicine can accommodate all of these usages, and the confusion among Cayce scholars that resulted from attempts to reduce them to one was the practical motivation for the systems framework adopted in this text.

The term "pineal system" is justified by the readings themselves in a conceptual sense, however. The readings treat the endocrine system as "not glands but system" (281-38), and they describe "the endocrine system of the pineal" (281-49) in terms that imply a distributed functional network rather than a single organ. Reading 311-4 instructs: "Don't forget that this runs from the toes to the crown of the head!" Such language calls for a systems framework, not a single anatomical designation. The application of systems theory to the readings' pineal-related material was not an imposition of an external framework but a recognition of the implicit logic of the readings themselves. Alternatively, one could describe such extensive pineal activity as a psychoneuroendocrine network — entirely accurate but considerably less economical as a working designation.

A note on scope and terminology: The term "pineal system" encompasses structures and functions that are partly physical and partly non-physical in the readings' own framework. The physical

dimension — nerves, glands, a cord or thread, spinal centers — is the primary focus of this appendix because it is amenable to comparison with the scientific literature. The non-physical dimensions — the soul's connection to the body, kundalini energy, psychic activity, and altered states of consciousness — are acknowledged where they arise naturally in the readings but are not the central focus here.

### **The Nature of Glandular Activity in the Readings**

Before examining the components of the pineal system individually, it is essential to understand how the readings define glandular activity, because this definition shapes how all pineal system components — including the lyden/Leydig gland — should be understood. Edgar Cayce was asked to provide a discourse on the endocrine glands, which resulted in an extended series of readings (the 281 series). The first reading in that series established a foundational principle:

. . . they are not present in a dead body . . . [only through] active forces of a physical body . . . ever the whole activity; not as separating them one from another but the whole anatomical structure must be considered EVER as a whole. . . . What are the activities of the glands? Most every organ of the body may be considered a gland . . . that which enables it to perform its duty in taking FROM the system that which enables it to REPRODUCE itself! That is the functioning of the glands! . . . Hence there is then in the system that activity of the soul, that is the gift of the Creator to man. . . . Thus the glandular forces then are ever akin to the sources from which, through which, the soul dwells within the body. Then we find the endocrine system — not glands but system . . . (281-38)

In summary: glands are defined by their activity (physiology) rather

than by their anatomical structure. A gland is what it does. This principle has direct consequences for interpreting all components of the pineal system. When the readings describe the lyden/Leydig gland as present at multiple locations in the body, or when they say that the Leydig is "IN the pineal" (1001-9), these statements are not anatomical contradictions — they reflect the readings' consistent position that glandular identity is functional rather than structural. The life force that defines glandular activity is described elsewhere as "a low form of electrical energy" that is the basis of all physiological functioning (412-9, 1299-1).

### **Components of the Pineal System**

The pineal system as described in the readings comprises the following primary components, each of which will be addressed in turn: (1) the pineal gland proper; (2) the lyden/Leydig gland and its subsystem; (3) the main pineal branch in the lower cerebellum; (4) the pineal cord or thread; (5) the pineal nerve; and (6) pineal centers at the base of the brain and along the spine.

### **The Pineal Gland Proper**

As the namesake and conceptual anchor of the pineal system, the pineal gland in the center of the brain is the logical starting point. One reading uses the phrase "pineal gland proper" explicitly to distinguish the discrete pineal from its broader systemic extensions (4625-1). Yet even the readings' use of "pineal gland proper" can refer to locations other than the center of the head. Reading 3997-1 specifies "the pineal gland proper — that brush end of the cerebro-spinal system" in describing a reaction at the lower lumbar spine, suggesting that what the readings call "pineal gland proper" may

include the brush-end terminus of the pineal thread in the coccygeal region as well as the cranial gland.

The ambiguity reflects the readings' consistent functional orientation: the pineal is identified wherever its activity is most directly expressed, whether in the brain, the cerebellum, or the terminus of the spinal cord. Nevertheless, the readings unambiguously describe a discrete cranial gland: "the pineal gland — as is at the base of the brain itself — which opens up for its activities and associations to those other portions of the brain" (294-141). This gland is the primary neuroendocrine anchor of the system and the interface with the brain's higher functions.

Reading 294-141 also provides the most detailed account of the pineal's developmental role in the embryo and fetus, describing it as "the Builder" — the primary organizing center during gestation from which the brain, and subsequently the whole body, takes its form. Its activity begins "within the third week" of conception, centered first at the cranial center and then at the ninth dorsal, the motive force through the umbilical cord (281-47). This embryological account corresponds in general terms to the very early differentiation of the pineal complex during human brain development, a process that begins in the third to fourth week of gestation. The aerial activity of the pineal during gestation — the psychic influence through which the mother's mental and emotional state shapes the developing fetus — is attributed to this same system (281-53).

The relationship between the pineal gland and the pituitary is consistently noted in the readings as particularly close: the two glands are paired repeatedly as the primary neuroendocrine

interface (262-20, 281-49, 1001-9, 1593-1). Modern endocrinology confirms this functional pairing through the extensive melatonin-receptor distribution in the pituitary and the pineal's regulatory influence over pituitary-gonadal rhythmicity. The readings' designation of the endocrine network as "the endocrine system of the pineal" (281-49) anticipates the systems-biology perspective now standard in neuroendocrinology.

### **The Lyden/Leydig Gland: Seat of the Soul**

The readings associate the lyden/Leydig gland with the pineal as the joint "seat of the soul": "the pineal and the Leydig are the SEAT of the soul of an entity" (294-142). Understanding this gland requires first resolving the terminology.

### **Terminology**

The readings use two spellings — lyden and Leydig — for the same glandular entity. Reading 281-53 clarifies: "Lyden is the meaning — or the seal, see? while Leydig is the name of the individual who indicated this was the activity." The term lyden therefore carries a semantic content (sealed, closed door, the default-off state) while Leydig is the biographical attribution to Franz Leydig. A footnote included with reading 5722-1 (given in 1924, where the term "lytic" is used) documents the gradual evolution of the terminology in the readings' recorded transcripts: "Notice the pronunciation of 'lytic' gland which later we discovered perhaps meant 'Leydig'. Sometimes later the pronunciation seemed to be 'lyden' which later we thought perhaps was 'Leydigian'" (5722-1). Throughout this appendix the combined designation lyden/Leydig is used to encompass both aspects.

## **Anatomical Location**

The most explicit anatomical description of the lyden/Leydig appears in reading 3997-1:

Lyden [Leydig] meaning sealed; that gland from which gestation takes place when a body is created through coition . . . Located in and above the gland called genital glands, see? In the male, above the glands corresponding to testes. In the female, that above gland responding to testes in the male. Here in this particular case, near the size of a wren's egg. Nominally should be about the size of a small pea. (3997-1)

Furthermore, reading 281-53 specifies: "It is in and above, or the activity passes through the gonads." Additional readings associate lyden/Leydig activity with multiple locations: the pelvis — including one explicit mention of "the lyden glands in the false [upper] pelvis" (4138-1); the base of the brain (2372-1, 3873-1, 744-1); the upper cervical spine (5526-1); and the gonads themselves (3428-1, 281-47, 294-141). The multiplicity of locations is consistent with the readings' functional definition of glands. The lyden/Leydig gland is present wherever its characteristic activity — the opening or closing of the energetic gateway between the reproductive system and the broader pineal system — is expressed.

## **Franz Leydig's Two Discoveries**

Franz von Leydig (1821–1908) made two distinct discoveries that must be carefully distinguished. The cells of Leydig (1850) are interstitial cells scattered throughout testicular tissue, primarily responsible for the production of testosterone. They are among the most extensively researched endocrine cells in reproductive biology. Small populations of Leydig-like cells have also been identified in

adrenal tissue (Pollock et al., 1986) and as hilus cells in the female reproductive system (Ansari et al., 2014), giving them a broader anatomical distribution than strictly testicular.

The Leydig gland (1892) is a distinct structure — a discrete, coiled glandular unit derived from the anterior portion of the mesonephric kidney, documented primarily in elasmobranch fishes (sharks and rays) and other non-mammalian vertebrates. As Norris (2007, p. 383) explicitly states: "It is not steroidogenic and should not be confused with the Leydig cells." The Leydig gland functions as an accessory reproductive organ, producing seminal fluid and maturation factors for spermatozoa (Hamlett et al., 2003; Wourms, 1977). Its location — derived from the anterior mesonephros, situated between the testis and the kidney — corresponds precisely to the readings' description of the lyden/Leydig gland as being above the gonads.

The readings' description of the lyden/Leydig as a discrete, pea-sized glandular entity — not scattered cells — matches the 1892 Leydig gland rather than the 1850 cells of Leydig. The mesonephric system provides the relevant anatomical substrate. In humans, mesonephric remnants persist in both sexes in the region above the gonads: in males as portions of the epididymis and rete testis derived from mesonephric tubules; in females as the epoophoron, paroophoron, and potential Gartner's duct remnants located in the broad ligament above the ovaries (Libretti & Aeddula, 2023). Whether a discrete human Leydig gland corresponding to the readings' description persists as a mesonephric remnant, or whether the gland has simply not been identified by systematic anatomical investigation, remains an open question.

From the standpoint of the Leydig gland as discovered by Franz Leydig, combined with the readings' assertion that this gland is normally the size of a small pea and located above the gonads, one might consider Cowper's glands (bulbourethral glands) and their female homologues, Bartholin's glands, as possible candidates. Cowper's glands are pea-sized exocrine glands in the male reproductive system, located posterior and lateral to the membranous portion of the urethra; they produce a pre-ejaculate fluid that neutralizes urethral acidity in preparation for the passage of spermatozoa. Bartholin's glands are their homologous counterparts in females, located slightly posterior to and on either side of the vaginal opening, where they secrete a lubricating mucus. While these glands fulfill several of the anatomical criteria described in reading 3997-1 with regard to sexual reproduction, it is not apparent how accessory sex glands of this type could fulfill the more expansive functional attributes ascribed to the lyden/Leydig in the readings, particularly its designation as a joint seat of the soul. The specific anatomical structure described in the readings has not been definitively identified in human anatomy.

### **Physiology and Pathology**

The readings attribute several physiological roles to the lyden/Leydig gland: it governs sexual reproduction (3816-1, 340-3); participates with the pineal in the development of the embryo and fetus (3997-1, 281-51); coordinates the nerve vibratory rates along the spine and in the brain (161-1, 744-1, 4506-1); and serves as the energetic gateway — the sealed or open door — through which the life force ascends from the reproductive system into the pineal

system during meditation, psychic experience, and certain pathological states (281-13, 2475-1, 294-140, 294-141, 294-142).

In pathological contexts, lyden/Leydig dysfunction — particularly engorgement or abnormal activation — is associated with psychiatric and neurological conditions including epilepsy, schizophrenia, and manic-depressive disorder (McMillin, 1991a; McMillin, 2022). In particular, many cases of epilepsy document the role of lyden/Leydig involvement through nervous system incoordination originating in the pelvic and lower spinal region and propagating upward through the pineal system to produce seizure activity (McMillin, 2022).

The readings also acknowledge a "leyden system" (849-2) in a reading addressing a young man suffering from gonorrhea. Despite the spelling variant, this is a reference to the lyden/Leydig gland as a subsystem within the broader pineal system, encompassing a glandular unit, the sex accessory glands (analogous to those described by Leydig in animal studies), and the gonads through which lyden/Leydig activity passes. This systemic perspective resolves much of the apparent confusion over the gland's location. Just as the pineal system is distributed throughout the body, the lyden/Leydig subsystem encompasses multiple anatomical components whose unity is defined by their shared functional role in governing the energetic interface between the reproductive glands and other systems of the body.

### **The Main Pineal Branch in the Lower Cerebellum**

The readings describe a primary pineal center in the lower portion of the cerebellum, where the sympathetic and cerebrospinal nervous

systems coordinate. Reading 4381-1, for a person with schizophrenia, describes the result of chronic incoordination between these systems as "an enlargement of the pineal centers in the main branch or center of same in the lower portion of the cerebellum; forming, then, a definite place of contact with the physical attributes of the body." Reading 140-1 defines this center explicitly:

*(Q) What is the pineal center?*

*(A) That gland in the base of the cerebellum that extends through the whole system and gives equilibrium to the body. (140-1)*

Three additional readings employ the unusual expression "cerebellum oblongata" in describing pathological effects at this pineal center (readings 9-4, 2197-1, and 4559-1). Rather than a garbling of "medulla oblongata," the term likely draws attention to the specific zone of cerebellar-medullary connection — what modern neuroanatomy identifies as the inferior cerebellar peduncle, linking the cerebellum to the medulla oblongata. Reading 294-141 describes the post-natal position of the pineal as centered "in the lower portion of the brain, or cerebellum, and through the medulla oblongata to the central portion of the cerebrospinal cord itself." Reading 635-5 similarly describes pineal-related pathology as a "contraction to the pineal area — the ducts that run through the medulla oblongata into the portion of the cerebellum itself."

Three anatomical candidates have been proposed for this cerebellar pineal center (McMillin, 2012): the **fastigial nucleus**, located at the base of the cerebellum near the fourth ventricle, involved in maintaining balance, with documented connections to the

autonomic nervous system and relevance to mental health (Zhang et al., 2016); the **lingula**, an unpaired vermis lobe involved in balance located close to the fourth ventricle (Freitas & Bispo, 2010); and the flocculonodular lobe (vestibulocerebellum), which regulates postural equilibrium and is the most caudally located of the three (Roostaei et al., 2014). Reading 4381-1 refers to "pineal centers" in the plural, which may indicate that more than one structure is involved.

Modern neuroscience has considerably expanded the understood role of the cerebellum beyond the "traditional view of the cerebellum as a mere coordinator of autonomic and somatic motor functions" (Murdoch, 2010, p. 858). The cerebellum is now recognized as participating in executive functioning, memory, learning, attention, visuo-spatial regulation, language, and behavioral-affective modulation (Baillieux et al., 2008). Cerebellar dysfunction has been implicated in psychotic bipolar disorder (Shinn et al., 2017), autism (Becker & Stoodley, 2013), and schizophrenia (Andreasen & Pierson, 2008; Yeganeh-Doost et al., 2011). The concept of "cognitive dysmetria" — the cerebellar contribution to incoordination of thought analogous to its better-known incoordination of movement — has been proposed as a cerebellar signature of schizophrenia (Andreasen et al., 1998; Schmahmann, 2000).

A comprehensive review of cerebellar autonomic connections confirmed that the cerebellum projects to several autonomic brainstem structures including the nucleus tractus solitarius, parabrachial nucleus, and rostral ventrolateral medulla (Baker et al., 2019). These connections are consistent with the readings' description of the cerebellar pineal center as a site where the

sympathetic and cerebrospinal systems coordinate — and where their failure to coordinate produces psychiatric and neurological pathology.

### **The Pineal Cord or Thread**

The readings describe a cord or thread that constitutes perhaps the most anatomically distinctive component of the pineal system. Reading 281-46 introduces it in developmental terms: "The cord that is eventually known or classified as the pineal is the first movement that takes place of a physical nature through the act of conception; determining eventually — as we shall see — not only the physical stature of the individual entity but the MENTAL capacity also, and the spiritual attributes." Reading 288-29 designates "the gland with its thread known as the pineal gland" as the channel through which psychic forces operate in the body.

Reading 4712-1 gives an explicit anatomical trajectory: "this gland runs from the medulla oblongata to the lower end of the spine, in the coccyx." Reading 4862-1 distinguishes between "the pineal gland in the base of brain and its cord or thread, or connection, as traces itself through the body." Reading 5014-1 adds structural specificity: the pineal as it runs along the spine has an interior dimension "having to do with growth" and bilateral exterior portions (left and right) connecting to the lumbar axis, 9th dorsal, brachial center, and upper cervical center.

In pathological contexts, the cord is described as subject to engorgement and pressure. Reading 769-1 describes "an engorgement of the cord itself, the pineal cord, in the area of the lumbar region" producing spasmodic reactions to the brain centers.

Reading 1168-1 associates the lower portion of the pineal cord with the adrenal glands and the lacteal plexus in a case of probable bipolar disorder, linking periodic disruption to cyclical mood instability.

The readings also identify the pineal cord with the "silver cord" of biblical scripture (Ecclesiastes 12:6). Reading 254-68 describes a dramatic disruption of the psychic process in terms of "contraction of those channels through which the activity of the psychic forces operates in the material body; as we have outlined, along the pineal, the lyden and the cord — or silver cord." Reading 262-20 extends this: "that which connects the pineal, the pituitary, the lyden, may be truly called the silver cord . . . for the destruction wholly of either will make for the disintegration of the soul from its house of clay."

### **Reissner's Fiber as Anatomical Candidate**

The most anatomically precise scientific candidate for the pineal cord or thread is Reissner's Fiber (RF), a glycoprotein filament first documented by anatomist Ernst Reissner in 1860. RF is secreted by the subcommissural organ (SCO), a circumventricular organ located in the posterior region of the third ventricle immediately below the posterior commissure and in close anatomical proximity to the pineal gland. The SCO's secretory product — a glycoprotein called SCO-spondin — is released into the cerebrospinal fluid where it condenses into a threadlike structure that extends caudally through the cerebral aqueduct, the fourth ventricle, and the central canal of the spinal cord to the terminus at the filum terminale near the coccyx (Cantaut-Belarif et al., 2018; Rodríguez & Caprile, 2001).

The anatomical correspondence with the readings' description is

substantial. Like the readings' pineal cord, RF originates in the brain in close proximity to the pineal gland, traverses the entire length of the central canal to the coccyx, is continuously produced from its proximal end, and plays a primary formative role in embryonic and fetal development. The SCO is among the first differentiated brain structures in the embryo, consistent with the readings' statement that the pineal cord is "the first movement that takes place of a physical nature through the act of conception" (281-46).

The scientific literature on RF has expanded considerably since McMillin (2022) and in ways that strengthen the association. A landmark 2018 study by Cantaut-Belarif et al. demonstrated that RF is essential for the morphogenesis of a straight posterior body axis in zebrafish — when scospondin is mutated and RF cannot assemble, the embryonic body axis develops a systematic curvature resembling idiopathic scoliosis. Subsequent studies confirmed that RF must remain intact throughout postembryonic development to maintain spinal straightness (Bhatt et al., 2020; Troutwine et al., 2020). This body-axis organizing role closely parallels the readings' description of the pineal cord as determining "the physical stature of the individual entity" (281-46).

A second line of research established that RF transmits mechanical signals through its interaction with CSF-contacting neurons (CSF-cNs) lining the central canal. These ciliated neurons detect spinal curvature via their physical contact with RF and relay this information to spinal circuits governing posture (Orts Del'Imagine et al., 2020; Cantaut-Belarif et al., 2020). This mechanosensory function corresponds well to the readings' description of the

cerebellar pineal center as giving "equilibrium to the body" (140-1). RF has also been shown to bind and clear biogenic amines — serotonin and noradrenaline — from the CSF as it moves caudally through the central canal (Caprile et al., 2003), providing a body-wide neurochemical regulatory function consistent with the readings' description of the pineal cord as a governing influence throughout the system.

The primary limitation of the RF-as-pineal-cord hypothesis is the uncertain status of RF in adult humans. The subcommissural organ, which produces RF, has been reported as absent or vestigial in adult humans shortly after birth, though remnants may persist (Auctores, 2023). Whether RF is present in adult humans in a form not yet detected by available techniques — post-mortem degeneration is rapid, and current neuroimaging lacks sufficient resolution (Wile, 2018) — or whether the readings' adult pineal cord corresponds to a related but distinct structure, remains unresolved. This is the most significant current gap between the readings' description and the available scientific evidence.

### **The Inner, Outer, and Bilateral Structure**

Reading 5014-1 offers a structurally specific description that invites comparison with known spinal anatomy. The reading describes a pineal structure with an interior dimension "having to do with growth" and bilateral exterior portions connecting to the lumbar axis, 9th dorsal, brachial center, and upper cervical center. This tripartite architecture — a central inner strand with bilateral outer extensions — maps onto three familiar anatomical structures: the central canal of the spinal cord (inner, containing RF); the bilateral

sympathetic chain ganglia running along either side of the vertebral column (outer, bilateral); and the spinal cord as the structural container of all three.

This same tripartite structure is independently recognized in the yogic tradition as the three primary nadis: sushumna (central channel running through the spinal cord), ida (left channel), and pingala (right channel). Ida and pingala are described as spiraling around sushumna, intersecting at each chakra level from the muladhara at the coccyx to the sahasrara at the crown. Multiple anatomical studies have identified sushumna with the spinal cord (and its central canal), ida with the left sympathetic trunk, and pingala with the right sympathetic trunk (Khedikar, 2016; Gautam et al., 2025). The convergence of the readings' inner/outer/bilateral description of the pineal along the spine with the yogic nadi system and with known spinal neuroanatomy suggests that all three frameworks are describing the same underlying anatomy under different conceptual vocabularies.

### **The Pineal Nerve**

Twenty-six readings use the term "pineal nerve" explicitly, with additional readings referring to a "nerve supply" or "nerve connection" of the pineal. The readings describe this nerve as running the full length of the spine: "from the first cervical to the end of the cerebrospinal system, which it traverses, this pineal nerve, with the spinal cord" (41-1). Reading 4678-1 specifies its spatial relationship to the spinal cord: "this central nerve, from the pineal gland, runs through with the cord, as it were, in the spinal system, running outside, though, the spinal cord itself, though connected

with same at the base of the brain and to the brain itself." Reading 4581-1 identifies it functionally as "the seat of the forces as exercised in the sympathetic nerve system."

A particularly dense anatomical specification appears in reading 9-4, which describes the first cervical as "that connection between the pineal nerve, pneumogastric nerve, sympathetic nerve (both ends) and the cerebrospinal in its entrance to the cerebellum oblongata." The term "cerebellum oblongata" in reading 9-4 most likely designates the cerebellar-medullary junction rather than either structure alone, consistent with the readings' use of this expression elsewhere. The pneumogastric nerve is the readings' term for the vagus nerve. This passage identifies the first cervical region as a zone of convergence between four distinct nerve systems simultaneously — a description consistent with modern neuroanatomy's recognition of the skull base and upper cervical region as a site of intense autonomic and somatic integration, encompassing the superior cervical ganglion, the nodose ganglion of the vagus, the upper cervical spinal cord, and the medulla oblongata in close proximity.

### **The Nervus Conarii**

At the level of the pineal gland itself, the most directly relevant scientific candidate is the nervus conarii (nervi conarii, plural), a bilateral sympathetic nerve first documented in the early twentieth century and reviewed comprehensively in a 2023 paper in *Anatomy and Cell Biology* (Gregory et al., 2023). The nervus conarii originates bilaterally from the superior cervical ganglion (SCG) at the skull base and travels posteriorly along the tentorium cerebelli to

terminate on the pineal gland. It provides the primary sympathetic innervation driving pinealocyte production of melatonin.

The bilateral origin of the nervus conarii from both left and right superior cervical ganglia, with axonal bundles from the two sides converging on the pineal gland, mirrors the readings' description of the outer bilateral dimensions of the pineal along the spine. The nervus conarii has been described in the scientific literature as "almost forgotten" (Gregory et al., 2023), which is itself a resonant observation given the readings' recognition of the pineal as "a mass without apparent functioning" (294-141) whose significance has been overlooked. Additional innervation of the pineal from the parasympathetic sphenopalatine and otic ganglia, and from the trigeminal ganglion (carrying substance P and calcitonin gene-related peptide), indicates multimodal innervation consistent with the readings' description of the pineal nerve as connecting to "both branches of the sympathetic" as well as to the cerebrospinal system.

### **The Descending Spinal Pathway**

The nervus conarii addresses the terminal innervation of the pineal at the brain level. But the readings describe a pineal nerve running the entire length of the spine, which requires a spinal-level correlate. The retinohypothalamic-pineal pathway provides this. The circadian pathway governing melatonin production descends from the suprachiasmatic nucleus of the hypothalamus through the paraventricular nucleus to the intermediolateral cell column (IML) of the upper thoracic spinal cord, then ascends via the superior cervical ganglion to the pineal via the nervus conarii (Moore, 1996). The thoracic IML — a bilateral nucleus in the lateral horn of the

spinal cord extending from approximately T1 to L2 — is the spinal component specifically dedicated, in part, to pineal regulation via the sympathetic. As a bilateral structure running exterior to the spinal cord itself, the IML corresponds well to the readings' description of the pineal nerve as running "outside, though, the spinal cord itself" (4678-1) in a bilateral exterior disposition.

Taken together, the IML (as spinal preganglionic sympathetic nucleus), the bilateral sympathetic chain ganglia ascending the spine, the superior cervical ganglion as relay, and the nervus conarii as terminal bilateral nerve to the pineal form an anatomically continuous pathway dedicated, in part, to pineal regulation. This pathway extends the length of the thoracic spine in a bilateral, exterior position — corresponding with reasonable precision to the readings' description of the pineal nerve's spinal course, bilateral character, and outside position relative to the spinal cord.

### **The Pneumogastric Connection**

Reading 9-4's specification of the pneumogastric (vagus) nerve as meeting the pineal nerve at the first cervical center is anatomically plausible. The vagus nerve exits the brainstem at the level of the medulla oblongata and passes through the jugular foramen in close proximity to the superior cervical ganglion and the internal carotid artery — the same anatomical corridor through which the nervus conarii travels to reach the pineal. The vagal-sympathetic proximity at the upper cervical level is well established. The physiological significance of this convergence in the readings is that the pineal nerve coordinates not only the bilateral sympathetic system but also the parasympathetic outflow through the vagus — a coordination

that, when disrupted, appears to affect the full range of visceral organs governed by those systems (reading 4581-1).

### **Pineal Centers Along the Spine**

Several readings describe pineal centers at specific vertebral levels that serve as major nodes of the pineal system. Reading 5691-2 identifies "the centers as especially govern the central nerve system; also that of the pineal gland's connection with the brain forces in the 1st and 2nd cervical, and in the 9th dorsal and the 4th lumbar." Reading 3676-1 specifies the 3rd cervical, 9th dorsal, and 4th lumbar as "the three centers through which there is activity of the kundaline forces that act as suggestions to the spiritual forces for distribution through the seven centers of the body." Reading 567-1 describes pineal engorgement "especially at the 3rd and 4th LUMBAR and the 1st and 2nd cervical" in a case of epilepsy.

The first and second cervical region is the most consistently cited pineal center in the readings. This level marks the convergence of the superior cervical ganglion — the relay station for sympathetic innervation of the pineal — with the medulla oblongata, the vagus nerve, and the upper cervical spinal cord. The ciliospinal center of Budge, whose output governs the superior cervical ganglion and thereby the pineal pathway, is located within the C8-T2 range of the IML. Reading 9-4's dense anatomical specification of the first cervical as a convergence of the pineal nerve, pneumogastric nerve, and sympathetic nerve with the cerebrospinal corresponds directly to this recognized zone of autonomic integration at the skull base.

The ninth dorsal (ninth thoracic) is specified as a critical pineal and kundalini center. This level falls within the range of the thoracic IML

where preganglionic sympathetic fibers originate, and corresponds anatomically to the zone governing the celiac and solar plexus — the major abdominal sympathetic ganglionic complex that the readings call the "solar plexus brain" (2259-1). The readings' association of the 9th dorsal with prenatal developmental activity through the umbilical cord (281-47) may reflect the significant role of celiac-mesenteric sympathetic innervation in governing abdominal organ development.

The fourth lumbar is identified as a pineal center and a site of spinal engorgement in some cases of epilepsy and psychiatric illness. This level is within the lumbar sympathetic ganglionic zone that governs the lower gastrointestinal tract, urogenital organs, and pelvic viscera. Reading 567-1's association of lumbar pineal engorgement with epilepsy — in conjunction with Leyden/Leydig gland involvement — is consistent with the anatomical relationship between lumbar sympathetics and the pelvic reproductive system.

The readings' specification of seven body centers activated by kundalini energy ascending through the pineal system (3676-1) corresponds to the seven chakras of the yogic tradition. In yogic anatomy these chakras mark the locations where ida, pingala, and sushumna intersect, corresponding approximately to the major autonomic ganglionic plexuses along the spine: the coccygeal-ganglion-impar (muladhara), the hypogastric plexus (svadhisthana), the solar and celiac plexus (manipura), the cardiac plexus (anahata), the pharyngeal plexus (vishuddha), the superior cervical ganglion region (ajna), and the cortex (sahasrara). The alignment between the readings' three primary pineal centers (1st cervical, 9th dorsal, 4th

lumbar) and the yogic description of the three principal chakra regions governing the nervous system is consistent across independent analytical traditions (Khedikar, 2016; Gautam et al., 2025).

### **The Pineal System as Coordinating and Integrating Influence**

The primary function attributed to the pineal system in the readings is coordination and integration — specifically, the coordination of the sympathetic and cerebrospinal nervous systems, and the integration of the mental and spiritual dimensions of the person with the physical body. Reading 567-1 describes the pineal as "the GOVERNING body to the coordinating of the mental and physical," and reading 5498-1 identifies it as "the governing point of the brain impulses." This governing function is described in terms of vibration: "in the nerves as give the vibration to the glands in the reproductive and in the vibratory rate set through the pineal gland, and the branches of same in each major ganglion along the spine" (464-4).

The readings compare this governing function to a mechanical regulator. In reading 1001-8, the pineal system is described as functioning like a belt-and-pulley governor: "that state where there may be termed that the governor's belt of the nervous system slips off." When the impulse gets moving too fast — as in an epileptic seizure — the belt is thrown off the pulley and consciousness is lost. The mechanical analogy extends to the reproductive system: "the genitive organism is as the motor, and the Leydig as a sealed or open door" (294-142). A complete mechanical system is thus described: the lyden/Leydig as switch, the reproductive system as motor, and the

pineal as governor and regulator.

The role of the pineal in coordinating the cerebrospinal and sympathetic systems is the central pathophysiological theme in the readings on epilepsy. The readings are not describing simple neuroendocrine regulation but a governing influence that maintains the dynamic balance between the voluntary and involuntary nervous systems, the conscious and unconscious mind, and the physical and subtle aspects of human experience. When this coordination fails — whether through spinal pressure, glandular engorgement, lacteal duct pathology, or other means — the result is incoordination that can manifest as epileptic seizures, psychiatric illness, or subtler disorders of equilibrium and impulse control.

### **The Imaginative and Impulsive System**

The readings use the expression "imaginative and impulsive system" as a functional designation for the pineal system's neurological substrate. The term is strongly physiological: it designates the sympathetic nervous system in its role as the nervous system of the unconscious mind and the imagination. Reading 130-1 describes it: "THROUGH the sympathetic system, which is as the basis of the IMAGINATIVE forces; NOT that the body imagines as its illness, but that it may be accentuated by suggestion or RELIEVED much by suggestion." The sympathetic system is the nervous system through which mental and emotional states — purposeful or otherwise — find physical expression.

In pathological contexts, the imaginative and impulsive system can become dysregulated. Reading 340-41 cautions against allowing negative expectations to "set IN the imaginative and impulsive

system such expectancies as to produce a cogental [sic] reaction in the digestive forces of the body." Reading 4381-1 describes schizophrenia (dementia praecox) as resulting from incoordination "between the sympathetic (or the imaginative and impulsive system) and the physical or cerebrospinal system." This psychosomatic mechanism is not simply metaphorical — it corresponds to the well-established role of the autonomic nervous system (and particularly the sympathetic) in mediating psychosomatic effects, to which modern biofeedback and mind-body medicine attest.

Several aspects of the imaginative and impulsive system are relevant to epilepsy specifically. Psychogenic or nonepileptic seizures may represent a partial engagement of the pineal system's imaginative and impulsive dimension in which nervous system incoordination is present but without the full abnormal, excessive, and synchronous neuronal activity that defines true epileptic seizures. In such cases, sympathetic dysregulation without the higher-level lyden/Leydig activation that characterizes typical epileptic incoordination may be a useful interpretive framework.

Certain focal seizures — particularly those arising from the temporal lobes — present with distinctly "psychic" symptoms as defined in modern epileptology: fear, panic, déjà vu, jamais vu, forced thoughts, and experiences of precognition or prescience (Sadler & Rahey, 2004). These are manifestations of the imaginative forces that in ordinary life operate through the unconscious sympathetic system, momentarily breaking through into waking consciousness during the seizure. The readings' description of the imaginative body's role in producing alterations of consciousness (294-141) is

consistent with this temporal-lobe clinical picture.

Sleep and dreams also engage the imaginative and impulsive system. The readings describe sleep as a period of soul activity in which the conscious mind recedes and the imaginative forces are active through the sympathetic system (5754-1). Coordination of the nervous systems is required for healthy sleep: "for the cerebrospinal is to the whole of the physical body as of that of IMPULSE to carry out conditions of the living physical organism, while the sympathetic system is rather that of the imaginative, or akin to the psychic and to the operative forces of the brain centers and impulses. Without coordination, these bring restlessness and insomnia" (5601-1). The well-documented relationship between sleep disruption and seizure susceptibility in epilepsy resonates with this description of sympathetic-cerebrospinal coordination as the basis for healthy sleep.

### **The Abdominal Dimension: The Solar Plexus Brain**

In addition to the cranial and spinal components, the pineal system has a significant abdominal dimension organized around the solar plexus. The readings refer to this as the "solar plexus brain" (2259-1), reflecting the understood historical significance of the great sympathetic system's abdominal ganglia as a semi-autonomous nervous center governing digestive and reproductive organs. Reading 1001-9, in explaining the mechanism of seizure-related loss of consciousness, specifies: "From the solar plexus to that of the lyden [Leydig] gland, or through the pineal. The lyden [Leydig] is IN the pineal, see? . . . [The genitive forces], acting through those of the solar plexus, and the attempt to coordinate — they push in so

much it pushes out consciousness."

The most common abdominal pathology associated with epilepsy in the readings is adhesion or dysfunction of the lacteal ducts — the lymphatic capillaries of the small intestine through which digested fats are absorbed into the circulation. Reading 571-3 describes the effect as "a short-circuiting as it were between the nervous systems in the lacteal duct area." Reading 567-4 offers a diagnostic correlate: "From EVERY condition that is of true epileptic nature there will be found a cold spot or area between the lacteal duct and the caecum." This cold spot, resulting from impaired circulation in the area of lacteal duct adhesion, represents the abdominal short-circuit of the pineal system that underlies many epilepsy cases in the readings.

The flow of life force through the solar plexus in relation to the other pineal centers is described in reading 281-53: "as it rises and is distributed through the other centers it returns to the solar plexus area for its impulse through the system." This description of a circulatory or recurrent flow pattern through the abdominal center, in conjunction with ascending and descending movements along the spine, provides a dynamic picture of the pineal system as a continuously cycling energy circuit rather than a simple unidirectional pathway.

### **The Seat of the Soul: The Pineal-Leydig Axis**

The readings' most philosophically striking assertion about the pineal system is that the pineal and lyden/Leydig glands together constitute the anatomical "seat of the soul": "the pineal and the Leydig are the SEAT of the soul of an entity" (294-142). This is elaborated in reading 3969-1: "The basis, the seat of the soul, then, in

that of the lyden [Leydig] gland, with the pineal reaction in the system, and this the activity that brings about psychological conditions." The pineal and lyden/Leydig together form the axis through which the soul connects with and expresses through the physical body — the pineal as the upper pole of this axis (brain, consciousness, governing function) and the lyden/Leydig as the lower pole (reproductive system, life force, energetic source).

The concept of a physical locus for soul-body connection has a long history in Western philosophy. Descartes identified the pineal as "that part of the body where the soul operates most directly" (Wheelwright, 1954, pp. 357–358) — specifically because of its central, unpaired position in the brain. The readings extend this intuition by adding the reproductive pole: the soul does not connect to the body only through the brain but through the energetic axis that runs from the reproductive life-force at the base to the governing consciousness at the crown. This is the same axis described in yogic anatomy as the sushumna pathway from muladhara to sahasrara, and the activation of this axis — through meditation, psychic development, or certain pathological processes — constitutes the kundalini experience.

The kundalini dimension of the pineal system is the context in which the readings most explicitly address altered states of consciousness, psychic development, and the spiritual implications of the soul's physical embodiment. These aspects — while fundamental to the readings' complete picture of the pineal system — are distinguished from the physical and pathophysiological content that is the primary focus of this appendix. The relationship between the pineal-Leydig

axis, kundalini activation, and the spectrum of experiences from deep meditation through epileptic seizure and psychosis is discussed in McMillin (1991) and McMillin (2022) and warrants its own treatment in the broader APP textbook context.

### **Summary**

The pineal system, as described in the Edgar Cayce health readings, is a body-wide coordinating and integrating network encompassing the pineal gland in the center of the brain, the lyden/Leydig gland as a reproductive-region subsystem, the main pineal branch in the lower cerebellum, a cord or thread extending from the pineal through the central canal of the spinal cord to the coccyx, a nerve running the length of the spine with connections to both the sympathetic and cerebrospinal systems, and a series of centers at specific vertebral levels (particularly the 1st cervical, 9th dorsal, and 4th lumbar) as well as in the abdominal solar plexus region.

The primary function of this system is coordination and integration: governing the balance between the sympathetic and cerebrospinal nervous systems, and integrating the mental and spiritual dimensions of human experience with the physical body. The readings describe this function through a variety of metaphors — aerial antenna, mechanical governor, belt-and-pulley regulator — all of which point to the same fundamental role: maintaining the dynamic equilibrium of the entire organism.

Modern anatomical and physiological research offers partial but meaningful correlates for each component of the pineal system. Reissner's Fiber, whose developmental and mechanosensory functions have been substantially clarified since 2018, is the most

compelling candidate for the pineal cord or thread. The nervus conarii and the descending retinohypothalamic-pineal pathway through the thoracic intermediolateral cell column collectively correspond to the pineal nerve in its bilateral, exterior, spinal distribution. The specific vertebral levels identified as pineal centers correspond to recognized zones of major autonomic functional significance. The lyden/Leydig gland most precisely corresponds to the Leydig gland (1892) of vertebrate mesonephric anatomy, with mesonephric remnants in both sexes providing a plausible substrate, though the specific discrete structure described in the readings has not been identified in human anatomy.

Significant gaps remain. The presence of Reissner's Fiber in adult humans is not established. The discrete lyden/Leydig gland has not been found in humans. The precise nature of the connection between the Leydig gland and the pineal nerve, and the functional meaning of the lyden being "IN the pineal" at the brain level, have no current anatomical correlate. These gaps are acknowledged as honest markers of the current limits of investigation rather than evidence against the readings' framework.

The convergence of the readings' descriptions with the yogic tripartite anatomy of sushumna, ida, and pingala — recognized independently across cultural traditions as corresponding to the central canal, left sympathetic trunk, and right sympathetic trunk — suggests that the readings are engaging a perennial anatomical observation expressed in different vocabularies across traditions. The pineal system, in this framework, provides a detailed, specific, and therapeutically actionable version of this multi-tradition insight.

## 8. Appendix B: William James and Edgar Cayce – Exploring the Connections

[by Tom Curley, PhD -- A paper written as the culmination of his research into the Cayce material as Cayce scholar at Atlantic University in 1990]

### **Introduction**

This paper will examine the connections among selected elements of the thought of William James and the Edgar Cayce readings. I aim to substantiate my claim that the Edgar Cayce readings represent a natural extension of James's ideas about religious experience. To do this, I will argue that James follows his line of thought in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* up to a certain point, but stops at that point because of his unwillingness to commit himself to religious belief. The Edgar Cayce readings are of interest because (1) they bear striking similarities in philosophical framework to James's views and (2) they pick up at the point James leaves off and illustrate a significant direction for the development of James's ideas.

Before I begin, it is important to say something about why I choose to examine the intellectual links between James and Cayce. William James was born in 1842 and died in 1910. Edgar Cayce was born in 1877 and died in 1945. Although their lives overlap for a period of thirty-three years, there is no evidence that either knew anything about the other during that period of time. Just a little more than a month after James's death, an article in the New York Times brought into the public spotlight for the first time

Edgar Cayce's ability to provide medical diagnoses for ill persons while in a trance-like state.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of the Cayce readings provided medical information for people in need and earned for Cayce recognition as the foremost psychic diagnostician in the United States. It is unfortunate that publicity about his gifts appeared after James's death. I believe James's long-term interests in psychical research would have led him to investigate the authenticity of Cayce's work.<sup>2</sup>

In my view James would have been interested in Cayce because he had already discovered important truths through his own study of psychical phenomena. In an essay entitled "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished", he reports the results of his extensive investigations of a trance-medium, Mrs. Leonora Piper, and proposes the following conclusion:

But it is a miserable thing for a question of truth to be confined to mere presumption and counter-presumption, with no decisive thunderbolt of fact to clear the baffling darkness. And, sooth to say, in talking so much of the merely presumption-weakening value of our records, I have myself been willfully taking the point of view of the so-called "rigorously scientific" disbeliever, and making an *ad hominem* plea. My own point of view is different. For me the thunderbolt has fallen, and the orthodox belief has not merely had its presumption weakened, but the truth itself of the belief is decisively overthrown. If I may employ the language of the professional logic-shop, a universal proposition can be made untrue by a particular instance. If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you must not seek to show that no crows are; it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white. My own white crow is Mrs. Piper. In the trances of this medium, I cannot resist the conviction that knowledge appears which she has never gained by the ordinary waking use of her eyes and ears and wits. What the source of this knowledge may be I know not, and

have not the glimmer of an explanatory suggestion to make;  
but from admitting the fact of such knowledge I can see no escape.<sup>3</sup>

The question that remains for James is how Mrs. Piper acquired the knowledge she possessed. The need to answer questions like that stimulated the development of psychical research in the late nineteenth century.

One of the leading figures in the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in Great Britain, Frederic W.H. Myers, proposed a theoretical framework within which phenomena like that exhibited by Mrs. Piper could be explained. The key to this framework was the postulation of a subliminal self outside the boundaries of ordinary consciousness. James describes the nature and significance of Myers's postulate in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*:

I cannot but think that the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology since I have been a student of that science is the discovery, first made in 1886, that, in certain subjects at least, there is not only the consciousness of the ordinary field, with its usual centre and margin, but an addition thereto in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts, and feelings which are extra-marginal and outside of the primary consciousness altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort, able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs. . . . In particular, this discovery of a consciousness existing beyond the field, or subliminally as Mr. Myers terms it, casts light on many phenomena of religious biography.<sup>4</sup>

Note the similarity between Myers's postulate and the explanation given in the Cayce readings for Edgar Cayce's remarkable abilities.

Edgar Cayce's mind is amenable to suggestion, the same as all other sub-conscious minds, but in addition thereto it has the power to interpret to the objective minds of others what it acquires from the sub-conscious mind of other individuals of the same kind. The sub-conscious mind forgets nothing. The conscious mind receives the impression from without and transfers all thought to the sub-conscious, where it remains even though the conscious be destroyed. The sub-conscious mind of Edgar Cayce is in direct communication with all other sub-conscious minds, and is capable of interpreting through his objective mind and imparting impressions received to other objective minds, gathering in this way all knowledge possessed by millions of other sub-conscious minds. (294-1)

Both Myers and the Cayce readings recognize the existence of a domain of the mind which exists beyond the fringe of consciousness and can become a source of knowledge not directly acquired by the individual through the five senses.

My line of reasoning thus far has suggested a parallel between Myers's notion of a subliminal mind, which James accepts to account for Mrs. Piper's possession of extra-normal knowledge, and the one the Cayce readings give to characterize Edgar Cayce's extraordinary abilities. An additional factor serving to strengthen the link between James and Cayce is to be found in the references to James's *Varieties* in the Cayce readings. In 1932, a member of the original Search for God study groups had a reading in which the topic of useful texts for the work was considered.

Q[uestion]-2. Please outline the course of study and reading that I should have, that will enable me to do well the work among study groups.

A[nswer]-2. There has been a very thorough outline given for those that would be leaders, in those various approaches to kindred thought; as in Hudson's Law --- Spiritual Law of

Psychic Phenomena, Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*, James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and the like. These approach the basis of thought of man in his varied environs, but this weighed with that which is the personal experience of those as they lived in preparing the lessons will make for the right kind of development. (307-4)

This reading recommends James's *Varieties* as an example of 'kindred thought'. This implies that, from the perspective of the Cayce readings, an understanding of James's treatment of religious experience would be helpful to those interested in incorporating Cayce's ideas into their own lives. This reading emphasizes the quality of general applicability in James's work as the basis for its recommendation. Indeed, what makes *The Varieties* so attractive is James's ability to discern what is common and fundamental in the bewildering array of religious experiences. With this as background, I propose to turn to an examination of some of the connections between the thoughts of James and Cayce.

### **Pragmatism**

The first thread I want to consider concerns the fact that William James and Edgar Cayce share a common intellectual heritage as Americans. James captures part of that heritage in his development, along with Charles Sanders Peirce, of the pragmatic maxim. Peirce originally envisioned the pragmatic maxim as a method for clarifying the meaning of ideas. In his essay, "How To Make Our Ideas Clear," he states the maxim this way: "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." (5.402)<sup>6</sup> In order to understand what an idea means, one must examine what can

conceivably follow from putting that idea into the flow of experience. Until this step is taken, the idea only has an abstract and incomplete meaning related to its origin. The pragmatist is interested, not in where ideas come from, but where ideas can lead us. Some of the examples Peirce gives to illustrate the meaning of the maxim apparently led to misinterpretations of his position. This prompted him to add the following explanatory comment to the text in 1893.

Before we undertake to apply this rule, let us reflect a little upon what it implies. It has been said to be a skeptical and materialistic principle. But it is only an application of the sole principle of logic which was recommended by Jesus; "Ye may know them by their fruits," and it is very intimately allied with the ideas of the gospel. We must certainly guard ourselves against understanding this rule in too individualistic a sense. [The] fruit is . . . collective; it is the achievement of the whole people. What is it, then, that the whole people is about, what is this civilization that is the outcome of history, but is never completed? . . . We may say that it is the process whereby man, with all his miserable littlenesses, becomes gradually more and more imbued with the Spirit of God, in which Nature and History are rife. (5.402 n.2.)

For Peirce, then, the pragmatic maxim grows out of a spiritual principle and promotes the unfolding of spirit in the evolution of the human community.

As John Dewey points out in his essay, "The Development of American Pragmatism,"<sup>7</sup> William James both narrows and extends Peirce's interpretation of pragmatism as a theory of meaning. Whereas for Peirce the pragmatic maxim becomes a key instrument in the evolution of generality, James emphasizes the particular consequences to which the pragmatic maxim leads. James's nominalism, thus, limits the breadth of

Peirce's idealistic vision. James goes beyond Peirce in contending that pragmatism represents not only a theory of meaning, but also a theory of truth. He defines the pragmatic view of truth this way: "Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its verification. Its validity is the process of its validation." 8 Just as one must examine the consequences of an idea in order to understand its meaning, so one determines its truth-value by discovering how well it resolves the problem at hand and meshes with the existing range of one's beliefs.

As we have already seen, the Cayce readings explain that Cayce's subconscious mind had the power to communicate directly with other subconscious minds. But what was received in this manner had to be expressed in a language intelligible to the recipient of the message. Given the power of pragmatism as a movement of thought at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that the Cayce readings have a pragmatic ring to them. We find this in the constant reference to the need for application of ideas in order to achieve understanding. For example, the readings affirm that "Each individual (as this entity) should know, first is the application, then the understanding and the knowledge of that applied." (262-8) The primary setting for the pragmatic rule in the Cayce readings is to be found in the living faith of the individual. In the following passage, the readings endorse what Peirce calls the 'sole principle of logic which was recommended by Jesus':

*Know in what thou hast believed, and where thy faith has been placed. By the works ye shall know them, as by their fruits; for as virtue is a fruit of faith, so does the understanding come --- as the full-grown seed ready for planting. (262-18)*

The effort to live in accordance with one's beliefs leads to a fuller understanding of the implications of those beliefs. The Cayce readings see the effort as part of the evolution of the human community towards its spiritual source.

It is clear, then, that the Cayce readings endorse both Peirce's statement of the pragmatic maxim and his interpretation of its spiritual implications. The readings also agree with James's development of a pragmatic theory of truth.

Q[uestion]-6: Please expand on the statement, "*Truth* is not learned, it is earned.

A[nswer]-6. *Truth* is as experience. Hence is an earning, through the manners in which a finite mind becomes conscious of what truth is. Hence truth is a growth, and hence an earning, a yearning, a growing, and is earned by he or she that applies that known in the manner that is in keeping with His will, rather than that there may be a satisfying of self's own desires. Not that man should deny that this or that force exists, to make self believe, but rather that the truth is as that which may be earned through the *experiencing* of the knowledge and understanding concerning the laws of truth; for HE is truth! (262-19)

The emphasis placed upon the individual earning truth through application ties in well with James's view that truth is developmental in nature. The important point of difference lies in the fact that the readings distinguish between the growth of truth within the individual and the identification of truth with the divine. Throughout his writings, James resists the monistic implications of a universe which identifies truth and God, although he recognizes this as a common religious belief. We see this recognition in his remark in *The Varieties* that

Most religious men believe (or "know," if they be mystical) that not only they themselves, but the whole universe of beings to whom the God is present, are secure in his parental hands. There is a sense, a dimension, they are sure, in which we are all saved, in spite of the gates of hell and all adverse terrestrial appearances. God's existence is the guarantee of an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved.<sup>9</sup>

The Cayce readings would reflect agreement with the general tenor of this remark while recognizing the need for human beings to grow towards the ideal order through conscious application of acquired truths.

### **The Nature of the Human Self**

A second thread of connection relates to James's and Cayce's understanding of the nature of the human self. Alfred North Whitehead credits James as the initiator of a new stage in philosophic thought.<sup>10</sup> This stage bears directly on the issue at hand. Whitehead focuses on James's rejection of Cartesian dualism. In his essay, "Does Consciousness Exist?," James proceeds directly to the heart of the matter.

To deny plumply that 'consciousness' exists seems so absurd on the face of it --- for undeniably 'thoughts' do exist -- that I fear some readers will follow me no farther. Let me then immediately explain that I mean only to deny that the word stands for an entity, but to insist most emphatically that it does stand for a function. There is, I mean, no aboriginal stuff or quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made, out of which our thoughts of them are made; but there is a function in experience which thoughts perform, and for the performance of which this quality of being is invoked. That function is *knowing*.<sup>11</sup>

Descartes argues that human beings are both thinking things and extended things. James responds with the assertion that one best understands

thinking, not as an independently existing thing called mind or soul, but as a functional quality of a complex human being. For James, the mind does not exist as an entity. Rather, one must view human beings as complex organisms involved in a continual interactive process of adjusting to their environment. Thinking represents one of the ways in which human beings can interact with the environment.

What, then, does James put in place of Descartes's division of reality into matter and spirit? On this level, James endorses the position of pluralism. In opposition to many forms of idealism, he argues that one cannot reduce reality to an ultimate unity. The world manifests itself in our experience as plural, and we must resist the intellectualizing tendency to establish connections for which there is no evidence.

The difference between monism and pluralism is perhaps the most pregnant of all the differences in philosophy. *Prima facie* the world is a pluralism; as we find it, its unity seems to be that of any collection; and our higher thinking consists chiefly of an effort to redeem it from that first crude form. . . . He who takes for his hypothesis that it [pluralism] is the permanent form of the world is what I call a radical empiricist. . . . There is no possible point of view from which the world can appear an absolute single fact. <sup>12</sup>

Plurality functions on the level of individual human beings as well. Just as humanity seeks to redeem the world from its pluralism, so individuals seek unification of the diverse elements constituting their life histories. Since evolution is an ongoing process, complete unity can only be an ideal one strives for, but never achieves in this life. The same resistance we noted earlier to the identification of truth and God carries over into James's understanding of the nature of the human self. The self is neither duality

nor unity. Rather, we are plural beings, some of whom seek to develop in the direction of unification.

When we examine the Cayce readings, we find a similar movement beyond the Cartesian duality of mind and body. The readings suggest that there are three essential aspects of human beings; the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. Our aim in this life is to establish a harmony among them. The readings set forth an affirmation which expresses this ideal aim well.

AS MY BODY, MIND AND SOUL ARE ONE, THOU, O LORD, IN THE MANIFESTATIONS IN THE EARTH, IN POWER, IN MIGHT, IN GLORY, ART ONE. MAY I SEE IN THAT I DO, DAY BY DAY, MORE OF THAT REALIZATION, AND MANIFEST THE MORE. (262-38)

This affirmation implies that, to understand oneself, one must realize that the ideal pattern for the human is to be found in the trinitarian concept of God. The readings spell out this analogy more explicitly in the following passage:

Thus, as you find in self body, mind, soul, in its three dimensional manner it is as the spiritual three dimensional concept of the Godhead: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. These, then, in self are a shadow of the spirit of the Creative Force. Thus as the Father is as the body, the mind is as the Son, the soul is as the Holy Spirit. (5246-1)

The self, as a shadow of the Godhead, imperfectly represents this ideal triune unity. Given the imperfect nature of this representation, one can conclude that, for the Cayce readings, humans are in fact plural beings, some of whom are striving in this life to actualize the deepest and highest ideal of unification. Thus, James and Cayce come to similar positions

regarding the nature of the human self. But, it is important to note that James sees the struggle for self-unity as part of the moral ideal which he calls meliorism,<sup>13</sup> while Cayce's interpretation of the self is set within the religious tradition of Christianity. The notion of meliorism is linked to James's commitment to pluralism while the Christian context of the Cayce readings is clearly monistic.

### **The Nature of the Human Mind**

A third thread of connection concerns James's and Cayce's views about the nature of the human mind. This issue lies at the heart of James's philosophical development. The *Principles of Psychology* (1890) stands as a powerful expression of his purdinctive approach to the understanding of the human mind through the newly emerging science of psychology. The *Principles*, however, does not represent his final word on this issue. Eugene Taylor argues that

... after 1890, James had a turn of mind. Increasingly disenchanted with a scientific psychology in America that restricted itself more and more to the laboratory and to the filterings of reality through a clouded lens of statistical analysis, James sought to extend the discipline by including within it the study of psychic phenomena, the subconscious, and religious experience.<sup>14</sup>

In the Introduction to this paper, I made note of James's interest in psychical research and his adoption of Frederic Myers's postulate of the subliminal self. I turn now to a fuller examination of these matters.

The view of the mind put forth in *The Varieties* suggests that, in addition to the ordinary field of consciousness with its foreground and background,

the mind also contains a subliminal or subconscious region. After describing this region as "... the abode of everything that is latent and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved" and after linking it with such diverse mental activities as intuition, dreaming, mystical experiences, automatisms, delusions, and supra-normal acts of knowing, James goes on to say that "It is also the fountainhead of much that feeds our religion. In persons deep in the religious life, as we have now abundantly seen --- and this is my conclusion --- the door into this region seems unusually wide open . . ."15 When we look for the source of religion, we must look to those direct human experiences which emerge from the subliminal. Examples of such experiences include conversion, saintliness, and mysticism. James's connection of these disparate phenomena with the subliminal enables him to draw the following conclusion:

Let me then propose, as an hypothesis, that whatever it may be on its farther side, the "more" with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life. . . . it is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances, and to suggest to the Subject an external control. In the religious life the control is felt as "higher"; but since on our hypothesis it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden mind which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true.<sup>16</sup>

Two points in this quote require mention. First, James has already committed himself to the existence of something more as the real common ground of the religious. The hypothesis he proposes explains the nature of this something more and, like all hypotheses, needs testing to determine its adequacy. Second, he identifies the subliminal with the higher powers of

the mind. Thus, we achieve subliminal states of mind by going beyond the lesser realm of ordinary consciousness. James realizes the dangers of taking this step beyond since the subliminal is also the realm from which mental illness often springs. Indeed, the subliminal in his view stands for a range of phenomena, some of which we barely comprehend at all. In his essay, "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished," James reports that

I have myself, as American agent for the census [conducted by the SPR], collected hundreds of cases of hallucination in healthy persons. The result is to make me feel that we all have potentially a "subliminal" self, which may make at any time irruption into our ordinary lives. At its lowest, it is only the depository of our forgotten memories; at its highest, we do not know what it is at all.<sup>17</sup>

The Cayce readings develop an expanded view of the mind which overlaps with James's position. We have already noted the triune concept of self as consisting of body, mind, and spirit. In *Meditation and the Mind of Man*, Puryear and Thurston state that

The central teaching of the Edgar Cayce readings is best understood by seeing the oneness in this triune formula: *the Spirit is the life, Mind is the builder, the Physical is the result*. This formula is the basis for the understanding of the nature of man which is given in the readings ...<sup>18</sup>

The human mind functions as the mediating force between spirit and the physical. It receives the vital force from spirit and uses that energy to shape the physical according to its inner vision. Given the dynamic nature of its activities, the readings speak of different levels of mind. Just as the self is triune, so too the mind has three distinct levels of activity. The readings identify these as the conscious, the subconscious, and the superconscious.

Our examination begins with the conscious level of mental activity. The readings assert that "The conscious means that that is able to be manifested in the physical plane through one of the five senses." (3744-1) In essence, this agrees with James's account of consciousness. James, of course, would fill out this definition by introducing the distinction between the foreground and the background of consciousness. When we come to the second level of mental activity, we see some divergence between the views of James and the Cayce readings. The readings call the second level the subconscious and define it as

That lying between the soul and spirit forces within the entity, and is reached more thoroughly when the conscious mind is under subjugation of the soul forces of the individual or physical body. We may see manifestation in those of the so-called spiritual-minded people. (3744-1)

This is akin to what James calls the subliminal or subconscious. Both the readings and James would agree that such mental phenomena as dreams and mystical experience have their source in the subconscious. James's unwillingness to commit himself to the presence of the spiritual in human beings means that he would not link, as the readings do, the subconscious with the spiritual forces within humans.

This divergence between the views of James and the readings becomes more pronounced when we turn to the third level of mental activity, the superconscious. The readings state that "The superconscious is the divide, that oneness lying between the soul and the spirit force, within the spiritual entity. Not of earth forces at all, only awakened with the spiritual indwelling and acquired individually." (900-21) The superconscious represents the link between the human and the divine which, the readings

claim, lies dormant within all humans. Only in those who attain a high level of spiritual development does this dormant force become active. In ordinary situations, we are directly acquainted with the conscious mind, indirectly aware of the subconscious mind, and not aware at all of the superconscious mind. The readings suggest that the superconscious does not make its presence felt directly. Rather, "... through the superconscious the Universal Forces are made active in subconsciousness." (900-31) This means that there is an aspect of the human mind which is open to the divine (which the readings call 'the Universal Forces'), but this aspect can only make its influence felt in this life through the subconscious mind.

The matter of the indirect influence of the superconscious mind has led some commentators to suggest a closer connection between James and the Cayce readings. For example, Harmon Bro, in his biography of Edgar Cayce entitled *A Seer Out Of Season*, argues that "William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* had grouped together as subliminal both the action of the subconscious and the engagement of the divine in religious experience; Cayce was using a similar model to represent currents nearer to and farther from consciousness."<sup>19</sup> We have already noted James's admission that the realm of the subliminal is elastic in that it ranges from a lowest to a highest level. James confesses that he does not understand the nature of the highest reaches of the subliminal. There is some evidence in *The Varieties* to support Bro's claim. After connecting the sense of the more (which is part of the essence of religious experience) on its side closer to us with the subconscious, James speculates on what this sense of the more might be on its farther side.

The farther dimensions of our being plunge, it seems to me,  
into an altogether other dimension of existence from the

sensible and merely "understandable" world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region, whichever you choose. So far as our ideal impulses originate in this region (and most of them do originate in it, for we find them possessing us in a way for which we cannot articulately account), we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world, for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly, the drift of James's thinking here moves in the direction of the notion of the superconscious mind. Indeed, the readings insist that an ideal "must be of the spiritual nature --- that has its foundation in truth, in God . . ." (262-11) But, we have to remember that James does not commit himself to the existence of a supernatural realm. The affirmation of the supernatural in the readings results in the full-blown development of the concept of a superconscious mind.

### **Prayer**

A final thread connects James's treatment of the phenomenon of prayer in *The Varieties* with the examination of the nature of prayer in the Cayce readings. After critiquing some forms of prayer, James suggests that ". . . we take the word in the wider sense as meaning every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine . . . Prayer in this wide sense is the very soul and essence of religion. . . . Wherever this interior prayer is lacking, there is no religion . . ." 21 From James's viewpoint, religion involves, at the least, some interior, active connection between the individual and the divine. The exchange that takes place must be mutual if religion is to be considered authentic. In addition, prayer is thought to have real consequences. James describes the consequences claimed for prayer this way: "Through prayer, religion

insists, things which cannot be realized in any other manner come about: energy which but for prayer would be bound is by prayer set free and operates in some part, be it objective or subjective, of the world of facts."<sup>22</sup> This statement could be interpreted in a number of ways, but it certainly reminds us of the position of the readings regarding mind as builder and physical as result.

The Cayce readings agree with James on the significance of prayer in religion. Because religious experience is such an integral part of the context of the readings, we find a more complete examination of the essential characteristics of prayer. In a set of readings given to the Glad Helpers Prayer Group<sup>23</sup>, the readings define prayer this way:

As it has been defined or given in an illustrated manner by the Great Teacher [Christ], prayer is the making of one's conscious self more in attune with the spiritual forces that may manifest in a material world, and is ordinarily given as a cooperative experience of many individuals when all are asked to come in one accord and one mind . . . (281-13)

Two points require comment. First, what the readings refer to as attunement has essentially the same meaning as James's notion of 'inward communion.' Second, whereas James sees prayer as primarily an individual affair, the readings point to prayer as a social phenomenon. Prayer has the potential not only of bringing the individual into connection with the divine, but also of uniting individuals in a common cause. Indeed, the God-human relationship requires the establishment of some form of human community. In addition, the readings suggest another dimension to the phenomenon of prayer. "Meditation, then, is prayer, but is prayer from within the inner self, and partakes not only of the physical inner man

but the soul that is aroused by the spirit of man from within." (281-13) For the readings, the spiritual dimension is not only at work in the world, but also latent within the superconscious mind. One form of prayer focuses upon establishing a connection with the spiritual presence in the world while another form, meditation, turns inward towards the spiritual presence within. The first is largely social while the second is of necessity individual.

In another passage, the readings delineate a further distinction between these two forms of prayer.

Prayer is the concerted effort of the physical consciousness to become attuned to the consciousness of the Creator, either collectively or individually. Meditation is emptying self of all that hinders the creative forces from rising along the natural channels of the physical man to be disseminated through those centers and sources that create the activities of the physical, the mental, the spiritual man . . . (281-13)

Prayer involves conscious attention, as an activity of the conscious mind. Through prayer, we speak with the divine and communicate our concerns. Meditation involves a receptivity which frees one from the restrictions of the conscious mind. One is then in a psychological position to hear the response of the divine to one's prayers. The meditative state is thus a manifestation of the subconscious mind open to the divine flow from the superconscious. In order to achieve this state, one must set aside the concerns of ego and the outside world. This clears the channels for the divine energy latent within us to impress itself upon our mind as we sit in a dream-like state.

While James and the readings are in accord as regards the significance of prayer for religion, the readings take the exploration of the nature of prayer to a deeper level. The theme of mutual communication between the human and the divine receives explicit treatment in the distinction between prayer in its usual sense and meditation. Meditation becomes the mechanism whereby the divine acts upon the human to stimulate transformation on the physical, mental, and spiritual levels. The readings go on to say much more about the nature of this mechanism, but that would take us beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the readings develop a richer sense of the meaning of prayer than we find in James.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have considered four threads of connection between the ideas of William James and the Edgar Cayce readings, namely, pragmatism, the nature of the self, the nature of the mind, and prayer. The first three refer to the philosophical worldview James and the readings adopt. The first demonstrates a similarity in philosophical outlook. The second and third show that the readings begin with a conceptual structure similar to James's, but go beyond the point where James leaves off. The fourth focuses specifically on one example of James's treatment of religious phenomena in *The Varieties*, and indicates how the readings build upon what James suggests about prayer. Many other such examples could have been selected to illustrate this point, but one seems sufficient. Clearly, the readings lead to conclusions that James himself would never endorse. But, the way in which these conclusions are reached does not do violence to the Jamesian framework of thought. Although one can imagine other lines of

development, this particular line seems a natural extension of James's thought.

Why didn't James develop his own thought about such topics as self, mind, and prayer further? Many commentators have noted a sense of incompleteness in James's thought. James himself suggests a reason why he did not expand the religious dimension of his thought. In a letter to James Leuba, dated April 17, 1904, James says:

My personal position is simple. I have no living sense of commerce with a God. I envy those who have, for I know that the addition of such a sense would help me greatly. The Divine, for my active life, is limited to impersonal and abstract concepts which, as ideals, interest and determine me, but do so but faintly in comparison with what a feeling of God might effect, if I had one. . . . Now, although I am so devoid of *Gottesbewusstsein* in the directer and stronger sense, Yet there is something in me which makes response when I hear utterances from that quarter made by others. I recognize the deeper voice. Something tells me: "thither lies truth" --- and I am sure it is not old theistic prejudices of infancy.<sup>24</sup>

Despite James's reference to his own position as simple, what he says reflects an unresolved tension. On the one hand, he has no direct experience of the divine. The readings build a framework of thought upon an explicit acknowledgement of the presence of the divine in nature and within humans. This line of development was closed to James. On the other hand, the religious exerts a strong attraction for James. This explains why his comments about religion in *The Varieties* point to paths of development believers might fruitfully follow. These comments provide evidence for the claim made in this paper that the Edgar Cayce readings represent a natural extension of James's reflections on religious experience.

One can sympathize with James's ambivalence because the inner tension he experienced was truly creative. He was able to approach the topic of religious experience with an honest openness, and to plant the seeds for the future development of his ideas. The Edgar Cayce readings are significant, in my estimation, not because they bring James's ideas to completion, but because they carry us further in our never-ending search to understand ourselves and the world.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Harmon Hartzell Bro, *A Seer Out Of Season* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. 313-16.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar Cayce gave readings over a span of forty-four years. Beginning in 1923, these readings were systematically recorded by a stenographer. Over fourteen thousand readings are on file in the library at the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) in Virginia Beach. The Edgar Cayce Foundation holds the copyright. The standard way of referencing these readings is by inserting the reading number in parentheses in the text. The first number is that assigned to the individual or group receiving a reading. The second number refers to the sequence of readings given to that individual or group. For example, 900-23 refers to the twenty-third reading given to individual # 900. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the A.R.E. staff in the process of research for this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Gardner Murphy and Robert C. Ballou, eds., *William James on Psychical Research* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library, 1936), p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> In 1931, a group of close friends dedicated to the value of Edgar Cayce's work decided to form a study group with the aim of developing their psychic abilities. The readings numbered 262 were given over a period of years to direct the activities of this group. The group wrote the materials which are used by Search for God study groups throughout the world today.

<sup>6</sup> The standard way of referring to the Peirce material is by volume and paragraph number, as taken from the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Arthur W.

Burks, Charles Hartshorne, and Paul Weiss, eds.(8 vols.; Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960-66).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. John Dewey, *Philosophy and Civilization* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968), pp. 18-21.

<sup>8</sup> John J. McDermott, ed., *The Writings of William James* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 430.

<sup>9</sup> James, p. 507.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 143.

<sup>11</sup> McDermott, pp. 169-70.

<sup>12</sup> McDermott, pp. 134-35.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. McDermott, pp. 466-72.

<sup>14</sup> Eugene Taylor, *William James on Exceptional Mental States: The 1896 Lowell Lectures* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> James, p. 473.

<sup>16</sup> James, pp. 502-03.

<sup>17</sup> Gardner and Ballou, pp. 42-3.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert B. Puryear and Mark A. Thurston, *Meditation and the Mind of Man* (Virginia Beach: A.R.E. Press, 1975), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Bro, p. 197.

<sup>20</sup> James, p. 506.

<sup>21</sup> James, pp. 453-54.

<sup>22</sup> James, p. 456.

<sup>23</sup> The Glad Helpers Prayer Group was an offshoot of the original study group. It was formed to pray for those in need of healing who requested their prayers.

<sup>24</sup> Murphy and Ballou, pp. 270-71.

## 9. Appendix C: Planetary Sojourns as Symbolic and Metaphysical Realities

The Cayce life readings focus on two aspects of the soul's journey — astral sojourns (within the environment of other planets or star systems) and reincarnation (past lives on earth). Most of the Cayce readings that include information on astral sojourns focus almost entirely on the planets of this solar system; thus the term planetary sojourn is commonly used throughout this appendix and the main text.

During planetary sojourns, the consciousness associated with experience of each planet has its own unique qualities that provide opportunities for soul growth and development. Earthly incarnation requires a three-dimensional flesh body as the soul's physical vehicle. Sojourns in the multidimensional consciousness of other planets (and other star systems) are nonphysical, requiring the use of a subtle body, for which the readings include several terms (e.g., astral body, celestial body, cosmic body, etc.).

### **The Symbolic Interpretation of Planetary Sojourns**

Some Cayce scholars posit that planetary sojourns are strictly symbolic or metaphoric in nature. Harmon Bro, for example, assumed a purely symbolic perspective by linking planetary sojourns to ancient Greek mythology and the work of Carl Jung:

The readings insisted that the planets linked with temperament [i.e., life readings] were symbols, not actual locations where the soul would incarnate as on earth. Each stood only for a dimension of consciousness, a kind of awareness and preoccupation in which the soul was steeped for a time by its

own choice before returning to earth.... In essence Cayce was saying what prior centuries of Western faith had affirmed: we “go” somewhere appropriate after earthly life to a realm which is more consciousness than spatial. But the affirmation in the readings of a measure of truth in astrology was difficult to relate to modern thought. In Cayce’s view it was possible to discern the mix of influences in an individual’s temperament by using the positions of the heavens at birth. Only in later years when I explored Jung’s studies of astrology, and found there his concept of archetypes helping to shape both humans and the stars, as well as the rest of creations would I have a mediating term for thinking about correlation between the heavens and the psyche. (Bro, 1990, pp. 154–155)

Todeschi (2007) has also emphasized the symbolic aspects of planetary sojourns, while pointing out the “specific energetic vibration” corresponding to each planet:

In brief, the idea is simply that each of the planets represents the vibration of specific lessons in soul growth. After each incarnation, the soul takes stock of its own strengths and weaknesses and may choose to undertake a rigorous lesson in consciousness development that will benefit the soul in future earthly incarnations. For example, a soul needing to know more about love may choose to undertake a period when it is surrounded by the consciousness or vibration of love. That specific energetic vibration corresponds, according to the readings, with the planet Venus. It is important to point out, however, that the soul does not “go” to Venus. Instead, the planet Venus represents the consciousness of love that corresponds to a “sojourn in consciousness” which a specific individual may wish to undertake. On one occasion, Cayce stated, “Each planetary influence vibrates at a different rate of vibration” (281-55). (Todeschi, 2007, p. 111)

Bro’s explanation is interesting and worthy of consideration. However, his observation that the readings insist that planets (in the life readings) “were

symbols, not actual locations where the soul would incarnate as on earth” warrants closer examination. While it is clear that the soul does not incarnate on other planets in a physical flesh body as on earth, and that the experiences in those environs are associated with dimensions of consciousness linked to recognized archetypal patterns, it does not necessarily follow that the sojourns are therefore purely symbolic. The use of Jungian psychotherapy and symbolic astrology may indeed be useful for addressing the obvious symbolic dimensions of these experiences; this approach has proven practical for many practitioners. However, symbolism and actuality need not be mutually exclusive.

Todeschi’s explanation of planetary sojourns as experiences in soul growth based on the “specific energetic vibration” unique to each planet is equally valuable. Such energetic patterns carry symbolism that is highly relevant to the soul’s development. And yet they are also suggestive of the involvement of some deep level of physics in such activity.

Thus, although symbolism is clearly inherent in the concept of planetary sojourns, the readings suggest that this cannot be the whole account. The physical position of the planets does seem to matter in the practice of astrology (as encouraged in the readings). If planetary sojourns and associated astrological influences were purely symbolic, the practice of astrology—utilizing birth charts and planetary alignments—would be inconceivable, since knowledge of the actual locations of physical planets is essential to astrological calculation.

The concept of “soul birth” raises the same issue. At about the time of physical birth, the soul entity may enter and take possession of the body. In the readings, this is called “soul birth” but does not imply that the soul is newly formed or created—it is pre-existent. The soul entity takes flight from other realms of experience and connects into the body, usually within a few hours before or after physical birth. Persons seeking astrological

information from Cayce wanted their charts to be as accurate as possible; hence the distinctions were made between physical and soul birth:

In entering the present experience we find there is a difference between the physical and the soul birth of the entity. (790-1)

Here we have a variation in the physical birth and the soul birth, of some hours. (826-2)

This entity, we find, was completed soon after the [physical] birth, and spirit and soul took its flight from Venus, with those helpful influences in Mercury and with that of Uranus and Arcturus, with variations in the Sun and in the Mars and Jupiter forces. (4353-4)

The appended reading excerpts at the end of this appendix provide additional examples of the soul's flight from planets in this solar system at about the time of physical birth, completing the possession of the physical entity via soul birth. These readings ground the disagreement with a strictly symbolic reading of planetary sojourns firmly in the source material itself.

This perspective is not without precedent. On the subject of planetary sojourns, the teachings of Rudolf Steiner parallel the Cayce readings, as documented by Fix (1979, pp. 176–180):

In a rare instance of agreement, the two most famous mystics of the 20th century both declared that man travels to the planets after death. Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was a clairvoyant Swiss 'spiritual scientist', according to his own description. His hundreds of writings and recorded lectures on the origin and evolution of man are widely known and of continuing influence. The American trance-psychic, Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), a source of thousands of verified medical diagnoses, produced in addition hundreds of readings on metaphysical subjects, some of which are in areas also dealt