

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE IN THE HUMAN AURA**  
**Part 2: Creating an Energetic Foundation for Human Development**

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The subtle body model described in the introductory article of this series suggests how human experience, changes in the brain, body and energy fields may interrelate. This article considers how our subtle energy system develops, which aids in understanding its steering functions. Let us begin by reviewing the basic elements of the model and then consider how these may apply to human development.

The aura comprises a frequency spectrum, with oscillations increasing from the bottom up. Slower oscillations carry more charge, so the intensity or energetic “density” of emotionality is far greater in the lower chakras. The energy fields in the aura have positive and negative poles that encode the impact of experience, or conditioning. Traditional teachings about the psychological correlates of the chakras suggest that the lower chakras correlate with abilities developed during childhood, with earlier abilities characterizing the lowest chakras.<sup>1</sup>

The energetic properties of each chakra can be understood in isolation but in reality energy fields throughout the body must affect each other because of their proximity and form a more complex, individuated field, just as the instruments in an orchestra combine to form a larger impression. In addition to the fundamental frequency of each chakra, there are complex variations within its field, just as a single radio frequency carries the complex signal we hear as transmitted sound and music. Emotions, for instance, may have their own energetic signatures (Clynes, 1977). The subtle fields also interrelate with rhythmic biological functions, from our breathing, to our heartbeats, digestion and other functions, as is known in acupuncture, one of the subtle energy disciplines.<sup>2</sup>

The stresses of living encode harmony and disharmony in our thinking and emotional selves. Psychological conflict may impede the free flow of energy through the subtle body and be experienced as disharmony of thought and emotion and disruptions in

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<sup>1</sup> Their underlying energetic structure is well understood by some ancient traditions, for instance, experts in Kundalini Yoga recognize a standard number of petals in the chakras that have characteristic subtle sounds. These petals are actually shapes of the energy fields in those chakras.

<sup>2</sup> Acupuncturists detect rhythmic energetic changes as alternating peaks and valleys in meridian flow at opposite ends of the day. The acupuncture tradition also confirms the chakra locations and properties of yoga (Raheem, 1984). And acupuncture meridians are being measured instrumentally (Motoyama, 1981).

awareness.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, healthy development allows life force to flow freely, resulting in stable identity and a generally positive emotional tone.

The subtle energy hypothesis is consistent with a variety of psychological experiences and relates to: 1) their intensity; 2) their steering functions; 3) polarization of opposites; and 4) integration of libido (life force) into the personality. These phenomena have been explained, of course, through previous psychological theories, and their activity is now correlated with brain functions. The model outlined in this paper suggests energy fields located in typical body locations for the issues involved and relates these to what is known about the chakras. Field effects within the brain itself may also accompany the field effects hypothesized throughout the body.<sup>4</sup>

### *Steering Effects*

The experiences we most remember and those that shape our behavior, whether adaptive or pathological, are ones encoded with intense emotion or vitality. The activation of energies low in the body is more likely to carry greater charge because of the longer wavelength there. Young children typically experience strong, relatively unregulated emotions and a passionate vitality. Thus even the routine behavioral scripts encoded in early life and held in the lower chakras would be encoded with higher voltage than later experience. These early experiences naturally exert a steering effect upon later learning through association, whether remembering prior sensory experience or accessing that experience through internal narration. Their field effects may also play a part in entraining (resonating with) later learning through their greater intensity compared to behavioral scripts encoded higher in the body.

The polarity of energy fields also appears to perform a steering function since this may be how attraction and aversion are encoded. Situations encoded aversively often trigger escape and avoidance and are thus dissociated. Activation of those fields at first reveals the aspect with which we are most comfortable, for example, our sense of being “right” in an argument with another. But once the field is enlivened, one may become aware of the opposite pole of the conflict. If one is able to remain conscious in this process, exploring both sides of the issue promotes growth and maturation. The encounter with and healing of that conflict held in our energy field is an intense experience. Its intensity and its characteristic frequency signature can entrain scripts lower in the body. Conscious experiencing of such scripts connects higher chakra awareness with one’s passionate and somatic self, and the fields integrate, resolving conflict and releasing previously

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<sup>3</sup> These ideas are the basis for bioenergetic therapies. There is also a rich tradition in psychoanalysis of the mutual influence of client and analyst on each other’s subjective experience.

<sup>4</sup> Swami Chandrasekharanand Saraswati (2003) correlates “brain centers” to Kundalini and subtle energy effects experienced in the body.

dissociated libido into the personality and merging previously separate fields into the larger aura. Such phenomena will be explored in greater detail in later articles that address issues of relationship and psychological health or pathology.

### ***How Personality “Grows Up”***

Let us begin at the beginning, with child development as a launching point for exploring development through the full flowering of individuation and beyond. Human experience tells us that each zone – head, heart and belly – has psychological characteristics. Our personality functioning forms through the interaction of nature (our inborn temperament and physical development) and experience. From earliest infancy until adulthood, these characteristics consolidate vertically, moving up the body. Evidence for this hypothesis is seen in the traditional psychological attributes of the chakras (wheels), the energy centers discerned by the seers of ancient India, which progress up the spine. In briefest summary, numbering the major chakras ascending from the base of the spine, their psychological attributes according to ancient yogic texts are: 1) survival and support; 2) sensuality and sexuality; 3) power, assertiveness, cooperation and confidence; 4) compassion; 5) trust, creativity and receptivity; 6) insight and wisdom; and 7) transcendence (Harrigan, 2002; Goswami, 1999).

Compare these attributes to those recognized by child development researchers. Again in briefest summary, Daniel Stern (1985) writes that we are born with a sense of self, corresponding with characteristics of the root chakra as support for the other chakras (Goswami, 1999) since survival implies a self that survives. Then we progressively differentiate our experience, starting with a somatic or bodily feeling self, then an emotional self, corresponding to the first three chakras, and a social self (third through fifth chakras), (Stern, 1985). Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder (2000) have shown how we develop concrete thinking (third chakra) at an earlier age than abstract thinking (sixth chakra). And Margaret Mahler and colleagues (1975) observed that empathy (fourth chakra) develops earlier than full verbal expression (fifth chakra).

What changes may occur in the aura with emotional growth? As one progresses through each developmental stage, one must encounter and reconcile many dualities, distinguishing self from other, comfort from discomfort, yes from no, etc. The dualities of embodied existence are encoded in the subtle body as energy fields with positive and negative poles, and this marks the beginning of discernment. Young children freely transit through intense emotions associated with life’s experiences and are less governed by emotion alone as they develop cognitive abilities and social learning.

The usual difference in emotionality between children and adults has implications for psychological change later in life. When adults become very activated, whether upset or elated, the intensity of their emotions entrains with these early emotional states so that for a time, emotional reactivity overtakes reasoned action. Psychologists call this

phenomenon regression. The pioneering Swiss psychiatrist, C. G. Jung (1960) referred to the “constellation of complexes.” If one can remain conscious and reflective even if intensely activated, the contents of the complex become integrated with the larger personality. I see this as an energetic phenomenon, a merging of fields (the complex into the larger aura) as what was formerly forgotten or conflictual is now remembered and becomes part of one’s conscious behavioral repertoire. Psychoanalyst Ernst Kris (2000) recognized this phenomenon and called it “regression in service of the ego.” Jungian psychologists, hypothesizing an inner guiding force beyond the personal ego call it “regression in service of the self” (Satinover, 1986).

I am not the first to suggest (Judith, 1996; Seeman, 2001; Dale, 2009) that personality develops from infancy to maturity in a sequence of “growing up” the body, chakra by chakra. The process of self-discovery can also be enriched when previously repressed emotions rise into consciousness and disrupt a rigid personality. This is another kind of growing upward.

### ***Individuation as Descent and Return***

Psychological growth can also occur by growing downward, from making mental connections (head), to speaking about them (throat), empathizing with them (heart), and feeling powerful or powerless (solar plexus), desire or aversion (belly), and security or annihilation anxiety (first chakra). Jung (1996) intuited this type of downward growth when exploring the mid-life crisis and its working through, which he called “individuation.” This process begins when a person’s customary adaptations are no longer satisfying. They find themselves intuitively (top of head) starting a descent from the person they thought they were (brow) into a re-examination of their love relationships (heart), vocation (head, throat, heart, solar plexus), passions (belly) and sense of identity (all centers cooperatively integrated throughout the body, including the root chakra).

Jung (1980) discovered that the individuation process is also symbolized in dreams and myth as a descent to the underworld, a dangerous enterprise where one may be overwhelmed by the unconscious or return transformed. The result of that return can be an integrated personality at peace with itself or more. He also noticed that over time, people grow in a spiral, circling back to the same issues (Jung, 1980). *This may occur because the descents and returns of personality growth enliven related themes in different bodily zones, with their characteristic issues.*

Jung could not conceive of individuation eventuating in an experience of mystical union with the divine Source (nonduality). He thought that infinite expansion of consciousness must annihilate individual consciousness (Jung, 1959).<sup>5</sup> Thus the ultimate return reported

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<sup>5</sup> Jung had trouble formulating what happens in mystical union. My sense of this is that the individual entrains to (resonates with) the Absolute, an experience that is not remembered

by mystics throughout history transcends his individuation construct (Seeman, 2001). A brief glimpse of spiritual return to the source as symbolized by three ancient traditions is offered here for interested readers.

### **Return to the Source**

In Kundalini Yoga<sup>6</sup> and Jewish mysticism, incarnation begins when a fragment of divinity descends into the material world. That divine spark eventually returns from the root of the spine to the crown of the head and beyond to reunite with the Source (Halevi, 1979; Seeman, 2001). The Christian Bible also tells us of divine descent and return through the example of Jesus and his teachings. In these three traditions and others, this ultimate transformation is symbolized as a death of self-centeredness, transubstantiation,<sup>7</sup> and spiritual rebirth. In Kundalini Yoga, Kundalini Shakti,<sup>8</sup> the embodied Divine essence, reaches the upper brow and starts a renovation and restoration process (Harrigan, 2000). Kundalini Shakti then reworks brain centers corresponding with the chakras in ascending order. This is experienced as an ascent through the chakras although it is actually occurring in the brain (Chandrasekharanand, 2003). It evolves the personality and energy channels to integrate feelings and thoughts with transpersonal perception, motivation and activity. For example, people undergoing this process may find themselves developing

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because it is so intense it overwhelms the brain's ability to record memories, yet the person is not unconscious but has more intensified consciousness. The person thus overcome re-enters ordinary consciousness by first falling into a state of non-meditation in which everyday life is experienced without attachment or thinking. Then ordinary consciousness gradually returns. But being so blessed by the Source yields aftereffects that include a different kind of faith – a knowing instead of hopeful belief – and some reworking of the subtle body to sustain such non-dual consciousness longer and progressively overcome impediments to expanded consciousness.

<sup>6</sup> “Kundalini” means “the coiled one” as this highest energy source in the body when dormant coils 3½ times around the base of the spine. “Yoga” means to yoke or harness in Sanskrit and refers to spiritual practices developed in India (Feuerstein, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Transubstantiation (transformation of one's very substance) is symbolized in alchemical texts, east and west, as absorption of the grosser elements into the next subtlest element until one returns to the Source, which is beyond all attributes. I.e., earth is absorbed by water, then by fire, by air, by ether, and beyond to immortality. These are subjective experiences documented in the teachings of ancient spiritual traditions such as Layayoga, (the yoga of absorption into the divine) that are built on case histories integrated with methods revealed through oral instruction (Goswami, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> “Shakti” is power, “the dynamic or creative principle of existence, envisioned as being feminine and personified as ... the divine consort of Shiva,” who personifies “the transcendental static principle” (Feuerstein, 2000). According to Joan Shivarпита Harrigan (2000), “Kundalini is the Sanskrit word for the spiritual power that dwells within us all.” It transcends the space/time concept of energy and is considered a power. In Jung's terms, its actions would be considered synchronistic (Seeman, 2001). When released, Kundalini acts intelligently to activate and guide spiritual transformation.

deeper stillness and insight and a strengthening vocation that helps others. Kundalini Shakti then breaks through the top of the head to achieve mystical union and promote further self-realization. The chakras of Kundalini Yoga very closely correspond with aspects of divine embodiment in the Kabalistic Tree of Life of ancient Jewish mysticism (Halevi, 1979). The unbroken oral wisdom traditions that teach how to realize the spark of immanent divinity and guide its return do not reveal their methods openly because these methods are very potent and must be tailored to the character and subtle body of the individual practitioner.

### **The Individual in Relationship**

In this paper I have suggested ways to understand the impact of human development on the subtle field of an individual. This provides a good starting point for understanding the aura and the steering functions of its encoded energies. But we cannot develop without caregivers, and we are interdependent with others around us. The next paper in this series will explore how people and their subtle fields interact with each other.

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