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A Reader's Guide to Yeats's *A Vision* - Glossary

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Glossary

The following glossary accompanies the book *A Reader's Guide to Yeats's "A Vision"* and the numbered references are to the chapters and sections of that book. The definitions are brief and supplementary to the fuller treatment in the book and almost all of the definitions and concepts are elaborated and modified significantly in context. (Earlier versions have appeared as the page <http://www.YeatsVision.com/Terminology.html> and, in adapted form, in *Yeats's "A Vision": Explications and Contexts*.)

Yeats was careful about italicization and capitalization of most terms, underlining even in manuscript and typescript, though not always entirely consistently. I have generally preferred the form that is most commonly used in *A Vision*, favoring *A Vision B* in cases where the two editions vary, and general consistency where there is variation within an edition.

Words in **bold** have their own entry in the Glossary.

afterlife

The Yeatses' system views birth and death not as true beginnings or endings but rather as significant junctures in a continuous process, or "an interruption" (*AVA* 214, *CW13* 177). I have sometimes used the term "**interlife**," since "afterlife" really applies only to the first three stages of the soul's existence between death and birth. The anatomy of the afterlife changed significantly between the two **editions** or versions of *A Vision*. In *A Vision B* it is divided into six stages of unequal duration, labeled with the signs of the **zodiac**, some with secondary names or subsidiary aspects: **Meditation** (Aries), **Return** (Taurus), **Shiftings** (Gemini), **Beatitude** (Cancer), **Purification** (Leo), **Foreknowledge** (Virgo). See chs. 11 and 13.

Aherne, Owen

See **Fictions**.

antinomy

Any of the polarized dualities in the system: “all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience” (*AVB* 193, *CW14* 142) and antinomy underlies our natural perception of the universe. The most important antinomies are those of the **solar** and **lunar** forces, called the *primary* and *antithetical tinctures* when applied to the incarnate world of the *Faculties*. The antinomy also manifests in the One and the Many, incarnate and discarnate life, objectivity and subjectivity, space and time.

antithetical

One of the two *tinctures*, the impulse to individuation and subjectivity, corresponding to the **lunar** (which operates on a larger and more general scale), and predominating during the brighter phases of the moon, between Phases 8 and 22. It is established in opposition to the *primary tincture* and defines itself by continual conflict with the *primary*. See ch. 4.

automatic script

Automatic writing is a technique of mediumship, involving the clearing or distraction of the mind, though not usually trance, so that the hand writes without the intervention of the conscious mind. It produces “automatic script.”

The Yeatses' automatic script is a complex series of questions and answers, evolving over several years, mostly between 1917 and 1920. After this a technique of **Sleeps** was used, with decreasing frequency, though these are usually loosely included under the general heading of “automatic script.” Only a proportion of the material that was collected (most now published in *Yeats's “Vision” Papers*) was finally refined and elaborated into *A Vision*. See ch. 2.

Beatific Vision

The culminating **Moment of Crisis**, following the *Initiatory* and *Critical Moments*, it receives scant treatment in *AVA* and none in *AVB*. In some manuscript material the term is also applied to the afterlife state usually titled “**Beatitude**.” Both terms derive from the Latin root for “blessed” and are traditionally associated with religion and mysticism. See §9.8.

Beatitude

The fourth stage of the **interlife**, also called the *Marriage*, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spirit's* gyre through the **zodiacal** sign of Cancer, the sign of the summer solstice. It is the brief resolution of the period between death and birth, when *Spirit* and **Celestial Body** are united, but is usually an “unconscious” state. See §13.3.4.

being

“By being is understood that which divides into *Four Faculties*” (AVB 86); as a special term, it is the process of being rather than being as essence, which is found in the **Principles** and **Daimon**. In terms WBY borrowed from Plotinus: “temporal existence” is “the characteristic act of the soul and must reflect the soul’s coherence” (VPI 934, CW2 725; Ex 397). See chs. 5 and 6.

Body of Fate

One of the *Four Faculties*, the internal representation of the external world and “the physical and mental environment, the changing human body, the stream of Phenomena as this affects a particular individual, all that is forced upon us from without, Time as it affects sensations (AVA 15, CW13 15). See chs. 6 and 7.

Cabala

WBY’s spelling in *A Vision* is Cabala, but elsewhere he tends to use Cabbala and the Coole proofs show “Cabala” corrected to “Cabbala” (e.g. CW14 234–35), changes that GY made in the Yeatses’ copy of AVB (WBGYL 2467, YL 2434). Other spellings include Kabbalah and Qabalah, or variant combinations of these. I favor “Cabala” as the traditional latinized form without an unnecessary doubling of the “b,” but “Qabalah” is closest to transliterating the Hebrew word קבלה meaning “tradition,” “received doctrine,” “received teaching,” or “received wisdom.” It is a system of Jewish mysticism of rabbinical origin and unknown antiquity, which appears to have gained its current form in Spain and France during the period between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries CE. Particularly influential is the system of ten emanations of God forming the Tree of Life, which was fundamental to the teachings of the Hermetic Order of the **Golden Dawn**. See ch. 3.

Cardinal phases

In the **wheel** of twenty-eight phases, the four phases that correspond with the cardinal points of the compass: Phase 1 (north), Phase 8 (west), Phase 15 (south), and Phase 22 (east). Two of these phases are supernatural for incarnation (Phases 1 and 15) and two of them are phases of crisis (Phases 8 and 22). See §4.8.

Celestial Body

One of the *Four Principles*, highest of the hierarchy, it becomes the **Clarified Body** once all earthly incarnations are finished. It reflects as the **Faculty** of **Body of Fate**. See chs. 6 and 8.

Civilization

Usually used as the secular counterpart of a **religious dispensation**, a 2,150-year civilization runs from the midpoint of the preceding religious era to the midpoint of the next. It does not necessarily correspond to any conventionally recognized cultural label, such as Minoan civilization or even classical civilization. Yeats's classical civilization runs from around 1000 BCE to around 1000 CE, with the monotheistic religions, focused on the Christian dispensation, starting at its midpoint (1 CE), and giving way to the civilization which this dispensation originated (Christendom) around the year 1000 CE (see *AVB* 203–4, *CW14* 150–51). These two historical cycles, therefore, have the same length but are “syncopated,” the civilization corresponding to a **lunar** month (starting at the new moon) and the religion to a **solar** month (zodiacal and starting at the full moon). Yeats also sometimes uses the term for periods of one-thousand-odd years, referring for instance to a period corresponding to 1000 CE–2100 CE as “our Gothic civilisation” (*AVB* 255, *CW14* 186). N.B. Yeats's published texts use the spelling with “s,” while his manuscripts use the spelling with “z.” See ch. 14.

Clarified Body

The soul experiences “the *Vision of the Clarified Body*, which is indeed a Vision of our own **Celestial Body** as that body will be when all cycles end” (*AVA* 235, *CW13* 194) during the **Beatitude** according to *AVA*, though dropped from *AVB*. However, the soul prefigures this state not at Phase 1 but at Phase 15, when “Its own body possesses the

greatest possible beauty, being indeed that body which the soul will permanently inhabit, when all its phases have been repeated according to the number allotted: that which we call the clarified or Celestial Body" (*AVB* 136, cf. *CW14* 102; cf. *AVA* 71, *CW13* 59).

cone

A cone is a diagrammatic convenience to represent the **gyre**, but one that becomes a synonym for gyre. See chs. 4, 7, and 8.

Creative Mind

One of the *Four Faculties* originally termed "Creative Genius" in the **automatic script**. It represents the mind in its consciously constructive aspect, and in more subjective, *antithetical* people can be seen as imagination (*AVB* 142, *CW14* 106). See chs. 6 and 7.

Critical Moment

The second of the **Moments of Crisis**, following the *Initiatory Moment* and preceding the *Beatific Vision*. See §9.8.

Cycle

1. A general term referring to the modified repetition of the **gyre**, and any of the cyclical phenomena which inform the paradigm, such as the natural cycles of the day, the month and the year. See chs. 4 and 11.
2. A specific term (often capitalized as "Cycle") referring to a complete round of 28 incarnations. The paradigm of the soul's progress involves twelve such Cycles, after which it may then enter the **Thirteenth Cycle** (in *AVA* at least). These Cycles received considerable attention in the **automatic script**, where they are labeled by the signs of the **zodiac**, starting with Taurus (at least "[Taurus] is the first human incarnation" [*YVP1* 279]). WBY considered himself to be in his sixth cycle of incarnation (the Libra cycle), while GY was in her seventh cycle of incarnation (the Scorpio cycle). See ch. 11 and the Appendix.

Daimon

A complex concept, which evolved with time, and which Yeats never tied down or, probably, wanted to. The *Daimon* is the supernatural opposite of the human being, but part of a single continuous consciousness with the human, and can even be viewed as the same elements in a different dimension and different emphases. To a certain extent it controls human destiny, but needs its human counterpart to complete its knowledge of reality. See ch. 9.

Discord

A relationship between *Faculties*, see *AVB* 93–94, *CW14* 69–70; *AVA* 24–25, *CW13* 23. The two **Oppositions** (*Will–Mask*; *Creative Mind–Body of Fate*) are Discords to each other: *Will* and *Mask*, the two fundamentally *antithetical* *Faculties*, are each the Discords to *Creative Mind* and *Body of Fate*, the two fundamentally *primary* *Faculties*. Each *Faculty* therefore has one Opposition and two Discords. The Discords lead the being to “the enforced understanding of the unlikeness” within the other Opposition, the realization that the goal is unattainable: “Life is an endeavour, made vain by the four sails of its mill, to come to a double contemplation of the chosen Image [*Will* contemplating *Mask*], that of the fated Image [*Creative Mind* contemplating *Body of Fate*]” (*AVB* 94, *CW14* 70; *AVA* 25, *CW13* 23). See ch. 7.

Dispensation

Largely synonymous with **religion**, a dispensation is the dominant religious impulse over a period of about 2,150 years. It is usually inaugurated by an avatar, such as Jesus Christ. See §7.6 and ch. 14.

Double Cone

The “normal double cone” or **gyre** shows the two *tinctures* as intersecting cones or gyres. In this form, the *Faculties* appear to move as pairs of **Discords**, *Will* and *Creative Mind* joined by a line across one cone, and *Mask* and *Body of Fate* joined by a line across the other. See ch. 7.

Dreaming Back

A subsidiary state in the second stage of the **afterlife**, the **Return**, in which the events of the preceding life are relived according to their intensity. See §13.3.2.

Editions

There were two editions of *A Vision*: *A Vision A*, privately printed in a limited edition of 600 copies by T. Werner Laurie and dated 1925 (actually issued in January 1926) and *A Vision B* published by Macmillan and dated 1937 (1938 in the US edition). These are abbreviated to *AVA* and *AVB*. About half of the material is more or less the same, but the rest is significantly different, so they are better viewed as versions rather than editions. See ch. 1.

Faculties

The four fundamental constituents of the human psyche during incarnate life. The *Faculties* are: the active, **lunar** force of **Will** and its focus or target, the **Mask**, and the active, **solar** force of **Creative Mind** and its focus, the **Body of Fate**. The *Faculties* are all, however, lunar in relation to the **Principles** from which they originate; unlike the **Principles**, they are creative but incapable of attaining understanding. The *Faculties* are not intrinsically hierarchical, and are arranged around the circle of the wheel in rough equality, although during any particular incarnation, one or more *Faculties* may be stronger. See chs. 6 and 7.

Fictions

Within a month or two of the start of the **automatic script**, Yeats was framing ideas for fictions through which to present these new and exciting ideas. These centered on two old sources and two modern characters: a European book by a Renaissance writer, **Giraldus**, and an Arabian tradition based on the teachings of **Kusta ben Luka**, brought together by Michael Robartes, who tells his discoveries to Owen Aherne. Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne are two characters Yeats had used in short stories in the 1890s and Robartes had been the “voice” of some poems (see Chapman, *RAW*). Their characters are roughly the same as before, with Robartes practicing Cabalism and

Rosicrucianism, and Aherne a Catholic mystic, though less mystic and more orthodox in the dialogs and fictions connected with *A Vision*.

The earliest drafts are assembled in *YVP4*, and there are relics of this scheme in poems such as “The Phases of the Moon” and the notes to various volumes of poetry or plays in the early 1920s (§4.3). In *AVA* (1925), Robartes’s discoveries are the same but the drama is over the editing of papers by Aherne or Yeats, and there is more detail about Kusta ben Luka and the Arabian background. Later, and with the same starting premise, *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends* (1931; incorporated into *AVB* [1937]) shifts the action, presenting a loose group of seekers, whose teacher is Robartes, with Aherne as his helper.

Effectively the stories in *AVA* conceal the real source in automatic writing, despite being obviously apocryphal or romance. In *AVB*, with the true origin revealed, the fictions dramatize the problem of free will and present a series of reactions to the system, from Robartes’s quest to usher in the new age with the third egg of Leda to slightly more uncertain disciples trying to remember the teachings of their departed master. See ch. 1.

Foreknowledge

The sixth and final stage of the **interlife** state, corresponding symbolically to the passage of **Spirit’s** gyre through the zodiacal sign of *Virgo*. The text of *A Vision* actually states, “The sixth and final stage (corresponding to Scorpio) [is] called the *Foreknowledge*” (*AVB* 234, *CW14* 171); this is a mistake, probably caused by confusion of the symbols of *Virgo* (♍) and *Scorpio* (♏), but *WBY’s* notes frequently jumble the order of the zodiacal signs. An earlier draft using the months from March to August rather than signs, assigned August to this stage (*NLI MS* 26,272/22). See §13.3.6.

Ghostly Self

One of the more elusive concepts in the system. At some points the *Ghostly Self* seems to be a view of the **Daimon** as the archetype from which the individual human life is drawn and to which the soul will return, a concept similar to Plotinus’s *eidōs* of the individual soul, which resides in the realm of *nous*. At other points the *Ghostly Self* appears to be closer to the Theosophists’ Atman, beyond **Celestial Body** but mirrored in

Spirit, existing as the inviolate first spark of divinity which stays separated from all incarnation. Its name derives from the Holy Ghost of Christianity and the Self, as used in translations of Hindu and Buddhist terms. See §9.10.

Giraldus

In the **fiction**s Yeats created surrounding *A Vision*, Giraldus was a Renaissance author who wrote a book called *Speculum Angelorum et Hominum* (1594), which set forth much of the system. Michael Robartes finds a mutilated copy of the work and later makes the connection with an Arabian tradition deriving from **Kusta ben Luka**. Giraldus may be based on Lilius Gyraldus of Ferrara or else one of two translators known as Giraldus of Cremona, who translated Arabic texts (spelling varies for all these names). However, a crucial reason for using the name may well have been its echo of the term “**gyre**.”

Golden Dawn

Properly the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, it refers to a magical society founded in 1888 by William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell (MacGregor) Mathers, with W. R. Woodman as a relatively silent third, based on information and rituals derived from a cipher manuscript of uncertain origin. The name properly only applied to the “Outer Order,” and was superseded by “MR” (*Morgenrothe*) in 1901, after a public scandal involving the name. The original body disappeared as a result of schisms in 1903, producing a variety of successors, including the Stella Matutina, which WBY supported and which GY joined. See ch. 3.

Great Year

A period of great length in which human history takes place. Traditional measures base the length on a periodic great conjunction of all the planets or on the **precession** of the equinoxes. The period in *A Vision* is based on precession, with twelve “months” of about 2,150 years each, which are alternately **primary** and **antithetical**. These make up a Great Year of some 26,000 years. See §14.2.

gyre

The fundamental paradigm of growth and life in the Yeatses' system. It represents the cyclical nature of reality, and the recurrent pattern of growth and decay, waxing and waning, sometimes used to mean movement in or passage through the cones or spirals of the system. It is also applied to each of the twelve divisions of the millennium, corresponding to one of the **cardinal phases** (1, 8, 15, 22) or one of the **triads** (2-3-4, 5-6-7, 9-10-11, 12-13-14, 16-17-18, 19-20-21, 23-24-25, and 26-27-28), first gyre, second gyre, etc.

Richard Ellmann records that gyre was “pronounced with a hard ‘g’” (*YM&M* 231), without giving his reason but probably on GY's authority, and a dictated typescript in one place misspells the word as “guyers,” which shows the typist heard a hard “g” (NLI MS 36,272/24, p. 7). See ch. 4.

Husk

One of the *Four Principles*, the lowest in the hierarchy. It is not permanent but the one that is most closely associated with incarnate life, corresponding with the **Faculty of Will**. See chs. 6 and 8.

Image

A projected form of the **Mask**: “The Image is a myth, a woman, a landscape, or anything whatsoever that is an external expression of the *Mask*” (*AVB* 107, *CW14* 81).

Initiatory Moment

The first of the triad of **Moments of Crisis**, which were never fully integrated into *A Vision*. See ch. 9.

interlife

This is not the Yeatses' term but mine, used sometimes in preference to “afterlife” as that term really applies only to the first three stages of the soul's existence between death and birth. See esp. ch. 13.

Judwalis

The Judwalis, or diagrammatists, are a fictional Arab tribe who follow the philosophy of **Kusta ben Luka**. When Robartes meets them, their sacred book has been “lost or destroyed in desert fighting some generations before,” but they have “a vast body of doctrine” explained by diagrams drawn in the sand and “identical with those in the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominorum*” by Giraldus (*AVA* xix, *CW13* lxi). See ch. 2.

Kusta ben Luka

Kusta ben Luka is a Christian philosopher at the court of Harun al-Rashid or a later Caliph of Baghdad. He is author of *The Way of the Soul between Sun and Moon*, since lost, which forms the basis of the philosophy of the **Judwalis**. The poem “Desert Geometry or The Gift of Harun Al-Raschid” details how the Caliph gave Kusta ben Luka a wife who marks out symbols on the desert sand while sleep-walking. This is effectively a concealed allusion to *A Vision's* real origins in the automatic writing, making Kusta ben Luka another Yeatsian alter ego.

lunar

The more inclusive term for the subjective, individual, multitudinous and creative pole of Yeats's overarching duality, represented in incarnate life by the **antithetical tincture**: “the Tinctures belong to a man's life while in the body, and Solar and Lunar may transcend that body” (*AVA* 139, *CW13* 112). See ch. 4.

Marriage

An alternative name for the **Beatitude**, the fourth stage of the **interlife**, conceived of as the symbolic marriage of the **Spirit** and the **Celestial Body**. See chs. 11 and 13.

Mask

One of the *Four Faculties*, “the image of what we wish to become, or of that to which we give our reverence” (*AVA* 15, *CW13* 15), or the “object of desire or idea of the good” (*AVB* 83, *CW14* 61). It only has meaning if there is the desire and choice of the **Will**; it in turn provides the focus or target for the **Will** and together they make up the emotional **Opposition**. See ch. 7.

Meditation

Part of the first stage of the afterlife, following the preliminary ***Vision of the Blood Kindred***, marking the transition of the consciousness from the ***Faculty of Will*** to the ***Principle of Spirit***, and corresponding to the ***Spirit's*** passage through the sign of Aries. See §13.3.1.

Moments of Crisis

An important element of the **automatic script**, which received cursory treatment in *AVA* (*AVA* 172–73, *CW13* 139–40) and none in *AVB*, linked particularly with sexual love. They are associated with the ***Daimon***, the least predictable element of the system, and are symbolized by the lightning flash. The ***Initiatory Moment*** represents a shift in the nature of the ***Mask*** and ***Body of Fate***, the “sensuous image,” effectively in our aims, values and goals, which sets in motion a series of events that reach a climax at the ***Critical Moment***. The ***Critical Moment*** represents a moment of the greatest freedom within an individual life, where the intellect is able to analyze the aims and actions initiated, probably with the help of the *Daimonic* mind, and the individual is able to act with as much free will as he or she is capable of. The *Critical Moment* is not always reached, and even if it is, this process may be repeated without the individual reaching the third stage of ***Beatific Vision***, where the individual moves into a form of greater wholeness, and possibly ***Unity of Being***. See §9.8.

Opening of the tinctures

One of the more problematic technical ideas in *A Vision*, partly because Yeats's understanding changed significantly between the two versions. In *AVB* he states that the ***antithetical tincture*** opens at Phase 11 and the ***primary*** at Phase 12, and that this means “the reflection inward of the ***Four Faculties***: all are as it were mirrored in the personality, ***Unity of Being*** becomes possible” (*AVB* 88, *CW14* 65).

Opposition

A relationship between ***Faculties*** (see *AVB* 93–94, *CW14* 69–70; *AVA* 24–25, *CW13* 23). The two Oppositions are “the emotional Opposition of ***Will*** and ***Mask***,” the two fundamentally ***antithetical Faculties***, and “the intellectual Opposition of ***Creative Mind***

and **Body of Fate**,” the two fundamentally *primary Faculties*. In each pair one is the active, appetent *Faculty* (*Creative Mind* and *Will*), while the other is the goal of its action, the passive, target *Faculty* (*Body of Fate* and *Mask*). Within the fundamental gyre, the active *Faculty* is the apex or origin of the gyre, while the target *Faculty* is the base or widest expansion of the gyre; on the wheel, the Oppositions are diametrically opposed to each other. The two Oppositions form **Discords** to each other. See ch. 7.

Passionate Body

One of the *Four Principles*, the third in the hierarchy. It reflects as the **Mask** in the *Faculties* and is associated with passion and desire, sharing much in common with the “astral body” or “Desire Body” of the Theosophists. It becomes fixed or *disappears* after death and is involved during the first two stages of the afterlife, after which it should be shed, but this is not always possible, which entails a repetition in the same phase of incarnation, as in the case of GY herself. See chs. 6 and 8.

Perfection

There are four types of perfection attainable, and these only in certain phases of incarnation: Self-Sacrifice (at Phases 2, 3, and 4), Self-Knowledge (at Phase 13), Unity of Being (at Phases 16, 17, and 18), and Sanctity (at Phase 27) (see AVB 95 & 100, CW14 70 & 73; AVA 26 & 33, CW13 24 & 30). Generally **Unity of Being** is used by Yeats to cover some or all of these, since it was the form that interested him most and which was personally possible to him. See §6.4 and §11.4.

Phantasmagoria

A minor subsidiary stage of the **Return**, the second stage of the afterlife, during which life and imagination are completed in order to exhaust emotion. See §13.3.2.

precession

Earth’s axial precession, traditionally called “the precession of the equinoxes” or “equinoctial precession” is a very slow “wobble” of Earth’s axis, taking some 26,000 years to complete a cycle. As a result of it, the North and South Poles point to different stars over time, and the sun’s position at the equinoxes shifts backwards through the

zodiac. This cycle lies behind the **Great Year** used in *A Vision*, which is divided into twelve “months” of some 2,150 years each. See §14.2.

primary

One of the two *tinctures*, the impulse to unify and objectivity, corresponding to the **solar**, which operates on a larger and more general scale, and predominating during the darker phases of the moon, between Phases 22 and 8. It is the first of the two *tinctures*, since “objectivity brings us back to the mass where we begin” (*AVB* 72, *CW14* 53), whereas the *antithetical* defines itself by opposition to the *primary*, however Yeats’s sympathies are more often with the *antithetical*. See ch. 4.

Principles

The *Principles* represent pure knowledge and spiritual reality, but are uncreative and incapable of making new material or distinguishing illusion from reality, only of understanding what life offers. They remain in the unconscious mind during waking life and are partially responsible for our dream life, coming to the fore after death, where the individual needs to understand and absorb the fruits of the preceding life before carrying on to the next life. The *Principles* are **solar** in relation to the *Faculties* and are intrinsically hierarchical, unlike the **lunar** *Faculties*. Within themselves, the two solar *Principles*, *Spirit* and *Celestial Body* are permanent and represent the continuity between lives, while the two lunar *Principles*, *Husk* and *Passionate Body* are impermanent and renewed for each new life. See chs. 6 and 8.

Purification

The fifth stage of the **interlife**, where the soul is cleansed of its previous incarnation and starts to prepare for its coming life, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spirit’s* gyre through the sign of Leo. See §13.3.5.

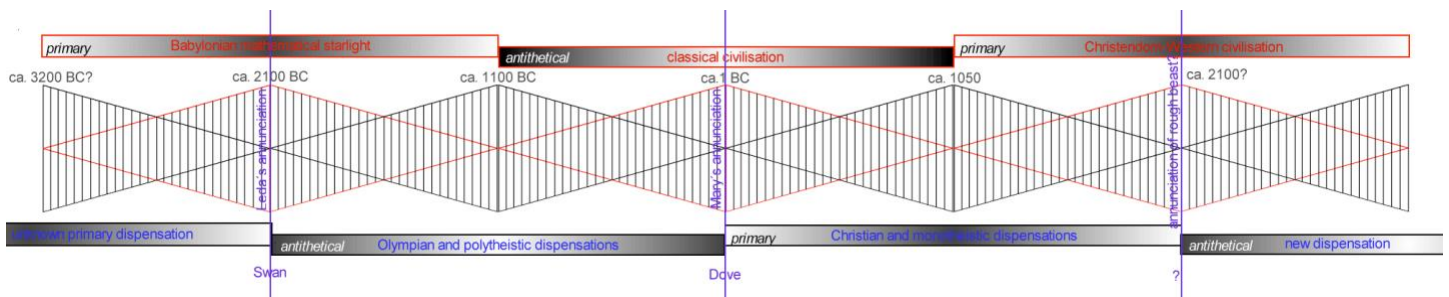
Record

In the *Sphere*, “All things are present as an eternal instant to our *Daimon*” (*AVB* 193, *CW14* 142). However, this state is incomprehensible to us, because “all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience,” so that Yeats’s “instructors have therefore followed tradition by substituting for it a *Record* where the images of all past events

remain for ever 'thinking the thought and doing the deed.' They are in popular mysticism called 'the pictures in the astral light,' a term that became current in the middle of the nineteenth century, and what Blake called 'the bright sculptures of Los's Hall'" (*AVB* 193, *CW14* 142). This definition seems to lay stress upon the past elements of the eternal instant, rather than the future ones, and, as Yeats hints, may owe more than a little to idea of the "akashic record," images in the spiritual substance, as well as to the tradition of *anima mundi*. See §10.5.

religion

Sometimes used for a period of 2,150 years, as the **solar** counterpart to the **lunar civilization**. Like civilization, it does not necessarily refer to any conventionally recognized single religion; since Yeats's focus is almost exclusively European, Christianity is the dominant representative of the monotheism which dominates the 2000-plus years of our current cycle, however, it also includes Islam, philosophical Platonism, and, to a lesser extent, Buddhism. Yeats's



The continuum of history as cycles of religion and civilization.

monotheistic religious period, focused on the Christian dispensation, starts at the midpoint of the classical civilization in 1 AD (1 CE), and the civilization that this dispensation enabled, Christendom, starts around the year 1000 CE (see *AVB* 203–4, *CW14* 150). These two historical cycles, therefore, have the same length but are "syncopated," the civilization corresponding to a lunar month, at the Ides of which (its full moon) starts a solar month (the zodiacal sign). Both religions and civilizations alternate between being *antithetical* and *primary*. See ch. 14.

reincarnation

One of the premises underlying the system of *A Vision* is the concept of reincarnation. Behind the concept of the wheel lies the idea that the soul sets out from absorption in God or Nature at Phase 1 and incarnates through the successive phases of the moon until it reaches Phase 1 again, when the cycle starts again at a more advanced level. From Phase 2 onwards, the soul gains gradual self-awareness and independence of mind, until it reaches complete subjectivity and isolation at Phase 15. After this, it starts to move return towards a more intellectual and social form of absorption into the group, and finally into God. See chs. 3 and 11.

Return

The second stage of the afterlife and the most complex, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spirit's* passage through the sign of Taurus. It comprises several states in each of which the *Spirit* attempts to understand its preceding life in different manners, and it passes from one to the other not in sequence but in rhythmic alternation. The first of these subsidiary states is also named the *Return*, where events are relived in sequence, and the other main stage is the ***Dreaming Back***, where they are relived according to intensity. Further stages include the ***Phantasmagoria*** and other variations which Yeats does not label clearly. See §13.3.2.

Robartes, Michael

See **Fictions**.

Sage and Victim

The *Sage* and *Victim* are general, interchanging figures who are of more importance to *AVA* than *AVB*. The *Sage* represents the frail, fundamentally *primary* soul, who has only his doctrine, while the *Victim* represents the *antithetical* soul, and "Emotional Man," who sacrifices all in a state of strength. In one sense they are categories that apply to all souls and they interchange on the wheel of the ***Faculties*** at Phases 22 and 8, so that whoever has been *Sage* before 22 will be *Victim* thereafter. However, Yeats also relates the terms specifically to the avatars of new ages, seeing in Christ the *Sage*, and in the next avatar, 2,150 years later, the *Victim* or *antithetical* revelation. Although the

automatic script does not directly suggest that the *Victim* is related to any of the types of ***Victimage*** that occur in the discarnate states, there is a suggestion that Yeats sees them as related, since he relates the interchange of *Sage* and *Victim* to the ***Shiftings*** (AVB 232n, CW14 169n). Certainly the term is also used when describing Phase 22, when “the mind that has been predominantly that of the *Sage* puts on *Victimage*” (AVB 159, CW14 118; cf. AVA 93, CW13 76).

Shiftings

The third stage of the afterlife, where the potential of a life's events is re-explored with different morality and motivation, corresponding symbolically to the passage of *Spirit's* gyre through the sign of Gemini. See §13.3.3.

Sleeps

After 1920, since GY found the sessions of automatic script increasingly draining, the Yeatses started the practice of “Sleeps” (or “Sleaps” in WBY's spelling) where GY would enter a trance and speak, while WBY noted what she said. He would often later go through these notes and expand on them, dictating to GY. These too decreased in frequency and largely stopped in 1924, though continuing into the 1930s. George Mills Harper gives a list of the main bloc in CVA xvii–xxiii; see also www.YeatsVision.com/AS.html. See ch. 2.

solar

The more inclusive term for the objective, collective and unifying pole of Yeats's overarching duality, which represents wisdom, knowledge and ultimate reality. In incarnate life the ***primary tincture*** represents the solar aspect: “the *Tinctures* belong to a man's life while in the body, and Solar and Lunar may transcend that body” (AVA 139, CW13 112). The solar wheel is used to show the progress of the ***Principles***; it is measured by the ***zodiac*** rather than the moon's phases and usually runs in the opposite direction too. See esp. chs. 4 and 6.

Speculum Angelorum et Hominum

The Latin title translates as “The Mirror of Angels and of Men” and is the name of the 1594 book by ***Giraldus***, an alter ego for Yeats, and created as a fictional source for the

system of *A Vision*. The book is discovered in Cracow by Michael Robartes, and, though it is mutilated, he is fascinated by its symbols and keeps it with him. He later finds that the diagrams used by the **Judwalis** are “identical with those in the *Speculum Angelorum et Hominorum*” (*AVA* xix, *CW13* lxi). In *A Vision A* the title appeared with the last word garbled as “Hominorum” and also “Homenorum,” mistakes which were corrected in the second edition.

Sphere

The absolute and unitary form of total being, beyond the **gyres**, the “ultimate reality.” The human mind, fixed in the antinomies, can only perceive it as opposition to the mundane gyre, and therefore sees it as a gyre or cone: the **Thirteenth Cone**. See ch. 10.

Spirit

One of the *Four Principles*, *Spirit*, the active, solar *Principle*, is the origin of movement and the individual being within the archetype of the **Celestial Body**. Although it comes second in the hierarchy, it is probably the most important of all, since it represents the impetus to life and experience. See chs. 6 and 8.

Stella Matutina

A magical order, one of the successor groups to the **Golden Dawn**, which WBY joined. He later sponsored GY's entrance to this order. See ch. 3.

Thirteenth Cone

The form of the **Sphere**, when seen through the **antinomies**. If you look at bright red for a while and then look at white, it will appear green, the complementary color. Similarly, the human being, trapped in the **antinomies** (red), sees the totality of the **Sphere** (white) as a form of opposition, an opposing cone (green). See chs. 6 and 10.

Thirteenth Cycle

Generally synonymous with **Thirteenth Cone**, since every cycle can be represented by its own cone. However, the preceding twelve cycles implicit in the name are those of incarnation, which also correspond roughly with the twelve months of the Great Year, so the Thirteenth Cycle is sometimes seen as the beginning of a new, supernatural cycle

of “incarnations,” and *AVA* complicates matters further by mentioning Fourteenth and Fifteenth Cycles. See §10.4.

tincture

The two *tinctures* are a manifestation of the **antinomies** and the source of the fundamental conflict and tension that drive human life. The **primary** represents the One, the macrocosm, the race, the collective, the objective, truth, and knowledge, and opposed to it is the **antithetical** representing the Many, the microcosm, the soul, the individual, the subjective, beauty, and creativity. On a grander scale, the poles are referred to as **solar** and **lunar**, the *tinctures* being reserved for incarnate life. The term, which does not originate in the **automatic script**, was borrowed from Jacob Boehme to give a joint name to the *primary–antithetical* polarity in the preparatory card index. “*Tincture*” is capitalized in *A Vision A*. See ch. 4.

triad

In the **wheel** of twenty-eight phases, most of the phases are grouped together in threes, and are seen as related in theme or form, each a manifesting it in slightly different way. See §4.8 and §12.3.

Unity of Being

Yeats had used the term before *A Vision* but developed it significantly with relation to the system. He derives the term from his memory of Dante’s *Convito*, claiming that Dante compares it to “‘a perfectly proportioned human body’” (*AVB* 82, *CW14* 61), although Dante does not use it and the closest equivalent is a reference to harmony within a language. It is defined in a draft as “Complete Harmony between physical body intellect & spiritual desire – *all may be imperfect* but if harmony is perfect it is unity” (*YVP2* 41). In some ways it is a version of a Renaissance ideal famously expressed by Leonardo as Vitruvian man, or even a balance of Galen’s four humors. It is declared to be the unity attainable through the **Mask** (*AVB* 82, *CW14* 61), therefore reserved particularly for the **antithetical** phases, when the *Mask* is free, and only really attainable after the “**Vision of Evil**,” which some souls attain at the full moon, Phase 15. See §6.4.

Victimage

A complex group of relationships through which two souls work off karmic debt. This may be from previous actions, or from denial of experience. See §13.6.

Vision of the Blood Kindred

The start of the first stage after death, when all the impulses and images of the **Husk** or senses appear in a form of synthesis, a version of the tradition of a person's life flashing before their eyes or being greeted by the dead of the family. It corresponds to the sign of Aries. It is a prelude to the **Meditation**, which is the more significant element of this state, but Yeats's exposition is not clear, so a number of critics take the first stage as confined to the *Vision of the Blood Kindred* (AVB 223–24; 235; CW14 162–63, 171). See §13.3.1.

Vision of Evil

The perception of the world as continual and necessary strife, only properly achieved at or shortly the life at Phase 15. It is more the acknowledgement of a dualistic, possibly even Manichean, universe rather than any diabolic sense: "...no man believes willingly in evil or in suffering. How much of the strength and weight of Dante and of Balzac comes from unwilling belief, from the lack of it how much of the rhetoric and vagueness of all Shelley that does not arise from personal feeling?" ("If I were Four and Twenty" VII, Ex 277, cf. CW5 43–44). See §11.7.

wheel

The wheel portrays the cyclical nature of the gyre, and is usually divided into twenty-eight stages, identified by the phases of the moon. Yeats perceives time as cyclical rather than linear and, as in the Hindu symbol, the wheel also represents the cycle of the soul's rebirth. Yeats, in an **antithetical** incarnation himself, does not see this as something that it is necessarily desirable to escape. Capitalized as Wheel, the term refers to the Great Wheel of twenty-eight phasal incarnations. See esp. chs. 4 and 11.

Will

One of the *Four Faculties*, described as "a bias ... an energy ... the first matter of a certain personality—choice' (AVA 14–15, CW13 15), which "has neither emotion,

morality nor intellectual interest, but knows how things are done, how windows open and shut, how roads are crossed, everything that we call utility. It seeks its own continuance" (*AVB* 83, *CW14* 61). It is effectively the life force or survival instinct in a relatively basic form, the will to continue. Without **Mask** it has no aim, but with the appropriate focus becomes the creative force in life. It was originally termed "Ego" in the **automatic script** and WBY refers to the "Will or normal ego" (*AVB* 83, *CW14* 61), a borrowing from Blavatsky rather than from the English translators of Freud, that indicates the self, but the lower self. The *Will* is not always the dominant *Faculty* but is the one which determines the phase in which a person is located, so that those of Phase 27 have their *Will* at Phase 27, although the other *Faculties* are located elsewhere and may indeed dominate. See chs. 6 and 7.

zodiac

The zodiac is a band of space on either side of the ecliptic, the apparent path of the sun through the year, within which the planets and the moon always appear. It is divided in a number of ways, most commonly: into 360 degrees, into 12 irregular constellations, into 12 regular signs, and into 27 or 28 mansions of the moon. Yeats specifically uses the signs of the zodiac to record the movement of **solar** elements within the system. The signs are usually reckoned from Aries, the start of which is the spring equinox, and are in order: Aries (♈), Taurus (♉), Gemini (♊), Cancer (♋), Leo (♌), Virgo (♍), Libra (♎), Scorpio (♏), Sagittarius (♐), Capricorn (♑), Aquarius (♒), Pisces (♓). The zodiac is also used to label the cycles of incarnation, but starting at Taurus, so that WBY in the sixth cycle of incarnation is in the Libra cycle.

