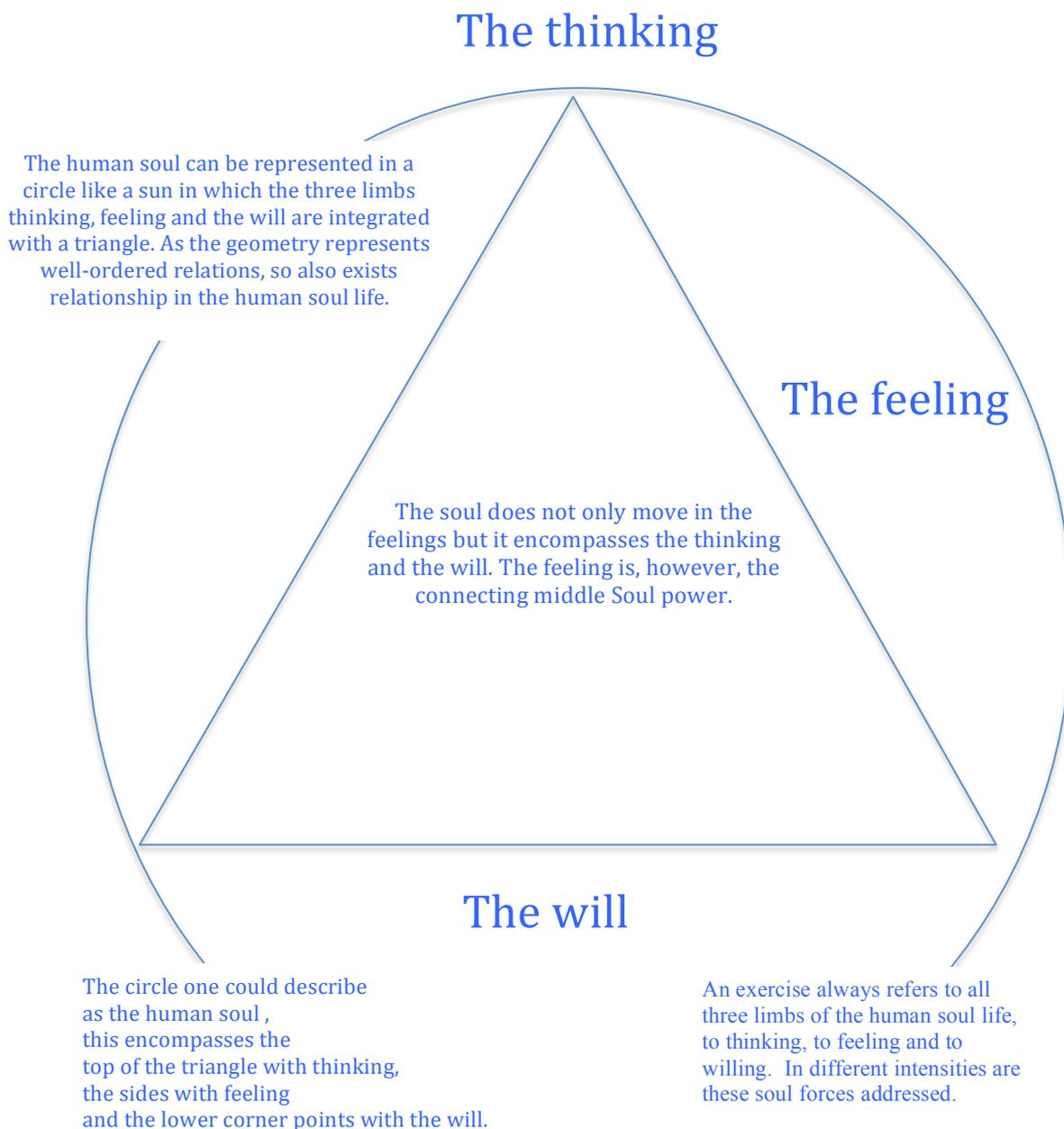


Introduction to the soul exercises

In order to understand the meaning of a soul exercise, it seems necessary at the beginning to characterize the soul, which is the being-existence of a person. What is the human soul? Is it only the general well known psyche or is it more than this? Is there a human soul at all or is it perhaps a pure question of theology or a mere construct of psychology? A careful characterization of the concept of the soul, as used in this book, is in any case very important at the beginning of these explanations because, if you omitted these characterizations so you would probably do the following exercises and yet not practice them sufficiently, independently and responsibly in their meaning.

The soul, as described here consists of three basic forces and these are thinking, feeling and the will. A general understanding of the term soul, is usually reduced to the most varied manifestations of the feelings of human existence, whereas thinking is usually assigned to the mind and the will to the primary impulse forces of the body. Since the term soul, however, alongside the feelings, also includes the thinking and the will, it becomes clear that the soul exercise is not just an emotional component, but also includes a thinking capacity, a sensitive inwardness and finally a will-full discipline. The name "soul exercise" was consciously chosen, because these three forces, thinking, feeling and will are to be schooled in a uniform and equal amount.



For the practice of a soul exercise one needs no particular conditions, like for example, a quiet meditation place or calm and solitude, and also no specific previous knowledge and training. Only a rational idea about human development, how it can proceed in the most favourable sense, and how it leads to health and social integrity, are aspects which should be acquired by those who practice these exercises. For this reason, this introductory chapter is a modest sketch about human development.

Each, individual person has the possibility to educate themselves in thinking with orderly and logical thought processes. The more ordered a thought is in connection with a next thought, topic or thing, or is thought in relation to fellow human beings, culture and social life, the more it subsequently promotes a healthy feeling life. The feelings of the human being can be promoted to deeper subtle-feelings in the further course. The opposite of deeper subtle-feelings are superficial emotions, which mostly fall over the people like a deluge and often take their course in exaggerated reactions such as enthusiastic debauchery or tragic derailments. The maturity of the human being, however, never represents a superficial emotional life, but rather the depth of their thoughts and feelings, which describe, so-to-speak, their soul.

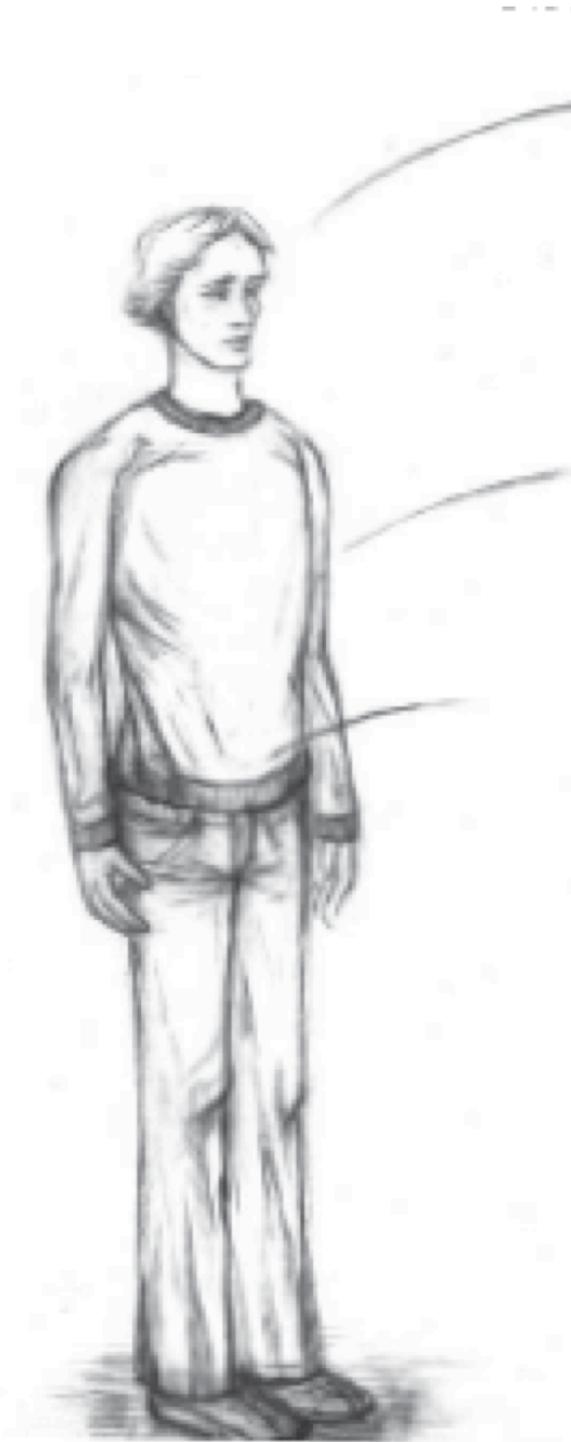
Human development needs alongside the unfolding of orderly thinking-ideas and the development of deeper sensations, a stable foundation in the will. This third force of the soul, the will, gives the individual their deepest imprint in the personality structure. Its less the outer instinctual desire, which is more devoted to excessive indulgence in the world, but more the will-full discipline to pursue ideals to the best of one's conscience, and in patient, level-headed commitment to carry out meaningful tasks to their end, which can lead to the strengthening of a persons will and consolidate their personality structure.

A soul exercise wants in the human being, for the thinking to refine, the subtle-feelings to deepen in joyful-relationship, and the will to structure and stabilise. The development question of this approach to the exercises relates, therefore, not to an external progress in the sense of technology or material prosperity, but to the human being and their maturing soul.

A soul exercise can be used in a very simple way to order one's being-existence. Those who, however, practice very intensively, increasingly unfold a higher insight to knowledge, which enters into a clairvoyant beholding of the different facts of life. The practitioner develops, through turning to the different phenomena of existence, a deeper feeling for truth and thinking for truth, and they notice that behind every phenomenon lies a spiritual meaning. Slowly their subtle-feeling for spiritual, higher knowledge is shaped out. This remains, however, not like a fantastic illusion and you will find that it does not take place in trance states or in halfway somnambulism or hardly conscious phases of existence. It shows, rather, through the development of thoughts and the emerging deeper soul perceptions. A spiritual, and in this sense a clairvoyant seeing of a deeper truth, deeper than the external senses pronounce, develops into a concrete and objective ability in the human being. A spiritual seeing is, therefore, learnt step by step.

The three soul powers can be sketched schematically and clearly with a triangle. The highest and freest soul force is the thinking. It will, therefore, be placed to the peak of the triangle. The connecting, connective skills that a person develops rests substantially in his mature feeling. This soul force is, therefore, assigned to the side of the triangle, which mediates between above and below. The deepest and most supporting force of human existence, however, is the forming will. The base, the baseline of the triangle, carries the side up to the top. The triangle, therefore, describes an excellent picture for the human soul life, as it represents a connected and logical unity and at the same time a structuring of this unity. The soul itself is divided into three forces and yet they form a unity.

To the human being a threefold structuring with an upper, a middle and a lower pole can be transferred. The thinking belongs to the head region, the feeling to the middle and the heart and the will to the metabolism. In this sense, the triangular relationship rests immanently in the human being.



The thinking

This free and universal soul force causes the ability to develop a thought further.

The feeling

It represents an individualized soul force.

The will

This is assigned to the metabolism and represents the innermost individual force.