

masculine, blue the feminine, and green the merging of the two. Words and letters also have significance in her work. The letters AO and WU respectively represent spiritual evolution and the duality of spirit and matter. The word avonwener written across the top of one of her paintings means “those who try to shed light on the earthlings” (*Hilma af Klint*, p. 42).

Many of Hilma af Klint's paintings (specifically in the Swan series) were the result of her study of polarities, as shown in her use of color, male and female figures, and the dual concepts of above and below (the connection between humanity and the universe), the stages of life, and the evolution of humanity.

The last group of paintings in The Temple series consists of three large paintings that are called altar pieces. Bernitz writes: “They were painted at the end of 1915 and, according to af Klint, they represented a ‘summary of the series so far’.” The paintings are heavily infused with Theosophical symbolism such as the triangle, the six pointed star, and the circle. These works depict Theosophical concepts of spirit descending into matter (involution) and matter ascending into spirit (evolution) — an unending cycle, the universal dimensions of time and space without beginning or end represented by the circle. The first painting, Altar Piece No. 1, may also depict the teachings of the seven rays as discussed in Blavatsky's, *Isis Unveiled* (1:514): “The Rosicrucian theory, that the whole universe is a musical instrument, is the Pythagorean doctrine of the music of the spheres. Sounds and colors are all spiritual numerals; as the seven prismatic rays proceed from one spot in heaven, so the seven powers of nature, each of them a number, are the seven radiations of the Unity, the central, spiritual SUN.”

Following The Temple series, Hilma af Klint's work became very geometric through the years 1916-1920. During this time she painted the Parsifal and Atom series and a set of paintings on the great religions of the world. The title “Parsifal” may refer to one of the Knights of King Arthur's Round Table who went in search of the Holy Grail, or in allegorical terms, spiritual knowledge.

The Atom series seems to be a working process to gain greater insight into duality principles and planes of existence. Hilma af Klint stated: “The atom has at once limits and the capacity to develop. When the atom expands on the ether plane, the physical part of the earthly atom begins to