

The Soul's Home

The Conception and Value of Home in Spiritual Tradition

Summary

The book comprises eleven chapters whose titles correspond approximately to their content: (1) A House as the Human Body, (2) The Human body as a House, (3) The House and the Human Body as the Universe, (4) The Human Body as a Castle, a Citadel, or a City, (5) The Human Body, the House, and the Universe as a Garment, (6) The Move from One Dwelling to Another, (7) 'That's Not My Home', (8) The Prison and the Tomb, (9) Homelessness, (10) The Journey, and (11) The Soul's Home.

A universal analogy between the human body and the building structure (a house and, particularly, a temple) holds true. This analogy is reciprocal: the building is equated with the human body, on the one hand, and the human body with a building, on the other. The analogy between a window and an eye is particularly striking (as in the English word 'window' derived

from Old Norse *vinds-auga* 'eye of the wind'). The building as such also includes a castle, a citadel, and a city. Moreover, both the human body and the building structure are analogous to the universe, the world. Thus, a sequence of analogies of different scales emerges: the body, the house (temple), the castle, the city, and the world. The garment, which is one of the most popular metaphors of the body as a peculiar shell or an integument of the soul, should be included in this sequence as well. Also, the appropriate symbolism of nudity emerges along the way.

These analogies are drawn from a wide variety of traditions, ranging from ancient Indian, ancient Greek, Middle Eastern to Baltic folklore of recent centuries and contemporary poetry. The data from different traditions complement each other and merge seamlessly to form a coherent picture, a fragment of a unified spiritual Tradition, thus once again highlighting the importance of comparative research. It is only in such a unified picture, which emerges from a whole of examples from different traditions, that any single image reveals its true meaning.

However, the value placed on home, as also on the body, the homeland, and the whole world, is quite ambivalent in spiritual traditions. There is the well-known tradition of a negative

attitude to 'this world', to carnal life, and to the body, from the Orphics, Plato, and the Gnostics to such contemporary examples as Tito & Tarrantula (*Pretty Wasted*, 2008): *Take me away, / away from this place, / away from myself, / away from my face...* This broad context includes examples of negative feelings towards home and homeland in Lithuanian folklore and literature.

In such a case, home (as also the body, the whole corporeal existence, the world turned into a prison and even a tomb) becomes a place that one seeks to escape, and this leads directly to homelessness. Firstly, the feeling of homelessness as experienced by the Lithuanian exiles and émigrés banished away from their homeland by all the hardships of the twentieth century is put under consideration. It is then drawn into the rich tradition of spiritually interpreted homelessness, starting with the 'placeless' (*atopos*) Socrates, moving on to Hinduism and Buddhism, and finally back to Lithuanian folklore, in which God, a beggar, himself confesses to not having a home (by the way, the Lithuanian *elgeta* is related to the Sanskrit *arhat* 'one who has attained a spiritual goal, fulfilment' in Theravada Buddhism, whose ordinary follower, *bhikṣu*, is, after all, *elgeta*). The main generalised conclusion would be that each existential condition has its metaphysical component which,

when consciously perceived and experienced, can become a powerful stimulus for spiritual growth.

When home is lost, only the permanent journey remains. On the one hand, this is exactly the spiritual *path*. On the other, the journey, the *path* is the most prevalent universal theme of the posthumous condition of the soul, particularly in traditional funeral laments, from ancient Tibet to recent Lithuania. It should be noted that, despite all its hardships, the last journey of the deceased almost invariably has an upward direction; it is actually not endless but leads up to the final true Homeland and Eternal Home, to what the whole wide world calls the heavenly beyond.

Ultimately, this true Home of the Soul is usually described in terms of infinite Space and pure Light, a sublime vision, which, if recognised and realised already here and now, when one is still alive, would transform this world into the final Soul's Home.