
TRINITARIAN THOUGHT STRATEGIES IN FREEMASONRY RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS ON THE PHENOMENON FORMATION STAGES IN RUSSIA

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Abstract

The article considers Trinitarian thinking, a topical issue for the modern stage of development of civilization, on the example of religious and philosophical doctrine of Freemasonry at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The data from a number of philosophical and natural-scientific studies are employed in covering the general theoretical aspects of the problem. Special attention is paid to the internal typology of the phenomenon of the triad, which allows the coexistence of three different models: linear, transitional and intrinsic Trinitarian. The analysis of the development of the anthroposphere and culture at its various levels allows asserting that a dialogue-‘interpenetration’ of Trinitarian and binary thinking is necessary for the most productive functioning of harmonizing tendencies in the development of society. This regularity is active and of a special demand in the system of ethical-philosophical teachings of various periods, which is clearly manifested in the historical and literary context.

Keywords: masonic, ideology, concept, virtue, ontology

1. Trinitarian thought as a phenomenon - some general patterns

Various beliefs and religious teachings are permanent companions of mankind. For all their contradictoriness, and, frequently, confrontation, it is obvious that in every case it is the desire to create their own model of the world that would explain the system of its genesis, evolution and prospects.

On the one hand, the constant juxtaposition of the notions of Good and evil, light and darkness in the axiology of mankind has always significantly updated and activated the tendencies of binary thinking. This kind of conception of the world and man is characterized by the opposition of the contrasting semantic poles of Being.

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On the other hand, some ‘inferiority’, and inefficiency of this approach becomes obvious. Binary thinking, existing according to the rigid principle of ‘yes or no’, not only did not help to overcome the split in different areas of life of the human community and culture, but often made these ‘gaps’ even deeper.

Completely different is the Trinitarian system, the Trinitarian thought strategy. The triad, according to the modern philosophers’ true observation... ”compares, unites, merges” rather than “contrasts, splits, or repels” [1].

Unlike binary dialectical wholeness, the triad always includes in its structure a special third element, the main purpose of which is to reconcile and promote the achievement of equilibrium and harmony. It is certain that contradictions and contrasts in the socio-cultural life cannot be solved by any of the global strategies of thinking alone, either by the binary, or by the Trinitarian. The most productive and correct option is their dialogue.

It is fundamentally important for the research that at the end of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century analysts approached the problem of dialogue between the various strategies of the ‘trinity’ in the spiritual and logical spheres of the life of civilization [2].

A supreme task is to achieve unity and stability in the spiritual life of society. According to the hypothesis of the famous thinker Nikolai Berdyaev, it is at this time that a desire for the most dynamic zone of culture – the so-called “middle culture” arouses [3]. In modern metaphysics, due to the reception of various kinds of hypotheses about the strategies of Trinitarian thought, there appear frequent discussions on the need to work out some “unified theory of interactions” [4]. Therefore, the role and importance of Trinitarian thinking cannot be overemphasized.

‘Linear’ triads are most typical of logical semantic systems of exact sciences, in which all elements are placed conditionally on one sense ‘axis’ (as, for example, the series: 1-10-100). On the contrary, in the social and humanitarian sphere, with which the phenomena of spiritual and religious axiology are eternally connected, the variants of a more complex order are in demand. These are ‘transitional’ and ‘systemic’ triads.

In case of a ‘transitional’ type triad, one of the three elements is raised to a certain ‘height’ in comparison with the two remaining ones, its purpose being to convey the meaning of the movement to a more complex synthesis (Hegel was the first in world Philosophy to clearly speak about it in his doctrine [5]). However, the principles of the removal of contradictions in such world vision are hidden, and the logic of movements in the systemic structure is unclear.

Quite a different thing is the ‘systemic’ triad which is the ‘systemic’ triad is a phenomenon of a higher order. In its case, the three absolutely equal elements are on the ‘same level of commonality’ – and, as a consequence, are most prepared for a multidisciplinary dialogue with each other. Each of the ‘links’ of the systemic triad can freely perform the function of a ‘judge-conciliator’ between the two other participants in the process. Therefore, the conflict does not exacerbate, as is the case in the binary opposition, nor does it gravitate toward one of multiple variants of its resolution like in the ‘earlier’ models of the ‘linear’ and

‘transitional’ triads. On the contrary, three productive and equitable ways to solve problems are immediately apparent, which is close to the teachings of the great Japanese philosopher Nishido Kitaro, who affirmed the need not to ‘withdraw’, but to ‘restrain’ contradictions for their constructive and harmonious overcoming/resolution [6].

To complete the necessary theoretical review, some terminological points need to be explained. The fact is that several variations of a single ‘ternary model’ coexist at different stages and in different contexts. The ‘ternary’ variation is based on the fact that there is almost no dependence and subordination between the elements of the triad; here equality is actually present in its most ‘crystal’, ‘pure’ manifestation. A variation of a more complex and heterogeneous order is ‘ternary’. The essence of it is that the system produces a ‘dialogue-pair’ of interdependent links that begin to interact with each other. Finally, the so-called ‘Trinitarian’ variation is concentrated simultaneously on the inseparability and non-merger of all basic structural elements. All the three links are absolutely distinguishable in their uniqueness and independence, and it is essential that “... one object does not exist without the other two ...” [7, p. 76].

The application of the system-complex analysis methodology in the interdisciplinary research allows speaking about Trinitarian variation and Trinitarian thought in this article, for they are the ones aimed at compiling holistic ideas about the world and ways to achieve harmony in it.

This is also one of the refrains for world Freemasonry. The applicability and validity of the principles of Trinitarian thought in relation to the analysis of the phenomenon of pre-Romanticism associated with Freemasonry have already been proved in the recent publication [8].

2. Trinitarian masonic model - key indicators

It must be noted that world Freemasonry was originally predisposed to both binary and Trinitarian thinking. On the one hand, a constant dialogue with world religions formed the basis of the well-known logical and philosophical antithesis ‘Light – Darkness’, on the analogy with the classical axiological pair ‘Good – Evil’. On the other hand, in the widely spread doctrine of the mystical square, there simultaneously appear obvious tendencies to search for a certain unifying core (in detail the symbolism and rituals of the world Masonic movement are covered in the fundamental multivolume work by R.F. Gould in the last quarter of the 19th century [9]).

The Freemasonry ethics in this respect is noteworthy for highlighting a new third link – the concept of Virtue. According to the definition of one of the founders of the Masonic movement in Russia in the 18th century, Mikhail Kheraskov, Virtue is a special ‘inner mirror’ reconciling everything with everything. Originally dual, binary in nature (there is a reflecting, ‘light’, and a dark, ‘black’ side), the mirror by its primary functions seems to be most oriented to binary, clear ‘bipolarity’. However, the fact that it is a representation of the

search for the path to the highest truth of the world – the ideas of God (the world outside man) and Conscience (the world inside) form a triad with it.

It is true that initially such a model has not yet met the systemic triad demands: Virtue primarily assumes the role of an ‘organizer of the process’, consciously occupying the position of ‘a judge over the fight’. Thus, the transitional type triad tendencies become the starting point, as we stated in the first semantic section of the article.

Before turning to specific examples, it makes sense to make a short digression into the history of Philosophy.

The ideal of Virtue, inseparably connected with the notions of the Beautiful in world aesthetics, was deeply assimilated by the literary culture in the synthesis of the revived traditions of the ancient world outlook (primarily the ideal of *kalokagathia*) and the new laws of European Enlightenment. In the latter case, the canons of the English ‘moral philosophy’ (about the panorama of English philosophical influences – see the classical study [10]) are especially significant. Somewhat later, there was a fusion of the ‘ideology of virtue’ and philosophical and aesthetic ideas about the Sublime (Sulzer, Eschenburg, Gellert, Kant). All these kinds of mentalities are activated significantly in the literature of the transitive character of the last quarter of the 18th – the early 19th centuries, marked in many ways by the dialogue and interpenetration of sentimentalism and pre-Romanticism [2].

One more theoretical and methodological point is indicative in the light of the problem of Trinitarian thinking strategies. The essence of it is that the binary is often both contrasting and conservative-inert, while the triad is aimed at the process from the very beginning. It is no coincidence that the well-known specialist in the phenomenology of aesthetics K. Fisher once opposed, when speaking of the system of the ethics of mankind, the notion of the static Holiness and the dynamic Virtue. The latter, according to his conclusion, is inextricably linked with the ‘struggle for morality’. “... in the sensually intelligent human being” the Beautiful as a moral ideal corresponds to the “static” of holiness, while the Sublime is located a step below and “oversees” the notion of “virtue”. Morality in such a picture of the world is impossible “... without struggle. <As a result of which> such beings cannot be holy but can be virtuous.” [11] Nikolai Karamzin, a literary figure who once was close to world Freemasonry, formulated a similar idea in Russia: the thinking writer, in his opinion, needs first of all “... to rise to the passion for good, to feed in himself the sacred desire for the common good that is *not limited by any spheres ...*” [12] (italics ours).

It is notable that in world aesthetics, starting with Plato, the inner virtue of man was understood as the only way of his elevation, stepping up the ‘ladder’ of comprehending the world [13, 14]. The era of the European early Enlightenment returns exactly to the Platonic theory – so, the future mentor and idol of sentimentalists, E. Shaftesbury creates his ‘Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit’. The notion of virtue as the highest good is the refrain of the doctrine of such an outstanding enlightener as A. Pope in his ‘Essay on Man’.

One of the remarkable Masonic editions of the last quarter of the 18th century, the magazine 'Morning Light' continued the time consecrated tradition in its own way: "Virtue is the beauty of men, the creation of the *sublime* above the soulless and brutal world ..." [*Morning light*, Part 2, 1778, p.35] (italics ours). An almost identical idea was one of the foundations in the Masonic society of I.G. Schwartz, who believed that "virtuous knowledge" "... makes him <man> the best "and with sublime and purified feelings" [15] (italics ours).

One can see, as the evolution progresses, there is a movement from the triad, linearly growing ('the soulless world' – 'the primary feelings of man' – 'the purified harmonious moral principles' with Virtue at the head) to the triad of a transitional type. In such a more refined way, 'primary' feelings form a 'friendly couple' with 'virtuous knowledge', and the crown that is already above them is 'lofty and purified feelings'. It is noteworthy that the representatives of Russian baroque of the late 17th century (the school of Symeon of Polotsk, first of all), following such interpretation in general, returned to the notions of a static binary opposition: 'a writer preaching like an apostle – a mankind-pupil who is listening to him'.

A significant step towards Trinitarian thought was taken by one of the founders of the German philosophy of modern times, J.G. Zolzer. In his treatise 'Unterredungen über die Schönheit der Natur...' (Conversations about the beauty of nature ...) there is a hypothesis that when a person comprehends Virtue, a harmonious polylogue of three principles occurs – of the Spirit, the Heart and the Soul: "... the spirit and heart are elevated, the soul receives a high impulse" [16]. C.F. Gellert, a German philosopher highly respected by the masons of different countries and beliefs, takes a somewhat different way and, on a new turn, returns to the improved 'linear triad' where all elements are located on one semantic 'axis', but in this case, in the order of a certain quantitative 'increment/change' (an example from mathematical knowledge was cited above). Certain specificity is that, in case of the ethics system, the 'axis' is not 'horizontal', but rises 'vertically', retaining the essence of 'linearity'. According to the picture of the world created by Gellert, the first 'link' is Science (the centre is the treatise 'On the action of the sciences over the heart and human nature', popular with Russian masons and translated by Ivan Turgenev, one of the leaders of this movement in Russia). Further, a step higher is 'inner Virtue', constantly improved by 'exercises'. Finally, the third 'link': at the highest level, having reached the worship of God, the creator of Being, to recognize the whole of mankind, "... people in general ... members of one great family of God ..." [17]. The processing of the metaphorical metaphysical 'gross stone' of human nature and the elevation of this nature to divine harmony is a key task of Masonic ethics (for more detail see [18]).

The great Kant less than ten years later in his study 'Critique of Judgment' (1790) greatly complicates the dynamic picture of the understanding of virtue. In his ideas there are tendencies of a triad of a transitional type: on one plane of meaning there are 'nature within us' and 'nature outside of us', while a universal 'font of morality' occupies a reconciling, harmonizing position over them, the

result of immersion in which being “... *boundless spiritual potencies*” for man [19] (*italics ours*).

The philosophical ideas of Edward Young played a special role in shaping the Freemason worldview. The English moralistic school again takes over the “palm of primacy” [20].

Freemasons were interested, first of all, in the moral aspect of the poetics of Edward Young, including, first and foremost, the ideology of spiritual Immortality. Here, it must be noted, the tradition of the Russian reception united the English and French ‘lines’. Thus, in 1799 S. Dzhunkovsky performed his translation of Young from the French translation of Pierre Le Tourneur (1769), and the prominent Freemason A. Labzin at the beginning of the next century (1804) turns to the original French literature: he translates the well-known work by J. Delille ‘Dithyrambe sur l’immortalité de l’âme...’ (1802) (Dithyramb for the immortality of the soul). Even at the dawn of Russian sentimentalism and Freemasonry in the 18th century, the theme of the immortality of the soul finds its confirmation in the works of such prominent Masonic writers as Mikhail Kheraskov and Vasily Maikov. It is remarkable that at the same time all this receives significant theoretical and philosophical support – in the teaching of I.G. Schwartz and his associates (a typical illustration is V. Zolotnitsky’s treatise ‘The proof of the immortality of the human soul ...’, 1780). It is worthwhile mentioning, though in advance, that it is here that Trinitarian tendencies in Masonry become most obvious.

The category of ‘sympathy’ becomes the most important artistic and philosophical category, which gives a new turn to the ideas of Virtue in Freemasonry. The mystical (Masonic) text “... is focused ... on modelling the process of personal reflection and ‘internal’ events ... ‘Sympathy’ is the most important concept of new artistic and ideological ideas.” [21]

Along with the ‘public’ aspect of ideology directed ‘outside’ (the myth of the Golden Age of the goddess Astrea), Masonic poetics has its own ‘inner sphere’. This area is associated primarily with the idea of Virtue. The basis is: the teachings of Freemasons about the first man Adam Kadmon, the struggle between Light and Darkness in the universe, and, finally, spiritual self-improvement as a way to overcome such a tragic crisis.

With the steady postulation of the dominance of the forces of Darkness in the modern world, the apocalyptic motives of sinfulness and fall, the Masons, however, sought to transfer their general attention to the ways of overcoming all this, the main of which for them being Light. It is evident that the problems of simultaneous contrast and interaction/flow of binary and Trinitarian forms are very important for them. In the words of the rituals of the ‘free masons’ themselves, “... there is a kind of spark inside him <man> that is imperishable, belonging to that Great ... Being that is the source of life and incorruption that holds the Universe” [22]. Thus, as a result there is the Trinitarian system: ‘Man – ‘Spark’ – ‘Great Being’ (God the Creator).

For all this, binary thinking is not denied; it becomes a sort of the ‘original platform’ for the subsequent harmonizing world-building. As the 17th century eschatological philosopher John Pordadge (1607-1681), highly esteemed by the Masons, noted, a certain ‘demarcation line’ runs between the ‘inner’ and the ‘external’ of the man, and this, in turn, coincides with the line that separates ‘this world’ and ‘Eternity’. As a result, significant changes occur in the consciousness of literary culture. The problems of ‘love for death’, ‘death and/as immortality’, “alienation from the world to the Eternal and Infinite” get priority [22, p. 121, 125–138].

Gaining of the lost Eden, and return to the ‘temple of Nature and Mercy’ [23] is possible, according to Masonic beliefs, exclusively through ‘exaltation through virtue’.

The coherence and the unanimity of the ‘free masons’ is striking – both in translations and in the original works. On the one hand, there appear translations of such works as ‘Manna of Heaven...’ by V. Weigel (with a remarkable subtitle in the Russian translation: about “... wonderful inescapable powers and virtues” (translated in 1787)), “Descriptions of the three active bases-properties of the human soul, as sources of moral virtues” by A.-S. Fleisher (the hand-written version of the translation appears about 1786). On the other hand, Russian Freemasonry theorists create their own works, of which ‘A virtuous soul, or Didactic rules in favour and teaching of the youth ...’ (1777) by A.A. Artemyev; ‘On the good morals’ (1782) by S.I. Gamalei; ‘On Virtues’ (between 1789 and 1791) by V.M. Milonov; ‘The Initial Door to Christian Good-Order ...’ (1805) by A.F. Labzin and a number of others are indicative.

The Trinitarian system is positioned very clearly. Over the ‘kingdom of Darkness’, the habitat of fallen spirits and evil people, there are three inextricably interrelated halos of the Supreme Light: ‘sensual’, ‘spiritual’, and ‘not created Divine’. This entire system governs the universe, commencing from the ‘lower rank’ of the rulers of the air, land and water – to the second ‘class’ of the ‘upper layer’: ‘star spirits’ (fire) – and, finally, to the kingdom of the first ‘class’: the spirits ‘purely angelic’ [24].

For man in this ‘environment’ the first step of the Supreme Goal is the “return to the heart of ours” (in the terminology of the prominent Mason Zakhar Karneev [24, p. 201]). With its help, a second step of a higher order is achieved – the realization that “... *elevating* and knowing *oneself*, a person cognizes and *exalts all nature*” [24, p. 209] (italics ours).

All this contributes to the attainment of true Harmony. It is no accident that in the Masonic environment, F. Vidal-Comenin’s treatise ‘Peace Harmony’ was known and loved (in the translation of I.S. Gagarin (the end of the 18th century) it sounded like: ‘Consent of Peace’) (an interesting parallel is continued in the works of poets of the so-called ‘Radishchev circle’: ‘World Harmony’, an ode by V. Dmitriev (1809), earlier – ‘Hymns’ by D. Dmitrevsky in the edition of N. Karamzin ‘Moscow Journal’ and some others). Thus, Trinitarian thought achieves its main purpose.

In the world realized as the unity of the opposites of Light and Darkness (cf. F.P. Klyucharev's speech 'Whole Freemasonry is the doctrine of gloom and light' (1783)), binarity is primordial. The Masonic path of 'enlightenment' and 'union'/merging with the divine essence, as one of the forerunners of world Freemasonry Hugues de Balma taught, can only be traversed through 'good faith' (S. Gamalei), 'faith, hope and love' (Z. Karneev), 'patience' (I. Karneyev), and the creation of the 'inner church' (I. Lopukhin). The reconciling function of Trinitarian thought is undeniable.

In addition to the 'triple union' of the halos of the Higher World, discussed afore, a new Trinitarian triad is formed: Earthly Life – Virtue – Death. The second and third links are as inseparable as the first and third ones. A number of the following statements-manifestos are indicative:

- a) "... only death is the beginning of life" (Z. Karneyev) [24, p. 198];
- b) death – "comforter", "beloved" (A. Labzin) [24, p. 198];
- c) "... let us, as disciples of virtue, ... love death" (S. Gamalei) [24, p. 199].

I. Rozanov, accentuating in his time the 'driving' motifs of death, up to the all-cosmic, finds the way out of the insoluble contradictions of Being in the authors of the late 18th – the early 19th centuries and their religious moralistic orientation toward Virtue. It is noteworthy that not only poets of the pronounced crisis worldview, 'anticipating romanticism' (S. Bobrov, A. Turchaninov, G. Kamenev) are named in this poetic picture, but also writers who directly or indirectly merge on sentimentalism (M. Muravyov, V. Kapnist, J. Knyazhmin) [25].

The phenomenology of God enters the system of another, even higher order, that of the Masonic ontological triad: Man – Spiritual Virtue – God the Creator. Here, Masonic ethics covers social context. 'On the true light that is Christ' by I. Karneyev (1790) is among the most noteworthy socio-philosophical treatises of this period. "Father of the gods! in you all creatures recognize/Both endless and strong virtue ..." is a sample postulated in the poetic work "Anthem of Cleanthe, a Greek poet and stoic..." in the almanac 'Evenings' [*Evenings*, 1772, 1788, Part I, 41]. In the stanzas of "Is it always perishable beauty..." in the same edition, the poetics of the Divine receives an even more definite spiritual and educational harmonic conclusion: "And an imperishable treasure, / Common happiness is given to us; / ... In our hearts it lies" [*Evenings*, Part II, 1772, 206].

'The Song to the Almighty' by F. Klyucharev (1782) is an illustrative hymnographic exercise.

The subject matter of which – the comprehension of the phenomenon of God as the centre of Mercy and Love in the Universe – is represented through a rather indicative game of chronotopes in the symbolic triad:

- 'time transience' (earthly Being),
- 'worlds', 'stars' (astral Being of the Universe outside of God),
- the Existence of God.

The author's supreme goal is to supply the ethically neutral concept of 'infinity' ('In immeasurability you spread yourself!' [*Evening Dawn*, Part III, 1782, 79]) with the moral categories transfigured in the religious crucible: "You

are *faithful, good, all-merciful, shining with love!*” [Evening Dawn, Part III, 1782, 80] (italics ours). The image of the lyric ‘I’ finds ‘self-determination’ only in the inseparable correlation with the Divine principle: “You are the sea without end, I see and I am amazed, / And in *Your mercy* I plunge!” [Evening Dawn, Part III, 1782, 77] (italics ours).

The very phenomenon of God is also taking a number of illustrative transformations in the poet’s comprehension, which is important from the point of view of a dialogue of binary and Trinitarian thought. In general, it is possible to talk about the obvious movement from the contrasts and catastrophes of the world, full of struggle of opposing principles, to the harmony of unity and reconciliation. In the language of philosophical aesthetics, this, respectively, is the movement from the category of the Terrible to the category of the Beautiful: “... You are a vast abyss!” [Evening Dawn, Part III, 1782, p. 77] – and: “... you *enliven everything* around you, / ... / You are *faithful, good, all-generous ...*” [Evening Dawn, Part III, 1782, 78, 80] (italics ours).

It is indisputable that the centre of the ideology of the ‘exalted Virtue’ in Freemason world vision is the Divinity itself, and the concept of Utopia is their common worldview peak (for more details see [26, 27]).

3. Some results of Freemasonry ethical teachings

The preliminary results allow concluding that for the ideology of Freemasonry, the following ‘chain of transformations’ is of paramount importance at the philosophical and ethical level:

- a) a person’s gaining ‘heart light’;
- b) fullness of supreme and universal love for people, and faith;
- c) the realization of God in oneself and, accordingly, the heart as the Throne of God;
- d) immersion in the mercy and love of God, and through this – awareness of the ‘light of Truth’;
- e) ‘imitation of Truth’ as a school of search for Virtues;
- f) the flight of the soul and immortal spirit to the Divine.

The reconciling role of Trinitarian thinking is most consistently traced in the Masonic doctrine of Virtue in the universe. In general, in the researched period, there appears to be such a system of representations:

- I. Virtue as a means and a way to rise above the world of sins;
- II. God as the Highest Virtue;
- III. Virtue as the path of man to find God in himself:
 - a) through boundless Love;
 - b) through the realization of the ‘heavenly Truth’;
 - c) through the purity and innocence inherent by nature itself;
- IV. Virtue is the shrine of the heart and, at the same time, the path of ‘consecrating’ the heart;
- V. Virtue as harmony and pledge of immortality.

The first three steps ‘reveal a transparent similarity’ both with Masonic philosophy, and with the more ancient and stable traditions of spiritual lyrics in literature.

4. Conclusions

The results of the systemic studies carried out by the authors of the article over the years have been repeatedly and comprehensively tested by them [28-38]

With further study of the dynamics of genesis and the evolution of Trinitarian structures and the Trinitarian thought arising on their basis in the system of human culture, it seems most important to consider the following:

1. Binary thinking (based on the opposition of paired elements) and Trinitarian thinking (comprehending the interrelationship of three quantities, one of which can play the role of an integrating factor, both with a certain ‘advantage’ in its favour, and under the condition of a harmonious equality of all the three quantities initially) should not be sharply opposed.
2. Especially significant is the dialogue of binarity and Trinitarianism in the system of moral and aesthetic concepts; one of the important levels of the system of these regularities in modern times is represented by the phenomenon of world Freemasonry.
3. In socio-humanitarian spheres, as observation shows, the most frequent case is the gradual ‘maturation’ of Trinitarian tendencies, where the final and most productive ‘Trinitarian triad’ appears gradually, during the interaction and dialectical correlation of the two simpler models – linear and transitional.
4. Along with the classical ‘horizontal’ development of early models of Trinitarian thought (as, for example, in the linear mathematical triad), the so-called vertical, ‘ascending’ variants can also be formed in the ethical system that find the most complete support in the Masonic context of the classical binary opposition ‘Man–God’, initial for their doctrine, representing the stages/steps of the ascent from the first to the second level, with the final goal of achieving harmony in the Universe.

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