



A Brief Tour Through the Body-Mind for the Purpose of Reaching Spirit

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There are many important axes in human anatomy, including the Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis, the Liver-Stomach-Intestines (known as the Liver Triad Axis) and the Brain-Gut Axis. We will discuss another body-mind axis worth considering.

The Reticular Activating System (RAS), acting in concert with the Vagus Nerve (CN-X), directs and modulates consciousness and functions throughout the body to maintain a dynamic balance—both with respect to the external environment and the body's internal environment (Turner & Knapp, 1995). Less well known to Western medical scientists is a parallel system supporting consciousness that develops in the subtle energy body of the human being. This energy body, while not visible with current Western and mainstream technologies, has been known in many of the ancient esoteric healing traditions of the East (Bailey, 1925; Hopking, Bailey, & Hopking, 2005; Settersten, 2011). According to these esoteric teachings, as the human being develops from a state of alert consciousness toward a condition of spiritually expanded or higher Consciousness, the locus of control over the functions of the bodies (physical and subtle) shifts from the physical brain to a higher mind within the developed subtle body. This shift occurs after activation of the alta major chakra (Figure 1).

This article proposes the RAS-Vagus Nerve-Alta Major

Chakra Axis as the nexus of communication from higher Consciousness to the physical and subtle energy bodies of the human being (Barsotti, 2010). By “higher Consciousness” we mean distinct from the consciousness contained within the local domain of our physical bodies and often referring to a state of being alert and focused. This type of consciousness is used to describe states such as waking, dream states, drug-induced states, hypnosis and others. In most medical references, consciousness is largely used by neuroscientists to designate various states of mental alertness and focus. The term higher Consciousness is used here to depict the human connection to God/Source.

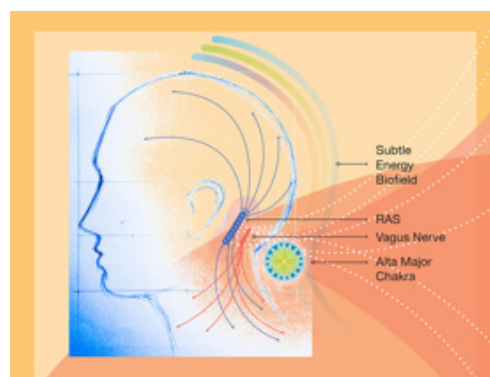


Figure 1. The alta major chakra resides in the etheric field, aligning with the location of the cerebellum, medulla oblongata and the Reticular Activating System (RAS).

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Reticular Activating System

Since its discovery over 60 years ago, the Reticular Activating System, or RAS, has been studied extensively (Magoun, 1951; Petty, 1996). The RAS helps direct, modulate and maintain functions throughout the body (Turner & Knapp, 1995). The RAS resides within the Reticular Formation (RF) (*reticulum* is Latin for “net like”), which serves as a gateway to conscious awareness (Figure 2). With its function as the afferent and efferent cholinergic conduit, the RAS activates a conscious status throughout the brain. The RAS is said to be the gas pedal that ignites the diencephalon (the hypothalamus and thalamus) as well as the

neuromodulators) conduct signals along long and short pathways, afferently and efferently. Without its principal and crucial involvement, any other cortical activity in the so-called “higher brain” cannot be registered throughout the body.

During his retirement speech, it was purported that Wilder Penfield (Penfield & Rasmussen, 1968) admonished his peers not to look for the mind within the brain, that he spent his career searching and could not find it there. We may come to find that neither consciousness nor Consciousness is under the control of a single structure, responding instead

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cortical areas of the brain (Petty, 1996). Functional Magnetic Resonance Images (fMRI) have given us the view or neural maps of which brain cortices become activated with thoughts, emotions and memories. Results of MRI imaging, however, reveal only cortical brain activity, leaving out the important afferent and efferent messenger molecules through the brainstem, including the RAS.

The RAS is about the size of one’s little finger and sits centrally in the brainstem. Without a functioning RAS, there is no bodily connection. There is instead a type of disconnection akin to being “comatose” or “locked-in” (Young, 2009). The RAS responds to stimuli from all sensory systems through its afferent and efferent pathways, regardless of the state of consciousness. These pathways integrate sensory, visceral, limbic and motor functions. Reticular circuits branch throughout the central nervous system and exert important influences on autonomic regulation of vital organ systems, levels of alertness, sleep cycles, somatic motor activities, pain modulation and behavior. At this time, it has become increasingly apparent that the RAS is not only a neuronal superhighway, but also an active conduit by which messenger molecules (e.g., neuropeptides, neurotransmitters, hormones,

to reflexes within an axis of structures. At this time, realistically, we can only measure the influence of consciousness on physiological or physical processes.

Vagus Nerve

The vagus nerve originates in the medulla oblongata.

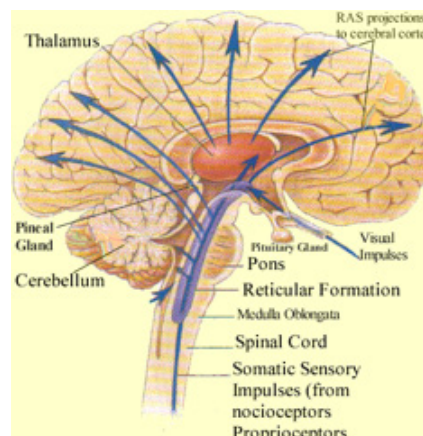


Figure 2. Site of the Reticular Formation (RF) and the Reticular Activating System (RAS) within the RF, along with its projections throughout the brain. (neurobiologychapter3.weebly.com/reticular-formation.html)



The medulla is located in the brainstem above the spinal cord and ventral to the reticular formation, and considered the main site in the brain for regulating the autonomic sympathetic and parasympathetic outflow. The vagus (Latin for “wandering”) is the tenth cranial nerve (CN X) (Wilson-Pauwels, 2010). This remarkable nerve has a more extensive course of distribution than any of the eleven other cranial nerves and is the main nerve of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). Efferent impulses start in the central nervous system and pass peripherally along spinal or cranial nerves. Afferent impulses start out peripherally and pass into the central nervous system. The vagus nerve, through its extensive motor and sensory fibers network, communicates sensory and motor information bidirectionally between the brain and body, supporting and helping regulate consciousness (Angeles Fernandez-Gil, Palacios-Bote, Leo-Barahona, & Mora-Encinas, 2010; Shi, Flanagan, & Samadani, 2013). There is substantial experimental evidence that demonstrates that immune and inflammatory responses are modulated by communications along the vagus nerve (Pavlov & Tracey, 2015).

Expanding the Mind

One of the beliefs within the new paradigm in biology and physiology is that cellular signaling and communication are providing an infrastructure of biological and subtle energy systems. Just as cells use their receptors to sense the environment in which they exist, the outer body receives information using the five senses. Our sensory responses are evidence of human contact with the world at large, as well as our inner-world of mind and body.

Spirit, from the Latin root of *Spiritus* meaning the breath of life (vitality), is the principle of conscious life and the vital principle in humans, animating a body or mediating between body and soul—the nonmaterial, intelligent and sentient part of a person. *The Kybalion*, an ancient Hermetic text states, “The Lips of Wisdom are closed, except to the ears of Understanding” (Three, 1908). Esoteric healers know how to move within the subtle energy fields, access information and assist with bringing awareness to the

person with whom they are working. The word *esoteric* is defined as “requiring or exhibiting knowledge that is restricted to a small group; and is designed for or understood by the specially initiated alone.” The esoteric texts teach us that the “specially initiated” are the ones willing to deepen self-awareness (Consciousness) and venture into unknown territory in a spiritually meaningful way.

Alta Major Chakra

Looking to the endocrine and lymphatic glands

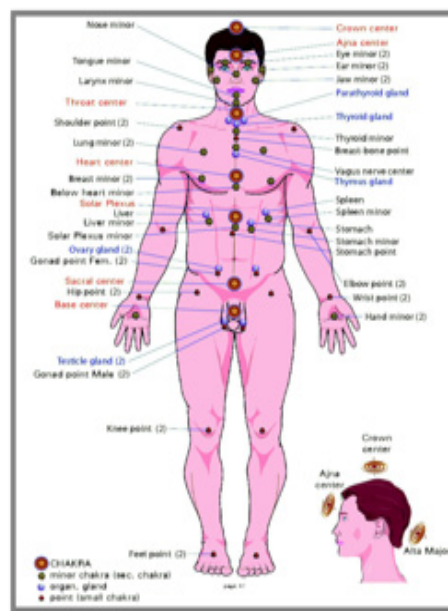


Figure 3. Overlay of glandular system and the minor and major chakras. Overlays of the glandular system (in blue) as well the minor chakras (medium-sized yellow and black circles) and major chakras (multi-color circles). The small red circles point to “minor chakras” which are key points along the body’s energy channels; these behave similarly to other chakras, but are less energetically dense by comparison to the major chakra points. The inset image of the head shows the three chakras as spinning vortices, and make up the three points of one of the head triangle sequences. Energetically speaking, the glands are denser energy channels as they are in the physical body and coordinate with the nervous system as a whole. Major chakras are believed to correspond to major nerve bundles in the physical body. (Barsotti, 2010)



throughout the body, we find an uncanny mapping to the micro and macro chakra centers (Figure 3). Theosophists were influenced by the Hermeticists of ancient Egypt and maintained the Hermetic arts and sciences, which they taught since the mid-19th century. Their teachings included the anatomical and physiological mapping of chakras with the physical and subtle energy surrounding the body—connecting our inner-world to the outer-world and vice versa.

Esoterically speaking, the alta major center, or chakra, resides in the etheric body. It is the final chakra or energy center of the human form to be activated for Conscious connection to Spirit. When the alta major center is activated, human consciousness expands to merge with Consciousness. There are several points worth considering regarding the alta major center, including how it becomes activated, its placement and interactions within the etheric/physical energy field, aligning with the outcropping of the vagus nerve and the RAS. This etheric bridge-like position enables purposeful communication between the physical human life and the human Spirit.

The alta major center is considered a minor chakra, but functions as a major chakra according the teachings of Master D.K. (Hopking et al., 2005). In the head triangle, the alta major chakra has a unique position, first because of its relationship in the head triangle, and second due to its powerful link to the cerebellum, the medulla oblongata, the spine and vagus nerve (Figure 1). The cerebellum is part of the hind-brain and controls voluntary muscles and, therefore, movement, and is energetically linked to the root or base chakra. The medulla oblongata, also part of the hindbrain, is closest to the spinal cord and is involved, as is the vagus nerve, with the regulation of heartbeat and heart rate, breathing, blood pressure and the reflex centers. The medulla is energetically connected to the throat and heart chakras.

In *Esoteric Healing*, Master D.K. writes, “Healers would do well to remember that when the three centres [sic] in the head are linked up and the magnetic field is therefore set up and the radiance is present, the

healer can then use the ajna centre [sic] as the directing agent for this ‘dispelling radiance’” (Hopking et al., 2005). (The ajna center, often referred to as the “third eye,” is related to etheric vision and can also be used to project energy.) You have, therefore, in the head three triangles, of which two are distributors of energy and the third is a distributor of force. The attention is placed; the magnetic field is spiritually vitalized; the generated vital radiance is then distributed and directed correctly through the medium of the third triangle (Figure 4).

In Bailey’s *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (Bailey, 1925),

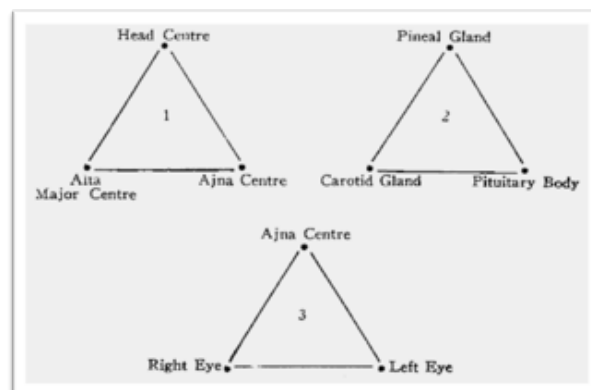


Figure 4. Esoteric Healing head triangles. These triangles and others are “magnetic in quality and radiant in activity.” (*A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, Alice Bailey (Bailey, 1925))

Master D.K. explains, “The alta major centre [is] that nerve centre at the top of the spine where the cranium and the spine make approximate contact. When this congery of nerves is fully developed, it forms a centre [sic] of communication between the vital energy of the spinal column (the kundalini fire) and the energy of the two head centres... (in the pineal, pituitary, carotid triangle) (Figure 4). It is the physical correspondence to the antaskarana [the antaskarana is a thread or channel between the personality (lower worlds) and the higher worlds of Consciousness].” In the full text version of this thesis, it is referred to as the Science of the Triple Thread.

The RAS-Vagus Nerve-Alta Major Chakra Axis

It was more than thirty years after the publication of



A *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* in 1925 (Bailey, 1925) that knowledge of the reticular formation first came to Western medical science (Magoun, 1951). Master D.K.'s words "the nerve center at the top of the spine" and "conger of nerves" could represent what we see as the reticulum and currently call the RAS and reticular formation. To know for certain there is a correlation here, a proper investigation will have to wait until there are more robust imaging capabilities since we cannot functionally evaluate the RAS using current fMRI technologies.

Interestingly, the Vedic tradition represents these concepts through the developed and energetically activated sutratma, antaskarana and antahkarana, which are energy threads comprising the sushumna (the central channel along the spinal column). The ida and pingala represent the male and female subconscious mind aspects and are the channels which allow for the interweaving of kundalini as it moves upward from the perineum. The proper raising of kundalini energy occurs with the development of the antaskarana and antahkarana, which once empowered and intertwined, supports activation of the alta major center (Figure 5).

There are specific practices, such as Kundalini Yoga, aimed at raising kundalini energy. While there are significant upsides to these practices, there are also significant downsides. Upsides include that the practitioner learns to move energies throughout the physical and subtle bodies. This can be very effective for clearing, cleansing and strengthening the energy centers and sushumna. Downsides include that not everyone is prepared to deal with what those energies are doing in the different energy centers. It is possible to raise energy much too fast and transfer "dirty" energy from one center to another. There is something called "Kundalini Syndrome" (Greyson, 1993; Modestino, 2016) which is a systemic energy contamination characterized by a host of symptoms including insomnia, over heating, hypertension, irritability, mood swings, increased sex drive, various pains and discomfort, and a feeling of overstimulation of the senses. From time to time, I (T.B.) have treated in my practice




Figure 5. The Central Channel, or Sushumna (which comprises the three threads, the sutratma, antaskarana and antahkarana), and the ascending and descending routes of Kundalini energy. (templeofspirit.wordpress.com/2014/01/07/central-channel-or-sushumna-nadi)

individuals with Kundalini Syndrome. I have found that if a person with Kundalini Syndrome has a lot of unfinished business, psychological disturbances, overly empathic or addiction tendencies, it is best for them to slow down the kundalini-directed practices or in some cases, it is much better for them to find a different type of yoga practice, such as raja or hatha yoga. In addition, breath work, regular salt baths and physical exercise, a diet without animal protein and pranic healing protocols that deal specifically with Kundalini Syndrome are very useful.

Dedication to the path of Consciousness means that the activated alta major chakra becomes the distribution center of life-force energy. This life-force energy moves down and up the antahkarana, the energetic spinal column, radiating magnetically to open the chakra centers. The RAS is the network hub of the physical nervous system, sending and receiving signals, creating connections using the endogenous hormones, neurotransmitters and neuropeptides



that move throughout the body. The vagus nerve carries the signals that coordinate these collective movements and activations, creating a homeodynamically balanced nervous system within the body. The RAS-Vagus Nerve-Alta Major Chakra axis speaks to the anatomy of the Spirit in the self and may serve as a communication nexus between the physical systems and Consciousness, which when activated, consciously arouses profound spiritual connection. 



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