

The Complementary Domain: A Historical and Cross-Cultural Analysis from Palaeolithic Shamanism to Contemporary Consciousness Studies

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Abstract

This paper traces the historical and cross-cultural recurrence of a single structural idea: that alongside the physical world there exists a complementary domain, and that some aspect of the human person is capable of traversing it. The argument proceeds chronologically, from Upper Palaeolithic shamanic soul-dualism through Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Gnostic, Perso-Islamic, Jewish, Indian, and East Asian formulations, into the Renaissance Hermetic revival, nineteenth- and twentieth-century esoteric and psychological reformulations, and the empirical consciousness research inaugurated by Robert Monroe. It closes by relating this historical pattern to a distinct, independently developed framework — the author's 2009 account of the Egyptian Ninefold Pattern (Ren, Ab, Akh, Khaibit, Ka, Ba, Khat, Sahu, Sekhem) and the 2026 concept of Dual Space, the abstract configuration space that recurs, under different names, across the mature formal sciences. The paper's claim is not that these traditions share verifiable historical descent in every case — several of the transmission lines discussed are explicitly flagged as historically contested — but that the same structural distinction between a manifest and a complementary domain, and the same claim that a subtle vehicle of the person can move between them, is independently rediscovered across cultures, centuries, and, latterly, disciplines that do not read one another's literature.

Keywords: soul dualism, Egyptian subtle bodies, Eleusinian Mysteries, Platonism, Gnosticism, Sufism, mundus imaginalis, Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, near-death experience, consciousness studies, configuration space, Dual Space.

1. Introduction: The Ninefold Pattern and Dual Space

In 2009 the author described, on this platform, the Egyptian Ninefold Pattern: Ren, Ab, Akh, Khaibit, Ka, Ba, Khat, Sahu, and Sekhem — a self-similar, fractal structure in which the Sahu functions as the light-body, the interstellar vessel steered by the Ba that carries the person through an unending cycle of birth, death, transformation, and rebirth. The Ka, Ba, Khat, and Sahu were there associated with what the author termed the Seven Twin Universes, corresponding to what contemporary physics calls dark matter: a different space-time, accessible only through the Gate of the Sekhem.

Seventeen years later, the essay *Dual Space & Ritme* observed that nearly every mature science — physics, biology, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, cosmology — eventually stops describing discrete objects and instead describes the abstract space of possible states those objects occupy: phase space, latent space, fitness landscape, superspace. The physicist Peter Rowlands gave one specific, technical instance of such a space the name Dual Space. That essay generalised the term to the pattern itself: independently, in fields that do not read one another's journals, the same discovery keeps being made.

This paper argues that these two observations are not separate research threads but a single recurring pattern, this time traced not through the formal sciences but through the history of human inquiry into consciousness itself. Generation after generation, culture after culture, the same discovery recurs: that beside the physical world there exists a complementary domain, and that some part of the person — Sahu, Ba, Akh, khu — is able to travel there.

2. The Deepest Layer: Practice without Text

Before writing existed, the shamanic practitioner already did. The earliest undisputed evidence for shamanic practice dates to the early Upper Palaeolithic, some thirty to forty thousand years ago, attested by cave imagery combining human and animal forms in states consistent

with trance, as at Lascaux and Chauvet. Anthropology terms the underlying concept soul dualism: a body-soul bound to the physical form, and a free soul capable of leaving the body during trance, dream, or death. This is, long before any term such as Ka or Sahu existed, already precisely the same twofold structure.

Among peoples such as the Evenki, the Inuit, and Australian Aboriginal groups, living traditions of "dreamtime" or upper-world journeying persist to the present, in which the free soul is held to travel through layers of the cosmos — frequently numbering seven or nine — in pursuit of knowledge, healing, or prophecy.

3. Mesopotamia and the Seven Gates

Mesopotamia provides the earliest elaborated cosmography of this domain: the descent of Inanna (Ishtar) through seven gates of the underworld, at each of which she is stripped of a garment or attribute. This structure corresponds strikingly to what Siberian and Central Asian shamanic traditions describe as seven layers of the underworld, each guarded by its own obstacle — a numerical correspondence for which no direct line of transmission between the two cultures can be established.

4. Egypt: The Ninefold Pattern as Systematization

What the author described in 2009 is accordingly not an Egyptian invention of the underlying idea but its most refined surviving written codification — supported by temple schools, funerary technology (the Pyramid Texts, the Books of the Dead), and a priestly transmission lineage. Within the temple, the complementary domain was not merely described but actively entered: through dream incubation, breathing technique, and the purification of the Ab (the heart), culminating in passage through the Gate of the Sekhem. Later figures, including the priest-historian Manetho and the writers of the Hermetic corpus, build on this foundation.

5. Eleusis, Pythagoras, and Empedocles

For roughly sixteen centuries, from approximately 1500 BCE to 392 CE, thousands of initiates at Eleusis drank the kykeon, a preparation of barley, water, and mint, and by nearly every surviving account emerged with a permanently altered relationship to death and consciousness. Among the documented initiates are Plato, Cicero, and the emperor Marcus Aurelius; both latter cases are well attested — Cicero describes his own initiation in *De Legibus*, and a bust of Marcus Aurelius survives at the sanctuary site itself. Pythagoras' own initiation is less secure: he is reported to have studied in Egypt around 530 BCE, but no source directly attests his initiation at Eleusis. The ergot hypothesis — that the barley in the kykeon was infected with a fungus containing alkaloids chemically related to LSD — is a serious hypothesis advanced by serious scholars, and received its first direct chemical corroboration in 2023, in residues recovered from a related sanctuary in Spain.

Pythagoras merits more than this single uncertain footnote. His doctrine of metempsychosis, drawn probably from Orphic and Egyptian sources, is inseparable from his number theory: for the Pythagoreans, number was not merely arithmetical but cosmological — the very structure according to which the soul itself was ordered. That fusion of number and soul-doctrine passes directly into Plato's own thought.

A generation later, Empedocles (5th century BCE) gives the doctrine a personal, almost confessional form. In his poem *Katharmoi* he presents himself as a fallen deity compelled, on account of an ancient transgression, to wander for thousands of years through successive incarnations — as plant, animal, human, and bird — before the soul may be reunited with the divine. This is the same Orphic doctrine, but rendered in the first person: not a system expounded, but a fate confessed.

6. Plato: Philosophical Codification

Plato's own doctrine of the soul was, as he himself acknowledged, learned from the Pythagoreans. The soul as prisoner of the body, originating from and returning to a higher, unchanging world of Forms,

represents the philosophical codification of a line running through Pythagoras and Empedocles back to Egyptian temple knowledge, and beyond that to the older shamanic soul-dualism. The World of Forms is Plato's version of the Gate of the Sekhem, rendered in a different vocabulary.

7. Hermes-Thoth, Plotinus, and Ecstatic Union

In the Alexandria of the early centuries CE, Greek and Egyptian priestly knowledge merge in the figure of Hermes Trismegistus — literally, the Hellenised Thoth. The texts transmitted under his name, the Corpus Hermeticum, are themselves late-antique compositions, not literal Old Egyptian temple texts, yet genuine Egyptian priestly knowledge is demonstrably woven into them, recast in Greek language and philosophical form.

Plotinus (3rd century CE) deserves more attention here than his well-known treatise against the Gnostics. His actual life's work was the pursuit, through contemplation, of union with "the One" — an ecstatic state beyond all distinction, which he reported reaching himself on multiple occasions. His pupil Porphyry documented this not only in his edition of the *Enneads* but in his biography of Plotinus, recording that his teacher attained this union four times during his life. Iamblichus, who diverged from Plotinus in method, subsequently formalised the practical dimension into theurgy in the third and fourth centuries: not contemplation alone, but ritual-technical procedures intended actively to return the soul to the divine. Proclus continues this line.

8. The Suppressed Branch: Gnosticism, Cathars, and the Eastern Christian Response

Already in the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran a sharply dualistic vocabulary is present — Sons of Light against Sons of Darkness. This feeds into early Christian Gnosticism, associated with figures such as Valentinus and Basilides and with texts such as the Gospel of Thomas: an evil demiurge-creator of the material world set against a distant, good

God of pure light, with the soul as a spark that must awaken and return. Plotinus wrote an entire treatise against this current, itself evidence of how widespread it had become within late-antique Platonism.

From there a line proceeds — acknowledged by historians themselves as not demonstrable through unbroken documentary evidence, yet too substantively consistent to dismiss as coincidence — through Manichaeism, the Paulicians, and the Bogomils, to the Cathars of Languedoc, exterminated in the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229).

Within orthodox Christianity itself, a related but institutionally embedded response develops in parallel, without condemnation as heresy: Eastern hesychasm, with its practice of silent prayer directed toward vision of the uncreated light of Tabor. Where the West burned its mystics, the East absorbed a portion of the same impulse into its own monastic tradition.

9. The Perso-Islamic and Broader Sufi Branch

In parallel, twelfth-century Persia produces Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi's School of Illumination (*hikmat al-ishraq*), which fuses pre-Islamic Zoroastrian light-philosophy with Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Hermetic thought; Suhrawardi explicitly styled himself heir to Hermes and the ancient Persian sages. He was executed in Aleppo in 1191. His contemporary Ibn Arabi develops a related, extensive metaphysics of the creative imagination, which survives into the broader Sufi traditions — from the Persian mystical poets to later orders teaching the path of *fana* (annihilation of the self) and *baqa* (subsistence in God). The twentieth-century Islamicist Henry Corbin reintroduced from this material the concept of the *mundus imaginalis* (*alam al-mithal*): functionally, the Persian name for what the author terms the Seven Twin Universes.

Jewish mysticism develops its own, independent counterpart: early Merkabah mysticism of the first centuries CE, in which the adept ascends through seven celestial palaces toward the throne-chariot of

Ezekiel, and the later Kabbalah, with its Tree of the Sefirot mapping the emanation between the utterly hidden (Ein Sof) and the manifest world.

10. The Indian and Asian Branch

Independently, India develops from the Upanishads the doctrine of Atman and Brahman — the individual self as essentially identical with the all-encompassing reality, the visible world as maya, veil. The pancha-kosha model, five sheaths from gross to subtle, and the later tantric and yogic systems, correspond structurally to the Egyptian pattern despite independent origin. In the twentieth century, Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga adds an inversion absent from the older yogic systems: not merely ascent of the soul toward spirit, but descent of a Supramental consciousness into matter itself; his spiritual collaborator Mirra Alfassa, "the Mother," claimed to have accomplished this descent into earthly matter in 1956.

Two related Asian traditions merit mention alongside the Indian: Chinese Daoist internal alchemy (*neidan*), in which the practitioner cultivates, through breathing and meditative technique, an "immortal embryo" within the body — functionally an independent counterpart to the Sahu — and Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, with its doctrine of the rainbow body and the bardo states between death and rebirth, describing in detail what consciousness is held to undergo after death.

11. The Renaissance, the Rosicrucians, and Their Continuation

In 1463, Marsilio Ficino translated the newly rediscovered Corpus Hermeticum, at Cosimo de' Medici's instruction interrupting his own translation of Plato to do so. Pico della Mirandola combines this Hermetic material with Kabbalah; Giordano Bruno pays for related convictions at the stake in 1600. In 1614 the philologist Isaac Casaubon demonstrated that the Corpus Hermeticum is itself a late-antique composition, not an original Egyptian document — and almost immediately thereafter, between 1614 and 1616, the Rosicrucian manifestos appear (*Fama Fraternitatis*, *Confessio Fraternitatis*, the

Chymical Wedding), bundling Hermetica, alchemy, and Christian Kabbalah into a closed fraternal tradition. Robert Fludd and Michael Maier continue this line.

Shortly before, Paracelsus (16th century) had already given the tradition a distinct, medico-alchemical formulation: alongside the physical body he posited an astral body, and within the person an inner *archeus* — a governing vital force determining sickness and healing from a level beyond the purely physical. A generation later the German mystic Jakob Böhme constructs a complete cosmology on the interplay of light and darkness as mutually necessary principles — strikingly close in content to Suhrawardi's Persian light-philosophy, without any demonstrable direct line connecting the two. In the eighteenth century, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, through Martinism, continues this Christian theosophical line within its own closed fraternal tradition.

12. The Modern Revival without the Old Vocabulary

Eighteenth-century Sweden produces Swedenborg, with his systematically documented out-of-body visions, entirely outside ecclesiastical sanction. The nineteenth century produces mesmerism, spiritualism, and Helena Blavatsky's Theosophy, which deliberately reintroduces the old Egyptian Ka/Ba vocabulary into Western discourse. Rudolf Steiner subsequently builds Anthroposophy on this foundation, developing its own disciplined path toward higher perceptual faculties.

In early twentieth-century Russia and later Europe, G. I. Gurdjieff and his pupil P. D. Ouspensky develop the Fourth Way: the person, in ordinary life, is held to exist in a state of "waking sleep," capable through directed inner work of developing a "higher body" that survives the death of the physical form — once again, in an entirely independent vocabulary, the same distinction between gross and subtle vehicle.

Around the same period, philosophy itself supplies two decisive reformulations. Henri Bergson proposes that the brain is not the source of consciousness but a filter — a reducing valve selecting, from an in-

principle unbounded consciousness, only what is relevant to survival. Carl Gustav Jung builds upon this an entirely independent framework: the collective unconscious as a stratum exceeding the individual psyche, populated by archetypes, and active imagination as a technique for conscious engagement with it. Aldous Huxley, following his own mescaline experiences, reformulates Bergson's filter theory as "Mind at Large": consciousness is not produced by the brain but is normally constricted by it. John Lilly carries this forward experimentally in the 1960s and 1970s, using sensory-isolation tanks and altered states of consciousness as his own research method.

Then, in 1958, an American businessman with no access whatsoever to this entire lineage begins to experience spontaneous, involuntary out-of-body states. Robert Monroe publishes *Journeys Out of the Body* in 1971 and founds his Institute in 1974, developing an entirely independent vocabulary — Focus levels, Hemi-Sync — precisely because the older vocabulary had, through centuries of persecution, been largely erased or driven underground. In 1972 the physicist Thomas Campbell, holder of a doctorate in experimental nuclear physics, joins the effort; his *My Big TOE* (2003) proposes consciousness as fundamental reality and the physical world as a derivative projection. In parallel, Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ formalise remote viewing at the Stanford Research Institute from the 1970s onward, with Joe McMoneagle as principal operational viewer; Dean Radin and Garret Yount continue related work at the Institute of Noetic Sciences, within what has since come to be known as transpersonal psychology and consciousness studies.

13. Near-Death Experience and Its Scientific Counterpole

A distinct twentieth-century branch develops around the near-death experience: Kenneth Ring, the Dutch cardiologist Pim van Lommel, and the psychiatrist Bruce Greyson independently document patients who, during clinical brain death, report vivid, structured experiences — frequently including passage through a tunnel, encounter with a being of light, and a return accompanied by lasting change in life orientation. Michael Persinger constitutes the deliberately sceptical counterpole: his

"God Helmet" experiments sought to demonstrate that such experiences can be artificially induced through magnetic stimulation of the temporal lobes, and are therefore better understood as a neurological artefact than as genuine access to a complementary domain. These two positions — experience as window, experience as neural short-circuit — remain unresolved and coexistent to the present day.

14. The Contemporary Theoretical Branch

In the twenty-first century the question acquires an explicitly mathematical-philosophical sequel. Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff, with their Orch-OR theory, propose that consciousness arises from quantum processes within neuronal microtubules — an attempt to treat consciousness as fundamental physical process rather than epiphenomenon. David Bohm had, decades earlier, developed a related concept with his implicate order: an underlying, enfolded reality out of which the visible, "explicate" world continuously unfolds. Bernardo Kastrup presently develops an analytic idealism in which not matter but consciousness is the fundamental given, with the physical world merely one of its appearances; Donald Hoffman, through his Interface Theory of Perception, argues mathematically, via evolutionary game theory, that human perception of space and time is not a depiction of reality but a user interface — built to function, not to be true.

15. Discussion: The Proposed Inversion

Every figure surveyed in this line — from the Palaeolithic shaman to Kastrup and Hoffman — describes the transition toward the complementary domain, viewed from this side. What the concept of Dual Space proposes is the inversion: not physical space as the starting point with a complementary space appended as curiosity, but the configuration space itself — the Sahu, the Focus domain, the mundus imaginalis, Dual Space — as the fundamental level, within which the physical world constitutes one trajectory among many possible.

Notably, this pattern is not confined to religion and mysticism. In the twenty-first century the same structure reappears, now in fully mathematical language, within the formal sciences themselves. The configuration space of physics, the latent space of artificial intelligence, the fitness landscapes of evolutionary biology, the Hilbert space of quantum mechanics, and the state space of neuroscience each describe, not objects, but the space of possible states from which objects and events arise.

16. Conclusion

Whether this constitutes a deep fact about the structure of reality, or a deep fact about how the human mind is constituted to model that reality — repeatedly, in the same recurring form — remains an open question, and this paper does not adjudicate it. What can be established is the pattern of observation itself: from the cave to the Monroe Institute, and from the Monroe Institute to Hilbert space, the same structure is independently rediscovered, again and again, in a new vocabulary each time.

Appendix: Summary of Rediscoveries

Tradition / School	Central Figure / Concept	Term for the Complementary Domain	Characteristic
Ancient Egyptian	Priestly tradition	Sahu, Sekhem	Light-body; gate to another space/time
Greco-Roman	Plato, Plotinus	World of Forms, the One	Transcendent reality; ecstatic union
Perso-Islamic	Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi	Mundus Imaginalis	Real intermediate realm of archetypes
Jewish mysticism	Merkabah, Kabbalah	Sefirot, celestial palaces	Emanation between the hidden and the manifest
Western esotericism	Paracelsus, Böhme	Archeus, astral body	Vital force; subtle vehicle
Asian traditions	Daoist alchemy, Vajrayana	Immortal embryo, rainbow body	Bodily technique as post-mortem vehicle

Tradition / School	Central Figure / Concept	Term for the Complementary Domain	Characteristic
Modern psychology	Gurdjieff, Jung, Bergson	Higher body, collective unconscious, Mind at Large	Inner work; filter theory
Near-death research	Van Lommel, Greyson, Ring	—	Experience during clinical brain death
Consciousness studies	Monroe, Campbell, Puthoff/Targ	Focus domain, Larger Consciousness System	Empirical self-exploration
Theoretical physics/philosophy	Bohm, Penrose/Hameroff, Kastrup, Hoffman	Implicate order, Orch-OR, analytic idealism	Consciousness as fundamental, not derivative

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