The Sphere of Pluto and the Nuclear Question

by Jonathan Hilton

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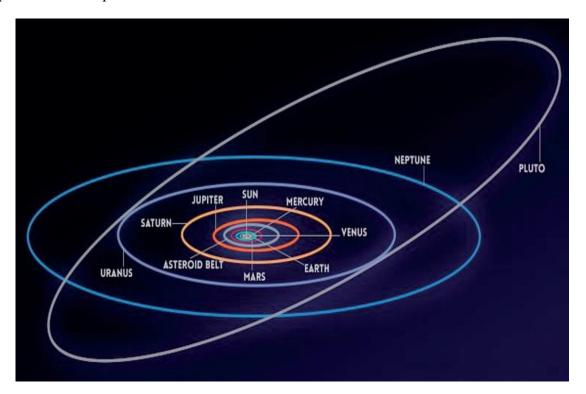


French nuclear explosion at Moruroa atoll, Licorne (Unicorn) test, on 3 July 1970

This year the new film *Oppenheimer* was released, telling the story of the Manhattan Project and the scientists, particularly Robert Oppenheimer, who developed the first nuclear weapon that annihilated 80,000 people instantly at Hiroshima. In the film, we hear Oppenheimer's thought as he witnessed the test explosion: Behold I am death, destroyer of worlds. This is from verse 32 in the Hindu sacred text, the Bhagavad-Gita. A more accurate translation of the Sanskrit is I am world-destroying time. Yet, not only these words came into his mind but also a quote from the same part of the text. They are words describing Arjuna's vision of Krishna before he had to go into his great battle, when he asked Krishna to reveal himself: If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendour of the Mighty One. Here we have two phrases from this sacred text, both describing Krishna, both entering the thoughts of Oppenheimer on witnessing the blast. In the primeval wisdom of the consciousness out of which the Bhagavad-Gita is only a faint echo, time was not linear as we think it now. Experience was not understood in a kind of spatial sequence laid out one after the other. Mythological consciousness is not bound to that thinking. Future and past can be simultaneous. Great holiness and great destruction can be one. The great god Krishna can be simultaneously a creator and annihilator. Even the word Krisna in Sanskrit means both black or dark as well as all-attractive. He is both terrifying and sublime. He is the splendor of a thousand suns bursting and a world-destroyer.

Both images present us with the extremes and contradictions of the sphere of Pluto which is related to both the deepest most destructive force of primal will – and the destruction of material existence – as well as the highest potential of the will, the transformation of matter into spirit. In this sense can destruction become the annihilation of human existence or the force of transmutation into a new form of existence on a higher level. The determining factor is the question of "the centre." In this article we will look at this question of the centre in relation to Pluto from the perspective of its relation to the nuclear force of the atom as well as to a third arena of psycho/spiritual activity outside of the polarities that define much of human consciousness today.

Pluto was discovered in 1930 and became the ninth and furthest planet from the Sun. Yet its place as a planet has been debated in astronomical circles. In many ways it fit the criteria but in other ways it did not. In 2006, at a gathering of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), Pluto was in fact demoted from planet to dwarf planet. Unlike all the other planets, which follow regular orbits along the ecliptic plane of the zodiacal belt, including the more recently discovered planets Uranus and Neptune, Pluto does not comply. Its orbit is extremely elliptical and tilts at an angle to the ecliptic plane of 17° so that it travels well above and below the zodiacal belt, which is defined as 8° above and 8° below the ecliptic plane. With its long orbit of about 248 years at a distance from the Sun averaging 40 times that of the Earth, as well as its unruly erratic orbital qualities, Pluto inhabits a kind of transitional place in our solar cosmos. It is the willful wild child of our planetary system. It is partly within the planetary community but its orbit also extends beyond the planetary system into what is called the trans-Neptunian sphere of the Kuiper Belt or "the scattered disc."



This region is called the Third Zone of our Sun-centred cosmos. It is a donut shaped ring populated by many icy objects, large and small of which Pluto is the largest member. So astronomically, Pluto is really an outsider not really belonging to the ordered sphere of the planets. Of the three new planets, not found in ancient star wisdom, Pluto, as the most recent, is still on the outside of conforming to the planetary order.

Beyond the Kuiper Belt is then the further sphere from which most comets come, called the Oort Cloud. This region is like a giant bubble enveloping our solar system, populated with the cometary objects that come and go as distant visitors provoking wonder and terror in humanity throughout history. The Oort cloud (see image below) has never been directly observed but only theorized and calculated. The outer edge of the Oort Cloud is considered the "edge" of our solar system, where the Sun's physical and gravitational influence ends. In this modern expanded picture of the solar cosmos, we have moved well beyond the classical planets, known by our ancestors, from Saturn on inward to the Earth and Sun.



The planets exist within a kind of ordered Sun realm which is enveloped by ever finer, non-ordered spheres, out to the edge of the solar reach. Pluto belongs to this Third Zone between the ordered planetary system and the comet region of the Oort cloud, as representative of the greater sphere of the scattered disc. In one sense, Pluto can be seen as participating in our spatial linear awareness yet at the same time carrying something of the non-linear, non-spatial qualities of another cosmic realm. It can oppose the order and centric based laws of our Suncentred planetary consciousness or it can become, perhaps, a transition away from centric spatial order to another dimension of future human consciousness. This can manifest itself like the Hindu myth, both annihilating and sublime.

This astronomical picture, along with the mythological imagery associated with Pluto, the King of the Underworld, the world of death, can help us shape our understanding of this planetary sphere. As a side note, the naming of Pluto did not come out of some deep initiation insight, but rather from eleven-year-old Venetia Burney, a schoolgirl in Oxford, England. She along with thousands of others sent in her name suggestion to the Lowell Observatory, which had hosted a naming competition. The members of the Lowell Observatory eventually voted on a short-list of three potential names. Pluto received a unanimous vote and the name was

announced on May 1, 1930. Perhaps, as we say, "out of the mouths of babes" can come a deeper truth.

What role then does Pluto now play in world history? This leads us into the relation of Pluto to the question of the "centre." Out of star wisdom, a study of the three "newcomers" to our planetary system, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto can reveal that they carry both the great challenges to human development as well as great potentiality for our expanding consciousness. To go into Uranus and Neptune would be beyond the scope of this article, however one finds in these two planetary spheres, and with developments in humanity at the time of their discoveries, a relation to electricity or light with Uranus and electro-magnetism or tone with Neptune, with the use of electro-magnetism to create devices to transmit musical notes, or telegraphy and other technologies to transmit sound or tones. Also, the discovery of Uranus occurs along with the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, knowledge based on the senses, whilst the discovery of Neptune occurs with the development of dialectical materialism by Karl Marx and with Darwinism. Without going more deeply into these planets, it can be said that they relate to two poles of opposition to human evolution as well as two potentialities of higher spiritual cognition.

To return to Pluto, we come to a third force of activity. The timing of its discovery and entrance into the arena of human awareness in 1930 coincides with events in human history that unleash new forces, perhaps even prematurely, as well as the emergence of a philosophical crisis and world events that bring us to the edge, to an existential crisis of the self. Beginning around 1930, the world changed in drastic ways, which directly led to the Manhattan Project and the recognition that now humanity had gained the power to destroy the world, to achieve total annihilation. The power of the death forces of Pluto, from the underworld, comes into our hands so to speak. History unfolds many landmark transitions, such as the discovery (or rediscovery) of the Americas, or electricity, or iron. These can be understood perhaps as revelations fulfilled in "due time" as humanity evolves in its consciousness of self and world. What emerged in the time of Pluto's discovery?

Two developments can become a starting point for understanding deeper truths about the mystery of Pluto in relation to the "centre" and the emerging third force. First was the development of the world philosophical perspective known as Existentialism around 1930.

1925 Gabriel Honore Marcel essay 'Existence and Objectivity'

1927 Marcel's *Metaphysical Journal* (metaphysical alienation)

1938 Jean Paul Sartre novel *Nausea* (manifesto of existentialism)

Though a complex world perspective, in essence existentialism posits that humans have no essence because there is no Creator. The Encyclopedia Britannica describes it thus (bold mine).

It can insist on the **transcendence of Being** with respect to existence, and, by holding that transcendence to be the origin or foundation of existence, it can thus **assume a theistic form**. On the other hand, it can hold that human existence, posing itself as a problem, projects itself with **absolute freedom, creating itself by itself**, thus assuming to itself the function of God. As such, existentialism presents itself as **a radical atheism**.

Philosophically, humanity began to wrestle with being and non-being, with the transcendence of our beingness or the futility of our aloneness out of which we can only create a self out of the nothingness.

As Jean Paul Sartre, a leader in existentialist philosophy, stated: *Life has no meaning a priori*... *It is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning that you choose.* And elsewhere he writes: *Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.*

Existentialism brings a kind of philosophical culmination of the consciousness soul

experience of "to be or not to be." Yet it addresses the very question of the 'I,' the self, which requires answering by each human being out of their own self-knowledge. But from where comes that self? Who is that self? Animal? Machine? Spiritual entity?

When Pluto was named, it was standing in the fixed stars of Gemini opposite the planet Saturn in the stars of Sagittarius. I will return to this later in the article, but bring it here to point out that the axis of Gemini/Sagittarius forms the vertical beam of the great world cross of solstices and equinoxes in our era. The vertical beam is the egoic axis, the upright axis, meaning that the constellations of Gemini and Sagittarius hold in our era the great questions around "identity." What/who is the human being? So, one could say that the cosmic wisdom presents an imagination and a question in this great cosmic cross. Out of this polarity how does the human being realize itself? In this moment of Pluto's discovery Saturn, the great sphere of world karma, the sphere deeply connected with the physical body and the tasks of incarnation, looks across to Pluto, the Ruler of Hades, the kingdom of death, along this vertical axis of the great challenge to humanity to come to an understanding of the true nature of the 'I', of the human being.

At this time the scientific achievements in the field of atomic physics began. This was the exploration of the very foundations of matter, the atom, and the force of the nucleus. This, too, was a crisis of the centre, unleashing the forces of death in radioactivity and the possible annihilation of Earth existence.

1927 Big Bang Theory, first noted by Georges Lemaitre. Our cosmos originated from an atomic explosion.

1932 First cyclotron or "atom smasher" was invented by Ernest Lawrence.

1934 Induced radioactivity was created. [Radioactivity that is created when stable substances are bombarded by ionizing radiation]

1939 Albert Einstein wrote a letter to the then USA President, Franklin D. Roosevelt about the need to build an atomic bomb.

The atom is the basic building block of all matter, all physical existence. It is really a microcosmic image of the solar cosmos, reflecting the hermetic law of 'as above so below.' It has a centre-Sun-nucleus, an ordering and holding force, around which other bodies (neutrons) revolve based on this holding force of the centre. These orbiting bodies vary in number and speed and density and form layers of spheres around the nucleus called the "electron shells." The nucleus is composed of positive-charged protons and uncharged neutrons which should want to fly apart as they all have a positive charge, but they are held together by a powerful force. This is the nuclear force and one can say this is at least pointing towards what is called the "third force" in esotericism. Atomic research centered around the destruction of that nucleus of Uranium-235, called fission, which would unleash that nuclear force. This splitting or destruction of the nucleus was created by projecting a neutron to strike the nucleus with tremendous power. This would result in the shattering of the nucleus, releasing the powerful destructive force which held together the nucleus. This would then lead to a self-sustaining chain reaction as the neutrons from the splitting nucleus would strike nearby nuclei creating more fission. At a certain point a self-sustaining chain reaction and radioactive decay¹ occurs in a millionth of a second.² This, then, is the atom bomb. This initial discovery was made by nuclear physicists in 1938 in Berlin. It was eventually realized in the first atomic bomb by the Manhattan Project in the USA in order to beat Germany in the race for the creation of a warending weapon and world power. One of the great risks considered in the discovery of this chain reaction was the remote possibility that once the chain reaction began it would not stop until the whole Earth was destroyed. Experiments convinced the scientists that the risk was worth the outcome goal. This destruction of the nucleus was what Oppenheimer witnessed bringing the Bhagavad-Gita quote to his mind. Nuclear energy as used today is only the difference between an explosion, the uncontrolled chain reaction, and a controlled chain reaction, which in a nuclear power plant is slowed down, cooled down and managed to produce the energy but not the explosion. But in this process humans have created what nature did not, new more deadly elements which have never existed and are heavier than the decaying uranium, such as plutonium.

This unleashing of the nuclear force of the atom, that which holds the centre together, is also the crisis of existentialism, in its question of the meaning and nature, if any, of a centre in the human being. These questions are representative of the nature of Pluto. It is indeed a question of world-destroyer or the sublime splendour of a thousand suns. And as the existentialists state, the answer is up to the human being, not given by some outer authority. Here I would like to venture a comparison between the atom as cosmic image and the human 'I' as cosmic image of our solar system to bring perhaps some kind of answer to the question, am 'I' divine, spiritual, transcendent splendour or am I nothing, emptiness, world destroying? It is the question of the centre, of the 'I'. It is beyond opposites, beyond time. It rather strikes into eternity, the "heart" of the matter. Ultimately it addresses the question of Sun and Earth, of human existence into the future and the challenge of Pluto.

In Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science brought forward at the beginning of the 20th century, a surprising description is given of the Sun, the centre of our cosmos. Science defines the Sun basically as continual nuclear fusion eruptions. In fact, we think of the whole existence of our cosmos as the product of a great nuclear explosion, the Big Bang. Our Sun is seen as a material body of these powerful eruptions emitting light and heat and radiation.

Yet Steiner describes the Sun differently. He presents the Sun as "a hole," as "less than empty." Here is a new picture of our centre, not as an object, a "thing" in space but as "less than empty" non-space. It is rather a non-material transformational activity.

In astrosophy, the new wisdom of the stars as developed by Willi Sucher, the Sun is described as both centripetal and centrifugal.³ The Sun permeates the entire cosmos as both centre and periphery. In its centric activity, in the "emptiness," it transforms condensing cosmic substance that streams from the non-spatial periphery towards a centre, spiritualizing it. The spiritualized substance then re-appears as the peripheral, supra-zodiacal substance. There exists a continual interchange between periphery and centre.

One must try to picture this outside of a spatial concept alone, but rather the non-spatial periphery forces becoming spatial, a process of densification into matter and then transforming again, re-spiritualization in the centre to the periphery. This is a cosmic picture of the true nature of the 'I'. Our true 'I' is sun-like in its dynamic transformative capacity. It is a spiritual activity, not a thing.

What then is the Earth? The Earth is the home of matter, the densest location in our solar cosmos. One could imagine that there is a kind of earthly centric 'I', or ego which has the quality of thingness, of matter, and there is a solar 'I', or ego that is a transformative dynamic force. If we then take a further step in spiritual understanding of world evolution, even the evolution of the divine spiritual itself, one can consider that evolution brought about the potential for the Earth to unite itself with the Sun nature. This is the true purpose of the death and resurrection of the Christ as the union of the Sun 'I' with the Earth; a union that acts as a new force in the Earth and in the 'I', or ego of human beings.

Krishna/Christ became matter and transformed matter completely into a resurrected physical non-material form through this Sun force. Here we really have a new kind of radioactivity, which destroys matter but not as a force of death and annihilation, but as a force of transformation to a new dimension of existence beyond the material. The Earth is now in process of becoming a Sun due to this seed event. There is a different, non-death based, radioactivity at work. It is the key to our existential question. What is the nature of the human

being in its essence? As existentialism posits, *in absolute freedom, creating itself by itself*, what is the "itself" which is creating?

This brings us to the two natures of Pluto in the context of astrosophy, which bears both the deepest destructive will-force of the nucleus of matter as well as, if taken up by the human 'I', the full power to transform matter into spirit out of a higher will. This is what Pluto offers to humanity now as we have evolved to a consciousness of this sphere in modern times. If this force is not made conscious and understood, it can very likely lead to our destruction. The so-called evil side of Pluto would destroy this spiritual ego and the physical Earth which is necessary for the full development of this ego. Yet that destructive force can also serve as a motivator, an awakener to the higher transformative capacities within our own will through that very destruction. It is the great paradox of evolution... that the "evil" becomes the source of the good through the human being. However, it is our choice and that choice determines the manifestation of Pluto in the world as either world destroying or sublime creation of the future human. It is world karma that the old form of the self will be destroyed. Can it be transformed and resurrected in the new spiritual 'I AM'⁴ or disintegrated, like matter, like a nucleus fragmented. This depends on our freedom to choose, 'creating itself out of itself' with transformative Sun force or with an atomic annihilation.

We live in a world currently defined by either/or, by polarities, dualism, space, and linear time. Computer technology is the child of this binary consciousness. Uranus and Neptune are the spheres of this dualistic view when untransformed, which in esotericism is known as the two anti-force poles. Pluto brings in a third element, not part of the polarities, but as a centre point, working on the ego, even destructively.

If we look now at the starry positions of Pluto in world history, we can gain some further insight. One example is related to what I mentioned earlier with the axis of Gemini and Sagittarius and the struggle of identity, the nature of the human being. As a picture, one sees in Gemini the heavenly and earthly twins, a kind of polarity of the higher spiritual and the lower earth-bound human natures and the question of how the two are reconciled.

In Sagittarius one also finds a kind of polarity, but now within the human soul, in the struggle to arise as human out of the animal/centaur nature aiming with the bow towards our future becoming. Both are deeply related to the struggle to realize our true identity as the human being. At the time of the death and resurrection of the Christ, Jupiter stood in the Twins, opposite Pluto (as yet undiscovered) in Sagittarius. Just as Saturn is connected to the sphere of the "Father karma," so is Jupiter connected with the sphere of the Son and the future spiritual fulfillment of the Earth. Thus, at Golgotha, [the place of Christ's crucifixion] the Son forces of Jupiter stand above, opposite Pluto, the Ruler of Hades, in the lower realm of Sagittarius. In this configuration is a picture of the descent of the God into Hades to overcome the power of death as destruction and separation from the divine.

The location of Pluto at the time of its discovery was again in this Gemini/Sagittarius axis but in a special relationship to both Saturn and Jupiter. Every 20 years, the great planetary spheres of Jupiter and Saturn come into conjunction (called a 'Great Conjunction'). These are significant events, cosmically, being times of important evaluation and decisions around both the future vision for humanity as well as the reconciliation with the past and the divine plan and intentions for humanity into the future. It is like a conference in the cosmos asking us the question: how are we doing on this great path of evolution and what is now needed? At the time of Pluto's discovery, from 1930-31, Saturn and Jupiter were in a great opposition, three times, in the axis of Gemini/Sagittarius and Pluto was in this axis line, conjunct Jupiter and opposite Saturn. These great oppositions are a kind of preview and preparation looking ahead to the great conjunction. What happened in humanity at this time in addition to the discovery of Pluto and the science of atomic physics? The Great Depression, the Great Terror of Stalin began and most significantly, Nazism arose in Germany with Hitler becoming Chancellor in

1933. To explore this in its fullness would take us well beyond the focus of this article, but to bring these world events alongside the atomic research into splitting the atom and philosophical existentialism can present a powerful picture of a world in crisis at its centre with the very definition of our humanity being challenged.

An additional event was also unfolding based on esoteric knowledge as given by Rudolf Steiner, which adds an important element to our consideration. Steiner described, beginning in about 1933, a new manifestation of the cosmic Christ, not in the earthly physical realm, but in a spiritual dimension just at the border of physical sense perception. He called this the "etheric dimension." This new experience would mark the beginning of a transition from a matter-based spatial consciousness, or our centric point-based consciousness, to a new spiritual consciousness in the etheric dimension, or a peripheral consciousness.

Great opposition to this further spiritual advancement in humanity would be expected by those forces holding on to materialism. This is particularly evident in the emergence of Nazism and the havoc and destruction wrought by it on Europe where this new awareness was to be especially emerging. Also, the genocide implemented by the Nazis was a manifestation of this newly emerging third element of evil in the world. Pluto holds a key element to this new spiritual capacity as well as its destruction.... world-destroyer and the revelation of the splendour of the Mighty One.

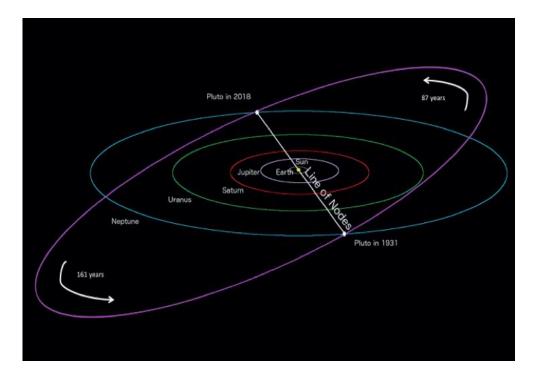
Now we come to the present. In 2019/2020 the planetary events of 1930 came to a further fulfillment with the Great Conjunction in December, 2020 at Christmas. The opposition of 1930 is an ancestor of this particular line of Great Conjunctions. This Great Conjunction was joined by Pluto, now opposite where it was in 1930 and all three planets were in the constellation of Sagittarius, the Centaur. Saturn was conjunct Pluto once and Jupiter conjunct Pluto three times before they came into their Great Conjunction just at the transition into the stars of Capricorn. This is a significant planetary configuration in history which leads to questions about the further manifestation of the destructive force of Pluto on the human 'I'. These are yet to be fully seen, but one can perhaps see the beginnings of that which would destroy the human ego and threaten earthly physical existence in current world events taking shape and the struggle for world power by the forces of materialism.

To add one more significant astronomical/astrosophical fact to these two positions of Pluto in 1930 and in our current times, we can look at heliocentric astronomy (with our sun at the centre).

As stated earlier, Pluto in its erratic orbit ascends far above the ecliptic plane and far below. Its orbit is also highly elliptical which accounts for the fact that only after about 90 years Pluto could have gone halfway around its orbit of 278 years (Pluto in the opposite constellation from 1930 in 2020). Its perihelion segment would take a much shorter time to complete than the long aphelion segment. As the image below shows, due to the extreme elliptical nature of Pluto's orbit, the arc through the section closest to the Sun, the perihelion, is much shorter than the long arc of the segment of the aphelion, away from the Sun. Thus it

takes much less time to travel the perihelion half from nodal point to nodal point, than the aphelion section of the orbit.

But importantly, during the time around 1930 and during the years around 2020, Pluto was passing through its nodes, which means that it was intersecting the ecliptic plane on its path. Pluto in its own ascending node around 1930s and in its descending node around 2020, would indicate a strong impactful relationship to the Earthly realm, as the nodes are like doorways or open portals between spheres. Pluto would be standing in a unique relationship to the Earth sphere in that it was in the intersection of the Earth's path around the Sun, the ecliptic path and its own orbital path. This would suggest a strong Plutonian element entering the Earthly sphere.



Though the entry of Pluto into our world consciousness, as well as the newer outer planets Uranus and Neptune, can provide a wide range of exploration, my intention with this article was to focus particularly on the relation of Pluto to the question of the "centre." By centre I mean the development of the atomic force in relation to the centre of the atom as microcosmic image of our greater cosmos as well as the essence of the great questions posed by existentialism as the emergent philosophy of that time. These are the questions of the human centre, the nucleus, the ego, and the great challenges facing humanity with regard to either its annihilation or destruction (or the destruction of the Earth on which the development of the ego depends). It is the challenge of the great task of the human to realize its spiritual nuclear force of transformation and resurrection out of the realization of the true I AM in each of us, the Solar self, the splendour of the Mighty One in us, which out of death creates new life.

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Endnotes

- 1. Radioactive decay or radioactivity is essentially the loss of energy by a nucleus, which of course occurs in an atomic explosion, which explodes a nucleus, releasing all of its energy and therefore releasing high levels of radioactivity. However, radioactive decay occurs when any atom nucleus is unstable and loses energy releasing particles, such as in alpha, beta and gamma rays. There are 28 naturally occurring elements that are radioactive. (Radioactivity is used in x-rays for example).
- 2. The fission of uranium, for example, produces more neutrons than it consumes. For every neutron captured by a Uranium-235 nucleus, between two and four neutrons are produced. As soon as a stray neutron bombards a Uranium-235 nucleus, fission will take place and three neutrons will be produced. These in turn will fission three more Uranium-235 nuclei, producing a total of nine neutrons. A third repetition will produce 27 neutrons, a fourth 81, and so on. This process is the chain reaction that escalates very rapidly. Within a few microseconds a very large number of nuclei fission, with the release of a tremendous amount of energy, and then in an instant a complete atomic explosion results. (from The Manhattan Project Critical Mass and Bomb Construction)
- 3. Centripetal force is the force pointing towards the center of a circle that keeps an object moving

- in a circular path, for example the way the force of the Sun keeps the planets in their orbits. The centrifugal force is the force ,or the sense of a force, that wants to pull away from a centre and expand outward or leave the centre pull.
- The "spiritual I am" is a complex topic, but it takes us again into the concept of centre and 4. periphery. The journey of life is the development on Earth of the sense of 'I am' by what we are not. Meaning, we develop the concept of self, of 'I am', as a centric point within looking out into the world, coming up against the external world, comparing our self to the other, and through this a sense of 'I am' develops. Think of the young child who hits its head on the table, and realizes he is other than the table. It is based on the basic idea: I am not that. I am me. This is the image of the Earth as centric point in space. The spiritual 'I am' is the transition to expanding the sense of I to the understanding that my 'I 'is of a universal quality. Hopefully this becomes the path in life during later maturity, once the sense of the separate self is fully developed, which is an important and necessary process of our becoming. One is not able to sacrifice the self to unite with the greater Self, if one has not developed a self to sacrifice. One can begin a process of identification with the world and others in a way that brings the experience that I am all that I have encountered. My 'I' is not separate but is one with the world. This is the peripheral 'I' experience or the Solar self in the sense of the non-spatial Sun. I am the world, the world is within me, not outside of me. It is this expansive experience of the 'I am' which can bring us to love all beings as part of us. In esoteric Christianity, this is the union and expansion of our individualized separated 'I am' with the greater universal cosmic I AM, who is the Christ being, the Sun Being.