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The Five Parts of the Self

Patrick Brady takes a GURPS-based look at the Tsolyáni psyche

The Tsolyáni believe that a person consists of five parts: the body (Bakte), the mind (Hlakme), the spirit (Baletl), the shadow (Chusetl) and "the Enemy" (Pedhetl).

These parts of the self are given fairly equal priority, so the model can be contrasted with the Terran viewpoint in which the mind and the shadow are just physical effects of the body.

The point is not just that there are different planes, but that you exist on five planes simultaneously. The physical and the mental are just different places. It is possible for the power of each self to change over time. A person can train their Bakte by exercise and their Hlakme by study. The Baletl is made strong by honourable action.

Enemy mine

The Pedhetl is close to the Freudian idea of the Id. It is a mindless mix of fears and desires and is considered to be the motivating force behind all human activity. The Pedhetl is the fire which burns inside every person, the primal need which gives him his drives. So an ambitious politician who also has "unusual" personal habits is just what you would expect. Without Pedhetl you are nothing; with too much you run the risk of burning out.

A strong Pedhetl is both a blessing and a curse. Characters can be designed with either High Pedhetl or Low Pedhetl, both as disadvantages.

High Pedhetl: -4 points/level

This is similar to Weak Will, but only when it applies to temptations. A person with a powerful Pedhetl is often not easily cowed, so it can be combined with Strong Will in other circumstances. The level of High Pedhetl reduces willpower for any situation dealing with self-indulgence, emotion or temptation. It also applies if these methods are used in support of Fast Talk. So, a person with a strong Pedhetl is difficult to intimidate but easy to tempt. This personality type combines well with Bad Temper, Fanaticism, Impulsiveness, Lecherousness and Addictions.

Low Pedhetl: -2 pts/level

This type of person is less susceptible to the temptations of the flesh, and so can combine levels of Low Pedhetl with Strong Will in such situations. Low Pedhetl is subtracted from any Sex Appeal, Carousing or Leadership roll and in any other circumstances that a lack of "fire" might influence. The person with weak Pedhetl is regarded as something of a "cold fish."

When you die, your Pedhetl is released back to the environment. This is one of the uses of human sacrifice, to provide a power surge for rituals.

Dream on

Everything is real somewhere. The Chusetl is the self that represents you in dreams. It is what reflects in a mirror or lies across the ground beside you in the sun. The Chusetl is normally linked to the physical body, but when the body and mind are asleep, the Chusetl is free to wander.

The travels of the Chusetl can take it anywhere. It can travel to places where ideas take on physical form. These are the planes associated with Lord Hr.í., mutable realms where the unreal is real. In such a place a concept might have a form and life of its own. This is why "sleeping on it" is valid using this model: the Chusetl is being sent out to do some research on the mutable planes. People who rely on intuition and imagination usually have a strong Chusetl.

The "reality" of the Chusetl is one of the reasons for the general sanity of the human race. Psychological pain will take the form of a visible injury to the Chusetl, making it easier to talk about and deal with. Advantages associated with a strong Chusetl could be Empathy, Intuition, and Artistic or Musical Ability. Applicable skills (Mental/Very Hard) are Lucid Dreamer and Spirit Quester.

Beyond the wall of sleep

A few people can maintain the link between mind and shadow-self when asleep. This permits lucid dreaming. A controlled lucid dreamer can use this ability to achieve astral projection. More common are those with marginal control of their dream selves. This allows interpretive or even prophetic dreams. (Think of *Twin Peaks*.)

Outside the Five Empires, the tribal shamans are famed for their use of lucid dreaming. Totem animal-spirits are creatures of the mutable planes. In those places they are real but, because they are dreams, they have little access to the mundane world. They have a limited link via their animal counterparts, however, and are willing to bargain with shamans for greater access.

The systematic use of trance-inducing drugs is also known. This is used for both therapy and training. A person's imagination, motivation and memory can be stimulated by a Spirit Quest. These can be extensive and complex. The Spirit Quest has two primary uses—firstly as remedial care, to deal with psychological problems and restore lost memories. Alternatively it can be used to rehearse events, stimulating the subject to solve upcoming problems.

Multi-person Spirit Questing is possible with a co-ordinating leader. The Spirit Quest might take the form of a descent into Téकुmel's mythical Underworld, there to do battle with an assortment of monsters and demons and face a range of moral challenges through which personal growth can come about. It is one arena for bizarre adventuring and has a number of practical applications.

Contacts and Patrons are possible on the shadow planes. Ancestral spirits, for example, may come back from the Isles of the Dead and accompany you on some journeys in the dream world.

Keeping the balance

It is possible for a person to lose all of their selves apart from their Chusetl and Pedhetl. In this case the person becomes an angry dream. If they also retain their Hlakme (intellect) they are one of the types of ghost, called a Nyelme. This is bad.

Energy is cheap on the shadow planes. The energy used to move the Chusetl is a fraction of that needed to fuel the physical body (Bakte). This is why entities like Nyelme reside on the dream planes—it reduces the drain on their remaining Pedhetl.

Sometimes a being retains its physical body after death but lacks a Chusetl. These are the unsleeping dead, the Mrur, favoured by the Temple of Sáрку. The Mrur have no access to the dream planes because they have lost that part of themselves.

Players must understand that the experiences of all five selves are equally valid. Just as the physical sensations of the body are real, so are the perceptions of the mind. The adventures of the shadow while your body sleeps are real events. As the body may go on a journey, so may the mind (intellectual development). The spirit's perception of humiliation is the same as pain to the body. It is therefore not rational for a Tsolyáni to accept loss of face to avoid pain or discomfort.

The acceptance of immaterial things as real is integral to the Tsolyáni world-view and provides a prime source of motivation. The Tsolyáni live in a world of omens and honour, where the unseen is as valid as the physical, where an insult is a wound and spirits can kill.