

The Nine Layers of the Soul

The Layers of the Soul

African people speak of the soul as being multilayered. The most comprehensive delineation of these layers that I have seen comes to us from the Igbimolasha (the Priest Council) of Oyotunji Village in Sheldon, South Carolina. The priests there have studied the beliefs of the entire diaspora and composed a view of the nine layers of the soul. I am indebted to those priests and especially to Iyal'Orisha Omi Aladora of North Miami Beach, Priestess of Yemonja, for her wise and humorous assistance in "cracking the ancestral code."

In numerology nine is regarded as the completion of a cycle; the ancient Maya believed that the underworld was divided into nine layers; and, most significantly, "Iyansa," the praise

Name for the Goddess Oya, means "the Mother of Nine." Offerings are given to Her in cycles of nine; there are nine heads on Her necklace; and Her initiates require an additional nine days of purification.

The Universal Soul

The first layer is called the Universal Soul. It is that connection with Cosmic Force "which unites the human being with every animate and inanimate thing in the Universe." This layer is born out of the "Big Bang" that set the creation of the Universe in motion. Through the Universal Soul we gaze at the heavens and know that we too are made of stardust like the rocks, the trees, and the animals. We are humbled by the magnitude of Olodumare. We are awestruck by Eternity.

The Human Soul

The Human Soul connects us with the manifestation of the Cosmic energy in the Homo sapiens form. It reminds us that we all, who call ourselves human, chose this form with its gifts and limitations. This choice becomes a condition of Fate. We share "the total human experience" from conception to death. Recognition of this should assure our humanity in each other's presence.

The Sexual Soul

This Sexual Soul represents that part of consciousness that chooses gender. The intelligence that guides the spinning of the child in the womb (Obatala the ruler of all heads) decides, at a specific time in the development of the fetus, to become female or male. In so doing, one agrees to address the gifts and limitations of that body-choice and to share in the experience of others of the same gender. Thus, we have age-grade groups, rites of passage, and secret societies based on gender. This connection is profound in women. It is a common experience that when a number of women live in close proximity they will often adjust their menstrual cycles to a common time.

The Racial Soul

This layer bestows upon people their physical characteristics and the "genius of their race." The Racial Soul decides what skin color and hair texture will adorn the baby. It also endows a person with the talents common to a particular race: a movement style, a contemplative nature, a predisposition for art, these things are often guided by the environment in which a group evolved. And although these talents may be inherent in all people, they may be applied differently according to racial temperament. Fear and misunderstanding of the Racial Soul are the cause of racism in human beings.

The Astral Soul

The Astral Soul represents an individual's relationship to the Forces of Nature. This is expressed through the identification of a person's primary Orisha and/or astrological configurations. Here one chooses a personal temperament, which flavors the experience of Life in the Marketplace. The Astral Soul "provides individuals with special talents, proclivities, and adversities."

The National Soul

The National Soul is expressed through cultural and political identity and the quest for Social Organization. It is this layer that separates itself from the basic humanity and creates war; connects primarily with its own and sustains ethnocentrism; or extends itself beyond the boundaries of land and culture to embrace peaceful coexistence. At this time in our development, the National Soul needs to expand to the Global Soul.

The Ancestral Soul

Here the human and racial characteristics are channeled through the gifts and limitations inherent in the genes of a particular family line. This talent or that attitude "runs in the family." This is the place where we find the "family curse." Sometimes the curse is physiological—an inheritable disease or neurological condition. But most often the family curse is psychosocial—generational incest, alcoholism, and so on. When these behaviors are repeated with fear and guilt, they usurp power from the other layers of existence and appear so large as to become a "curse from God." With clear commitment and diligent work, these generational curses can be healed.

The Historical Soul

The Historical Soul "provides individuals with the characteristics of their generation." It is a relative of the National Soul and can be connected to astral events. A particular generation (Pluto) can be affected by the political events of its time (Republican rule) and may respond to and participate in those events under the urgings of astrological influences (Scorpio: Sex, Death, Transformation). Children of the sixties viewed the world differently (free love) than children of the eighties (AIDS epidemic).

The Guardian Soul

The Oyotunji Priest Council describes the Guardian Soul as that "which controls, counsels, and protects individuals as they seek to integrate themselves with their other souls and the rest of the world. It is the Ori directing the fulfillment of Destiny."

These layers encompass **Ile Orun, Ile Aiye, and Ile Olokun**; they are a composite of our inheritance. We receive energy from them, participate in them, and contribute to them in the overall scheme of Continuous Creation.