



The Upper Triad Material

Commentaries II

Edited by Peter Hamilton

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Commentaries II

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The Upper Triad Association is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit educational organization established in 1974 and devoted to the study and practice of various principles leading to personal and spiritual growth.

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The Full List of Upper Triad Books:

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The Upper Triad Material 3rd Edition

Articles	3 volumes
Commentaries	15 volumes
Miscellany	2 volumes

The Upper Triad Material 4th Edition

Introduction
1 Purpose
2 Consciousness
3 Truth and Reality
4 Karma
5 Knowledge
6 Religion
7 Manifestation

A Personal Journey 4th Edition

Through the Grace of God 1st Edition

Preface

The Upper Triad Association is a non-profit educational organization, formed in 1973 and formally organized in 1974 by a small group of Christian students dedicated to spiritual growth through the study and practice of various ethical, metaphysical, spiritual, and theosophical principles.

The Upper Triad Material is a collection of over 1,500 articles and commentaries, plus various prayers, mantras, meditation outlines, quotations, synthetic triangles, and keywords relating to various aspects of metaphysics, religion, philosophy, psychology, and theosophy.

Since 1974, the Upper Triad Material has been published and distributed incrementally through the sometimes monthly, sometimes bi-monthly Upper Triad Journal, and has been reprinted as needed in various forms, most recently in a series of topical issues that cover the entire range of material and through the Association's website.

The Upper Triad Material is written by members of the Upper Triad Association. There is generally no author attribution, as most of the material is evoked through prayer and meditation, and the writers have no need of recognition. The material is augmented by a number of articles written by and attributed to associate members, e.g., two series of articles by K.M.P. Mohamed Cassim and an article by Robert L. Moore.

The various articles are relatively easy to read. The various commentaries are relatively more technical and not as easy to read due to the style of writing and the numerous correlations suggested via parentheses. This style of writing is not contrived. Commentaries are simply written according to the flow of consciousness of the writer.

The commentaries are not intended for the casual reader, but for the more serious student who is willing to invest the time and attention to understand both the semantic context and meditative import. Neither articles nor commentaries are intended to be read in any intellectual sense. Many of the

commentaries are incidentally intended to discourage casual reading and to encourage a more deliberate-but-non-linear approach that allows and stimulates a more intuitive reading.

The Upper Triad Material is not prescriptive, but it is suggestive. It is what we understand, at the moment it is written. It is intended to stimulate constructive thinking and foster spiritual growth. Each thought may be accepted, deferred, or rejected, in whole or in part, according to the framework, perspective, values, and consciousness of the reader. The challenge is for the student to read the material meditatively and intuitively rather than intellectually. We believe that self-realization occurs not through any rational or intellectual process, but rather through grace and through the meditative quality of higher consciousness. In the final analysis, it is up to the reader to discern the truth, according to his or her own consciousness.

Third Edition

This third edition is organized functionally and chronologically, in three titles, namely Articles, Commentaries, and Miscellany. The articles are written without much regard for format or length. Commentaries are naturally constrained to one page as originally published. The miscellaneous material is fairly diverse, but complements the various articles and commentaries.

In this third edition, the material is presented with articles and commentaries numbered according to their original sequence, except in the case of some series, where there are intervening articles or commentaries that would disrupt the series, in which case the series of articles and commentaries are presented in their more natural order.

Notes

To the best of the editor's recollection, all of the material in Commentaries II was written by Upper Triad staff members.

More information on the Upper Triad Association and a complete index of the Upper Triad Material are provided in the Miscellany volume of this third edition and in the Introductory volume of the fourth edition.

Additional Caveat

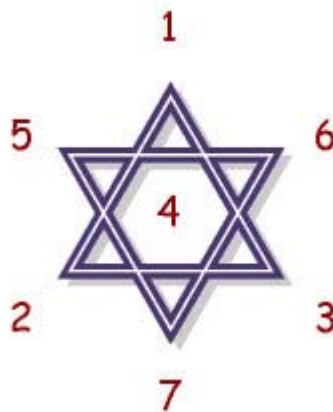
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There is a place, deep within the heart, where we touch God, and where God touches us, where human hearts achieve communion, with God, and with one another, there being no difference, no space between us.

The challenge, for human beings, is to find our way to that place. There are signs along the way, left by those who have passed this way and found that place.

In that place, there is no having, no doing, there is only being. What we have, thus has no hold upon us. And what we do, likewise. As stewards we have things. As servants we do things. But in God we are simply being.



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Harmony and Conflict

The present planetary evolution is conditioned or qualified by the fourth ray of harmony through conflict, as the planetary scheme is presently in its fourth round of the fourth evolutionary chain. The fourth ray is especially active in humanity, as the human kingdom is the fourth kingdom in the evolutionary sequence. But this quality of harmony through conflict is both abstract and implicit, indicating far greater significance and meaning than is normally understood of harmony and conflict.

The fundamental driving force of nature is the eternal pressure of evolution. This pressure (conflict) can manifest in various ways and through a wide range of intensity. Under fourth ray qualification, the pressure of evolution is quite intense, and the resultant manifestation of karma is more serious than gentle. Fundamentally, conflict is the evolutionary pressure and harmony is the evolutionary fulfillment. Harmony is balance, completion, and perfection; conflict is tension, pressure, and crisis, leading to harmony. The very state of incompleteness is a basic (internal) discord to be resolved.

The nature of harmony and conflict is further enhanced by the dualistic character of manifestation, as the pairs-of-opposites are faced and resolved. In this sense, harmony is balance (equilibrium) and conflict is contrast (tension between the polar opposites). The arena for evolution is a realm of extremes (poles) (choices) between (within) which the individual life (and group) must ultimately find balance (control) and stability. The path is one of moderation (guidance) between the extremes, a middle road leading to the gentle synthesis of contrasting elements. The various opposites are complementary (and illusory). Contrast is a necessary condition for evolution, without which there could be no progress; but pain and suffering need not be necessary. The contrast (tension) between the elements of the personality provides the struggle of integration (development); the contrast between the soul and the integrated personality provides the struggle of alignment. The contrast between the various major and minor planes (levels) (dimensions) of consciousness provides for evolution in consciousness. Conflict implies interaction (communication), and through lack of awareness that conflict (karma) can manifest as pain.

Harmony does not mean the avoidance of conflict; it means the transformation of conflict into a realm of intelligent and controllable contrast. Harmony is a means of approach and a method of resolution. If conflict (experience) is approached with harmony (self-control) (equilibrium), then the resultant progress is more significant and the extreme of pain will be unnecessary. Passive harmony is a metastable (vulnerable) condition of weakness. Active harmony is a condition of stability and strength. Harmony is not really the objective, but it can be an indication of the accomplishment of the objective which is the higher consciousness.

The highest human harmony comes in higher meditation (true contemplation) in which mentation (contrast) ceases in the equilibrium (serenity) of the soul. The lowest form of human conflict is that which may exist (externally) between groups or individuals. Conflict arises where lessons are not learned. Wherever human conflict exists, there exists the need for love, understanding, and intelligent resolution, that lessons might be learned and that harmony might prevail. There are lessons to be learned in every crisis and in every conflict, subtle or otherwise. As the unity (in diversity) of the human race is realized, through light and love, may conflict (illusion) be transformed and resolved into cooperative contrast (synthesis), and harmony (reality) manifested on Earth.

† Commentary No. 102

Psychology 1

Psychology is the philosophy and science of mind and behavior, and includes the analysis and evaluation of the individuality and the manner of its expression. Orthodox (academic) psychology generally considers the mind to be the source of a person's psychological constitution and expression. Metaphysical and esoteric psychology considers the soul to be the source (individuality) and the mind (personality) to be the mechanism for expression for the soul. But the soul is the interface between spirit and matter, and a great deal depends upon the relationship (relative balance or interaction) between the soul and its personality.

Modern psychology is primarily the psychology of the mind and the personality, treating the personality as being more or less self-contained and with some external influence or factors. As such, psychology is somewhat limited in its scope of effectiveness to persons who are living strictly on a personality level (as most do). Treating the personality as the center of consciousness, however, neglects the karmic factor and a world of internal causes (the soul) which is increasingly significant as consciousness evolves. When the relationship between the soul and the personality is properly recognized, then the science of psychology shall be much more useful.

A major key to the higher (esoteric) psychology is the nature of the seven rays and the relationship of the seven rays to the soul and to the personality. The basic premise of esoteric psychology (as applied to human nature) is that each element of the human being is qualified by one or another of the seven fundamental rays (qualities or energies). The soul ray qualifies the higher nature (atma-buddhi-manas) and the personality ray (provided the personality is relatively integrated) qualifies the lower nature (the mind, the emotions, and the physical body). As the individual evolves, the soul ray (the primary) comes to dominate (uplift) the personality ray (the secondary). Thus the character of the soul ray is manifested through the character of the personality ray.

Another key to metaphysical psychology is the degree of activity of and the relationships between the various psychic centers. There are seven major centers (chakras) within the human form; these centers may be active or inactive (or partially active), individually or collectively. The active centers may be under control or out of control (or somewhere in between), voluntarily or involuntarily. Each center contributes to the psychology of the individual. Improper psychic stimulation is the (intermediate) cause of many psychological (personality) disorders. With higher consciousness (based on experience and spiritual maturity) comes the understanding and control of the various centers (and oneself), so that (personality) resistance to the emerging energies of the soul is overcome and the nature of the soul is effectively manifested.

This mystical or metaphysical psychology is the science of consciousness, which considers all of these relationships and the effects of consciousness (or the lack thereof) on behavior. The conscious mind or waking-consciousness has a wide range of relative states of consciousness. The undeveloped, unevolved, or

undisciplined mind often works on an instinctual, subconscious, or self-centered level. The highly evolved (developed and disciplined) mind often works on an intuitive or super-conscious level. If the waking-consciousness can function in rapport with the soul, the infusion of energy (quality) can provide a very different (higher) domain for psychology to consider. It is the quality of consciousness that determines the degree of interaction between mind and soul (or inversely), as the greater consciousness is manifested.

† Commentary No. 103

Akshara Brahma Yoga

The eighth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Akshara Brahma Yoga, the yoga of the imperishable Brahman, the nature (mystery) of the eternal omnipresence. The internal (subjective) (symbolic) dialogue continues with Arjuna asking questions. Krishna responds by discussing the nature of Brahman, the nature of the Atman, and the meaning of karma. Also considered is the nature of death, symbolizing the end of the path of incarnations.

Karma is cause and effect, action and consequence, the force of creation, the origin and terminus of the universe. The Atman is the spirit of Brahman, the highest aspect of the human life; Brahman is the supreme, imperishable. The days and nights of Brahma appear as a vast (cosmic) wheel of time, through which the pulses of manifested life appear and disappear, a thousand ages of becoming. The greater life is as far beyond the wheel of time as the human consciousness is beyond that of the elemental atom. Beyond the unmanifest is another level of being (beyond becoming), one that does not descend into manifestation. The greater unmanifest is not unconsciousness; it is beyond consciousness, beyond relative existence. At the end of each age, the highest elements of manifestation are absorbed or abstracted by that which remains unmanifest and imperishable, while all else is dissolved. So it is also, in the parallel of the cosmos and the human soul, as the end of the (lower) spiritual path is achieved, and the soul returns no more to the lower worlds.

The quality of mind and consciousness at transition (death) bears upon the nature (ease) and extent of the immediate afterlife, but of far greater importance

is the totality of consciousness (quality) of the particular incarnation. Particular events and achievements are relatively unimportant. It is the overall quality of manifested consciousness that matters. Quality in consciousness leads inevitably to liberation (completion). As the thoughts of the student are fixed upon God and upon the path, the aspirant becomes the disciple and the eternal path is entered. It is in this respect that the Brahman is the sacred word within which the enlightened find their freedom.

Death (transition) is a bipolar phenomenon. The incarnating soul is born into the kingdom of the earth (matter), the temporal world of darkness, and simultaneously the soul dies with respect to the kingdom of light (spirit), the eternal world. The departing soul similarly dies to the lower world and is reborn into the higher. The departing soul takes one of two paths, depending upon karma and consciousness. As symbolized in the times and the seasons, the paths of darkness and light are the paths of return and no return, respectively. The path of return is the normal, inevitable path for most of humanity; the path of darkness is the path of reincarnation for further (human) experience, at a slightly higher turn of the evolutionary spiral.

One cannot avoid rebirth as long as karma remains unfulfilled or as long as consciousness (and experience) remains incomplete or insufficient. The path of no return is offered to the spiritual student who has passed through the higher stages of discipleship, who has seen and become the light that leads to perfection and freedom. Such a soul may return or not, according to the needs of humanity and the specific responsibilities of that soul within humanity. The temporal path (darkness) ever leads (slowly) to the path of perfection which in turn leads (more rapidly) to the path of light and cosmic absorption. The soul then becomes the monad and the eternal omnipresence (the world of being) is entered as the world of becoming (consciousness) is left behind. The son returns to the father as the pilgrimage into matter is completed.

Emotional Refinement

Emotional refinement may proceed concurrently with physical sublimation, though the effectiveness of the emotional purification effort is somewhat dependent upon progress or achievement in physical purification. As the foundation of physical refinement is developed, increasing attention can be directed to emotional control and the transformation of the desire nature. The physical concern should then begin to fall below the threshold of consciousness; for the mind that is fixed upon lesser things unnecessarily is distracted from that which is of greater importance.

The real problem of the emotional (astral) (desire) body in many aspirants is lack of self-control. Emotions tend to be unrestrained by the mind and tend to function rather independently. Emotions (feelings) (desires) that remain undisciplined are subject to external influences (such as the emotions of other persons and other factors in the emotional atmosphere). Negatively polarized (passive) emotions must be controlled and uplifted if they are to be useful in any positive (constructive) (active) sense. Emotional extremes definitely distract the waking-consciousness from its task, and emotional stability must be achieved before the quality of emotion can be increased. Unrefined emotions also contribute to the (serious) problem of glamour (illusion on astral levels).

The mind is the instrument of discipline for the lower faculties, and it is through deliberate (and intelligent) mental effort that the emotions can be calmed, controlled, and purified. The aspirant should be aware of the emotional nature, so that emotional weaknesses (instability, lack of control, lack of purity) can be recognized and dealt with. It is in this respect that the exercise of retrospection is especially helpful (in training the mind to recognize and transform weaknesses into strengths). Emotional control should be neither rigid nor uncomfortable, for the spiritual student needs to maintain flexibility if further tasks are to be faced. With increasing self-control, the conscious mind can uplift and transform the coarse, selfish, and mostly personal emotions into refined, purified, unselfish, and relatively impersonal emotions. The highest form of emotion is the quiet spiritual aspiration and its concomitant manifestation of humanitarian (impersonal) love. Undisturbed by emotional

conflict or the glammers of the personal life (selfishness), the controlled (calmed and disciplined) and purified emotional body is then an effective instrument for the higher self.

Many of the lesser emotions to be transformed into the higher emotions are relatively easy to recognize; fear, anger, hatred, selfishness, and desire (in its many forms) must each be elevated into higher and controlled qualities. But there are also many glammers and emotional deficiencies that are subtle and not so easy to realize. That which appears to be sensational or phenomenal (anything that is based upon emotional appeal rather than merit) is of no real interest to the spiritual student. Excitement and emotional enthusiasm are indications of the lack of emotional discipline and mask more subtle problems.

But the time comes when the emotions are reasonably well-controlled and purified, so that the student can turn the attention toward mental purification. The aspirant can then become the disciple. The disciple is not one who is above standards of physical or emotional refinement; the disciple is one who has achieved such refinement and need no longer be consciously concerned, for the required standards are maintained automatically. The desires of the emotional self have been (mostly) transformed (eliminated) in the disciple, who is then free to focus outwardly toward humanity and inwardly toward the one soul.

† Commentary No. 105

Esoteric Economics

Esoteric economics is the science of energy production, distribution, and consumption (dissipation). The source of energy is the logos (God) who releases and directs (with purpose) a finite amount of energy (life) during manifestation. Since the purpose of the logos is evolution, the energy of manifestation must be directed, transformed, manipulated, and distributed for (relative) effectiveness, that purpose might be fulfilled.

From the highest plane of consciousness to the lowest, and from the center of the logos to its ring-pass-not (the periphery of local manifestation), countless (internal) lives play various economic roles in support of manifestation (creation,

experience, and dissolution) (differentiation, interaction, and integration) (concretion, expression, and abstraction).

Greater (superhuman) intelligence is concerned with the energy transport and transformation from cosmic (logoic) levels (and relative sources) to human (soul) levels and directly to the elemental (subhuman) lives. The lesser (elemental) lives are utilized in the energy domain by human and superhuman intelligence, from the standpoint of consciousness and consequence. At each stage of the energy transport sequence, the energy is prepared (qualified) by differentiated purpose. The initial ray of life (God) (manifestation) becomes seven (horizontal) rays and seven (vertical) planes, and each septenate differentiates further. Each of the rays is a relative source given to the production (horizontal transformation) of qualified energy. Each of the atomic sub-planes is a relative source given to the vertical transformation of specific energy (quality). The first, highest, most pure plane (or sub-plane) (at whatever level) is called atomic (fundamental). Each atomic plane transforms vertical energy (from a higher relative source) into both horizontal and vertical planar manifestation. The rays and planes are thus polarized ninety degrees apart (forming an interlocking matrix or energy web) and together constitute the entire (energy) structure of manifestation for all evolutionary and involutory units of life.

Following the production (availability) of energy come distribution and consumption. Distribution (on any level) implies interaction (communication), the activity of evolution. There is a ceaseless sharing (projection and reception) of energy among all rays, planes, and lives as each functional unit finds its place, and as relationships are established. Vertical relationships are a function of the (involuntary and evolutionary) nature and polarity of the unit. Horizontal relationships are more concerned with experience and expression on some particular level. Ultimately, consumption (realization) is achieved and the energy is no longer in the field. It is this ultimate release of energy into the isotropic (irretrievable) void that demands responsibility.

Energy cannot be lost in the absolute sense, for all is recovered (in an esoteric fashion) by the logos during (universal) pralaya (the interval between cosmic incarnations): but the energy that is beyond access due to fulfillment (or due to waste) is, for practical purposes, lost. In order to achieve the intended fulfillment, energy must be considered (at all levels) in the economic sense.

Intelligent (conscious) cooperation with the divine plan requires responsibility and wisdom, that energy might be utilized properly (constructively and efficiently). The practical aspect of (spiritual) energy conservation (usefulness and effectiveness) in human terms, is the passage of energy from soul levels to (purified) personality levels where the energy can be shared with humanity in practical (concrete mental and aspirational) form.

† Commentary No. 106

Humility

With every consideration of a virtue come the questions of what it is and how it may be expressed. Humility is perhaps the most difficult of virtues to understand and to manifest, and yet it is one of the most essential of qualities expected of the spiritual student. Humility is a key with which many gates along the path are opened, where otherwise the student would be denied passage. It is indeed an elusive quality; by its very nature there can be nothing artificial or pretentious about it, and even the sense of humility can be quite deceptive. A foundation of selflessness and honesty is without substitute in any quest for humility.

In the popular sense, humility implies virtue and weakness; in the spiritual sense it implies virtue and strength. But is humility a positive quality (virtue) or is it the absence of a negative quality? Can humility be possessed or can it only be expressed? To analyze humility is to entertain complexity; to experience humility is to realize its beauty and its profound simplicity. It seems to be a synthesis of qualities and can only really be defined indirectly. To be humble is to be free from pride, disdain, arrogance, assertion, ostentation, self-centeredness, selfishness, and separateness. As a synthetic quality, humility is closely related to love and wisdom. Humility is, in a sense, a prerequisite for the higher, impersonal love (or is love a prerequisite for humility?), and can be considered an intermediary between love and wisdom. The love and wisdom, courtesy and reverence, of the truly humble person is incomparable. Needing no recognition, and leaving pride and glamour behind, the humble student of life can safely proceed with the work to be done (service without attachment). But

where is the source of this synthetic quality? Is it not within the humble nature of the soul itself?

True spiritual humility is a majestic soul quality; with it comes the realization that all selves are equal, regardless of appearance. There is nothing submissive or degrading about the humble state; the humble student is neither lowly nor insignificant, for God is recognized within all (including self). The humility required for salvation eliminates any sense of superiority or inferiority; there is naught but a sense of inner equality as all others are seen in a balanced perspective. In fact, even the sense of otherness is incompatible with true humility. Through the balancing of head and heart, the spiritual student can experience the reality of identification with all of humanity in a sea of oneness. God is seen to live equally through all things, and any sense of separateness or superiority (or inferiority) is not in harmony with the greater life.

If humility can be realized or achieved in consciousness, how can the depth of humility be extended into the daily life? Is it not a matter of soul and personality and their relative strengths? A degree of humility in personality is required for the union of self, since humility is a natural expression of the spiritual self, and that quality draws the personality unto the soul. And it is the personality that must ultimately bear the expression of that greater self.

As the crowning virtue, humility is an indication of the active presence of the spiritual self (the soul) and its concomitant expression (manifestation) of inner (quiet) strength and confidence. It is the release (purification and upliftment) of the proud and separative lower self and the openness to spiritual quality that paves the way toward active humility. Humility cannot be made; it can only be allowed as the common bond of divine life (love) is realized and as the foundation of spiritual equality is established.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy which considers the nature and grounds of knowledge, especially with respect to the limits and validity of knowledge. The domain of epistemology includes the triplicity of the knower, the field of knowledge, and knowledge itself. The various types of knowledge and the means through which knowledge is acquired are also considered, as well as the relativity of knowledge.

Knowledge might be divided into two broad categories according to quality and means. Primary knowledge is relatively universal (sacred) and based upon an understanding of spiritual causes. Secondary knowledge is relatively particular (profane) and is lacking the spiritual factor. Primary knowledge is knowledge (realization) gained through the spiritual intuition which relies upon the activity (consciousness) of the soul. Secondary knowledge is gained through the intellect and based upon the activity of the concrete (rational) mind. Primary knowledge is qualified by the second ray (love-wisdom), while secondary knowledge is qualified by the fifth ray (science and the concrete mind).

There are subtle differences between knowledge, truth, and wisdom, though the three are certainly interrelated (and sometimes interchangeable). Knowledge implies information and the domain of the mind. Truth implies a degree of consciousness (quality) and realization. Wisdom is a combination of experience and consciousness, leading to a state or capacity for manifestation. Knowledge is of preliminary concern to the spiritual student, for the goal which is wisdom requires a foundation of knowledge. And it is through the spiritual path that knowledge is transformed by experience into wisdom. The seeking of knowledge is a prelude to the path of consciousness. Such seeking is the lower aspect of the urge to wisdom, the urge to perfection in consciousness; but the seeking must ultimately end, as being is attained.

One of the classical questions about knowledge and consciousness concerns the existence of absolute and relative knowledge. Absolute or ultimate knowledge is perfect, pure, and unquestionable. But as such, absolute knowledge is beyond the human intellect, for human consciousness (the instrument) is rather less

than perfect. One of the esoteric keys to life is the relativity of truth and knowledge. Through the extension (projection and upliftment) of human (soul) consciousness, there can be reached threads or glimpses of greater knowledge, but even that level is not absolute knowledge. True realization is of greater dimension than the human mind, and that concrete mind would still be a limiting factor. The existence of a cosmic mind (principle) does not really imply the existence of absolute truth. Is absolute truth absolute? Can that which is finite reach that which is infinite or transfinite?

Another similar concern is the nature of faith and knowledge, and the possibility of proof (certainty). The ultimate question in this regard is what can possibly be proven one to another. And in the eternal domain, is not faith as meaningful as scientific (objective) knowledge (knowledge that is based upon the illusions of material existence)? The wise seek not the demonstration of validity (though concrete knowledge is of considerable value), for it is only the internal knowledge and understanding that can attain certainty. All of the assumptions upon which knowledge is based are relative, and the very illusions upon which objective experience is founded make absolute certainty an impossibility. Certainty can only be relative (which implies paradox). Truth can be accepted and knowledge can be tendered, but truth cannot be proven, one to another; truth can only be experienced and realized subjectively.

† Commentary No. 108

Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga

The ninth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga, the yoga of the sovereign (royal) science (knowledge) and mystery, the royal secret, the yoga of mysticism. Considered is the heart-centered path of aspiration and devotion (bhakti yoga) and the relationship of the heart (the love aspect) to God. The royal (deeper) secrets are available to those who have prepared themselves through the purification of heart and mind. Knowledge blended with love leads to wisdom (realization). But without proper preparation, truth cannot be easily discerned, since the glammers and illusions of the mundane world tend to mask truth so that the secrets of life remain hidden from profane consideration. But the path of devotion leads ultimately to

realization and spiritual responsibility. Those who have found themselves (those who have truly found the inner path) (those who truly recognize the love nature and its relationship to God) embark upon the path of becoming themselves (as they become one with God in consciousness).

God-consciousness is akin to self-knowledge, for that which is above (beyond) is reflected into that which is below (within). As the spiritual aspirant comes to know himself in depth, the keys to the various mysteries are found. The macrocosmic God (immanent and transcendent) is the origination (projection), maintenance (sustaining force), and the termination (ultimate manifestation) (synthesis) of the universe, while the microcosm (the life of the human being) is a divine monad, soul (sustaining force), and personality (manifestation). The keys to the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm are found within (the realization of the nature of) the soul. The soul is the aspect of consciousness, and it is through aspiration that the waking-consciousness is elevated into the soul. Without spiritual aspiration the personality would not be able to harmonize with the soul; such harmony is a prerequisite for the alignment of the lower self with the higher.

One of the keys to the path of love is the passage beyond desire (the achievement of complete and divine attunement). The worship of lesser things leads to greater entanglement and distraction. The worship (recognition) of (identification with) that which is greater (the one God) leads to perfection and freedom. Those who are satisfied with intermediate levels expend their merits and return to the mundane, for they have not found the eternal path. Love and devotion are keys to the purified and integrated self and a total commitment to the spiritual path. The rewards of loving devotion are varied and many, but all are related to the spiritual self. True, impersonal devotion and aspiration lead to purity, sincerity, humility, and honesty. The path of aspiration leads to the path of service and unselfishness.

Deeds (tasks) performed not for the self, but for God (and humanity) are deeds of love, an offering of the all, so that the lesser values fall into minor significance. Tasks performed for oneself and tasks performed in a personal manner lead to a greater absorption in the mundane world (the physical, emotional, and mental (but not spiritual) realms). The goals of the spiritual way are life (spiritual strength), love (spiritual consciousness), and light

(spiritual realization and comprehension), and the encouragement and sharing thereof. Neither knowledge nor (temporary) happiness is the goal.

The way of salvation (perfection) is to strive to do one's best, to live up to the truth within, to allow the God within (Christ) (love-nature) to flow and manifest freely. Such is the greatness of the eternal path of aspiration, bhakti yoga; and such is the implication of the sovereign mystery.

† Commentary No. 109

Mental Discipline

The real key to the successful purification of the lower self (the personality) is mental discipline; it is the impression of the mental activity upon the physical and emotional nature that evokes sublimation and integration. Without a strong and disciplined mind it would be difficult to encourage and achieve the cooperation and alignment of the physical and emotional nature with the mental nature. Without the will, determination, purpose, and reasonableness of the mind, the resistance of the lower self would preclude integration.

So it is in the early going of probationary effort that the mind is used to guide the emotions and the physical instrument and to impress upon them the goal or purpose intended. But as the physical body and the emotions become more and more responsive to the mental influence, the more important it is to have the mind self-disciplined. When the mind becomes strong and influential (with respect to the personality), the mental deficiencies become amplified in their effects upon the lower nature. A careless thought, for example, can encourage emotional distraction or even physical vulnerability, so long as the lower self is responsive to the mental activity (as it must be if integration and alignment are to be achieved). So mental discipline must be maintained if the soul is to properly express itself through an integrated personality.

The concrete mind must be purified and disciplined, or else the mind will become too strong and independent (as is its nature) and unresponsive to the soul. The mind is potentially one of the greatest (internal) aids and at the same time is potentially quite a hindrance to the spiritual path. The disciplined and

elevated mind is a great asset to an incarnating soul; the independent and unresponsive mind is one of the most difficult obstacles to be faced by the soul. Where the mind is relatively weak, the emotions are usually quite a problem. But in the later stages of probationary effort, it is the mind that must be dealt with, that its separative and critical tendencies might be transformed into a unified (coherent) and spiritually responsive mechanism. The mind is presently the primary instrument of experience intended for humanity, but the mind must be tamed and harnessed to be useful.

It is the critical nature of the mind that presents difficulties well into the path; but even opinions must ultimately be dissolved as the lower mind is uplifted into the higher, and as mental attachments are transformed into freedom and realization. The observational and analytical capability of the mind can be turned inward, so that the mind is aware of the state (quality) of mind. Through that awareness the mind can be trained and programmed for self-discipline. The disciplined mind that is free from attachment is a mind that can respond easily to the higher, internal guidance and express the soul energies through the personality quite effectively. The outward (objective) mental capabilities are then magnified in usefulness.

A key to proper mental discipline is the balance of the head (mind) and the heart (the higher emotions and the intuition). Neither unrestrained emotion nor an undisciplined mind is of much use to the soul. But where the head and the heart work together, being mutually and coherently responsive to the soul, then there is achievement leading to effective discipleship. It is the purified heart (the mystical nature) that can temper the mind and keep the mental nature from the distractions and illusions of independence. As unnecessary illusion and independence are overcome, the reality of interdependence and true freedom is made manifest. With continued mental discipline and an integrated personality, the work of the soul can proceed without hindrance.

The Teleological Universe

A teleological universe is a universe in which purpose is implied. For practical purposes the local universe can be considered to be the solar system (its physical and superphysical structure), since the cosmic unit of evolution is the solar logos. The aura of the solar logos extends somewhat beyond the physical periphery of the solar system, but it is within that aura that the element of purpose is impressed in various ways upon all that exists. The purpose of the logos is the first ray aspect of the trinity, which is life.

One of the most significant aspects of the energy field of the solar logos is preservation. Without the sustaining force that is impressed upon the structure of the system, the entire system (and all of the manifesting lives) would dissolve, as it must when purpose is fulfilled and the experience of manifestation is abstracted. Without that sustaining force (consciousness), even matter as it is presently known could not exist. God the preserver is logioic consciousness which qualifies every atom within the system, holding each in place by the will and purpose of evolutionary intent. While creation leads to preservation (and unfoldment) and preservation leads ultimately to abstraction (dissolution), it is the lengthy preservation stage in which the major work of evolution (purpose) is accomplished.

The various aspects of the logioic purpose are impressed upon the various planetary schemes (lives) and the septenary cycles of evolutionary activity. The will of the logos manifests also through the various laws that are (indirectly) the consequence of that will. The laws that govern local manifestation are not imposed directly, but come about as the universal structure responds (involuntarily) to the superimposed thought-form of the logos. The logos (through lesser lives) creates the archetypes (ideas) from which the forms of evolution are developed. Each archetype has its place in the grand evolutionary scheme. It is the very lack of harmony between the archetype and the physical or superphysical form that is being developed, that generates an additional urge to completion (harmony) (fulfillment of purpose).

There is a vast and complex pattern for evolution on every conceivable level, from the elemental and atomic lives through the logoc and cosmic lives. And that pattern must account for the development of forms and the unfoldment of lives so that consciousness may be cultivated and naturally expanded. The evolutionary plan for each scheme contains general and particular guidelines and provisions for local adaptation. Even the appearance of spontaneity (brought about by subtle forces) and the obvious trial and error (within boundaries) of certain lives (especially human) has its place in the evolutionary pattern. The pattern contains ample opportunity for (relative) innovation (epigenesis) and freedom, though such is related to the overall logoc purpose and intention.

From the natural laws which govern the atomic and molecular building blocks to the cosmic laws qualifying the unfolding lives on every level of manifestation, the purpose implied within universal structure remains the only real reason for existence. The purpose of each higher life is impressed upon the lesser lives through which the greater is manifested, so that even the elemental lives (atoms) are sustained by the purpose implied by the creator. Even the physical human form (which is composed of many lesser lives) is sustained by the will, consciousness, and purpose of the human soul, without which the form would cease to have any real meaning. The physical structure of the local universe is but the lowest aspect of the form for experience and expression of the logos.

† Commentary No. 111

Paths of Approach 1

The approach of the individual to the spiritual path generally falls into one or the other of two categories, depending on temperament. One path is essentially mystical or heart-centered; the other path is essentially head-centered or occult. The true mystic is characterized by love, devotion, and aspiration; the true occultist is characterized by light and understanding. Important points on either path of approach are motive and intention. Both the head-centered nature and the heart-centered nature can be applied to selfish purposes or to spiritual purposes. The true occultist is as much a servant of God as the true mystic; and the untrue mystic can be as selfish as the most self-centered occultist. But

where motive and intention are basically unselfish, then each of the two paths of approach leads into the spiritual path.

The heart-centered (mystical) path of approach leads directly onto the spiritual path, for great is the power of aspiration. The mystical path is basically spiritual, and it is the heart-centered student who becomes the spiritual aspirant. Where the aspirant is polarized emotionally, the path of approach and the subsequent probationary period can be quite lengthy. Where the aspirant is mentally polarized (but still governed by the heart-centered nature), the path of approach and the probationary period are relatively short. The emotional aspirant must develop the head-centered nature and balance the head with the heart before discipleship can be attained. The mentally polarized aspirant is simply better prepared for the tests and trials of probation and discipleship, and finds less difficulty in achieving the required balance.

The head-centered (occult) path of approach may or may not lead into the spiritual path. The occult path is the path of knowledge; knowledge can only lead into the spiritual path where knowledge is transformed into realization, through consciousness. The path of the seeker (the head-centered student) (the occultist) may be never-ending and fruitless; or it may gradually lead into spiritual matters as the objects of seeking are left behind, as spiritual values are realized, and as the complementary heart-centered nature is unfolded.

The emotionally polarized seeker usually faces the longest path of approach, having to deal with two significant hurdles: the undisciplined emotional nature and the self-centeredness of the unbalanced head. Even the mentally polarized seeker finds the way not easy, for the rational mind can be a formidable opponent for the soul, whereas the mind (head) that is aligned with the heart-centered nature is much more likely to respond to the intuitional guidance of the soul. But where the seeker does turn toward the spiritual path, the mind becomes a powerful instrument for constructive spiritual work, and more so as the heart-centered nature is developed.

For the aspirant and for the seeker, the transition from the path of approach onto the probationary path is based upon realization and commitment. The soul makes the commitment, and the personality comes to realize that commitment. The realization and cooperation of the personality may not be immediate; the

path of approach may well be a battle and a struggle between the overshadowing soul and its reflection, the proud and independent personality. The unrelenting personality may continue the struggle (on subtle levels) long into the spiritual path proper, but eventually the soul gains the upper hand and the personality becomes subservient and responsive to spiritual purpose and higher guidance. The particular path of approach along which the student has traveled remains an influence well into the path, even though both the head and the heart may be nicely developed and properly balanced.

† Commentary No. 112

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is that branch of philosophy which considers beauty, the nature of that which is beautiful, the ideal of art. Each human being is endowed with some sort of aesthetic sense, depending on experience, consciousness, and temperament. That sense may be entirely human, being based within a wide range of human (personality) values; or it may approach the divine, being based upon more spiritual or universal values, where the aesthetic sense of the soul is manifested through the lower self.

The aesthetic sense may be weak or strong, pure and noble, or relatively crude. A weak aesthetic sense indicates indifference to that which is beautiful or harmonious; a strong aesthetic sense may indicate exaggerated values and the various problems of luxury. The basis of a strong aesthetic sense is the inner urge to perfection, and it is that inner urge that (if misplaced) can manifest through the unaligned personality as an urge to wealth and luxury (through glamour) (which implies superficial or temporal values). The drive toward increasing quality (consciousness) should be properly balanced with practical and humanitarian values. The true, pure aesthetic sense (moderation) is more concerned with beauty, nature, perfection, and harmony, without attendant glamour. Where mostly spiritual values are present in the waking consciousness, the aesthetic urge is turned toward God, virtue, and wisdom.

A pure aesthetic sense normally invokes cleanliness and neatness, both internally, in form (appearance) as well as in consciousness. The physical,

emotional, and mental surroundings and atmosphere of the individual (and group culture) are quite pertinent. Where there are beautiful and harmonious surroundings, that quality is induced within the human consciousness, in accordance with responsiveness and appreciation (openness to positive quality). Where the surroundings are not really attractive, then the student must turn inward for encouragement. The higher aesthetic sense is one in which God is perceived in all forms and in all lives, regardless of appearance. In such beauty is the basis of faith.

The realm of aesthetics encompasses idealism, with respect to human relationships and with respect to the artistic expression. Ideal human relationships are those which are constructive, cooperative, and harmonious. In a sense, the purpose of human life on earth is the cultivation of right human relations. The role of artistic expression is definitely related to human experience and development, and to the link between that which is human and that which is divine. Ideally, the various arts should contribute quality (spiritual inspiration) to the human experience, leading humanity from the imperfections and disorders of the lower life toward the perfection (perfect order and harmony) of the greater life and consciousness.

The quality of the greater life is evident within the natural beauty of manifestation, in the proportions of nature, and in the symmetry, rhythm, and balance of the universe on every level. The urge to perfection in the higher life is reflected in the creative and artistic impulse within human consciousness. The apparent inconsistencies of the lower life can lead to the frustration of imperfection; but where the beauty of life is realized with appreciation, the perspective is healed and inspiration is received. The appreciation of natural beauty (freedom from glamour) is essential to the refinement and upliftment of human nature. In harmony there is health and progress; in the alignment of the lower self (personality) with that which is truly beautiful (the God within all) comes encouragement onward and upward.

Vibhuti Yoga

The tenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Vibhuti Yoga, the yoga of the glory (power) of God, the yoga of divine manifestation, the yoga of heavenly (universal) perfection. Considered are the source of manifestation, the nature and role of the path of devotion (bhakti yoga leading to buddhi yoga), and clarification of the presence of God in all things. Krishna represents and personifies God Manifest-unmanifest while Arjuna remains the spiritual aspirant seeking yoga (union) with the Godhead.

The source or origin of all manifestation is a singular life (God), the supreme being; the beginning, the duration, and the end of all. God is manifestation and that which is beyond manifestation. God is timeless, for duration is only a fragment of conscious existence. God is the One which embraces the all (one is an infinite number, viewed as a singular totality). As manifestation proceeds, existence is differentiated, while God remains unborn and timeless. From simplicity comes complexity, yet each remains a valid perspective and complement. Differentiation does not imply fragmentation or separation; it does imply a perspective through which the work of evolution can be fulfilled, an appearance through which lessons are learned and new qualities are evolved. The end of differentiation (manifestation) implies the beginning of integration (though the universal structure or pattern ever remains integrated), especially as far as consciousness is concerned.

The path of yoga is the path of integration of consciousness; as the knowledge of God increases, the integration of the individual is achieved and communion with God becomes possible. The higher the recognition of truth, the greater becomes the freedom from all sins (glamours) (illusions) (independence) (the delusions of phenomenal or separated existence). To know God is to become attuned to greater values and greater purpose, and it is through yoga (the integration of the fragmented personality and the alignment of the integrated personality with the soul) that the divine knowledge comes. Reality can only be experienced through the higher self (the soul) (the true intuition, not astral or sense impression) as a consequence of constant and eternal meditation, a subjective temperament that overshadows all objective activities.

It is said that God dwells in the heart, as the innermost self; thus it is that a man must know himself well before much progress along the path can be made. The path of bhakti yoga embraces the communion of the innermost self through aspiration and devotion. Through intelligent aspiration, the student achieves purification, understanding, and wisdom. Aspiration leads to buddhi yoga, the manifestation of the wisdom of the soul, but much depends upon the quality of the heart and the quality and responsiveness of the mind. One of the keys to the transition between bhakti yoga and buddhi yoga is the recognition of the glory of God; as the presence of God is realized in all things, the inner (and the outer) communion with God (and with nature) is enhanced.

The power (glory) of the Godhead embraces all that is sentient or insentient; through the many and various attributes of God comes elucidation of the essence of God. Dwelling upon the attributes leads to eventual absorption within the divine. The student is encouraged to emphasize the fundamentals and the structure of life (manifestation), rather than the details. For all manifestations (complexities) are limitations; all revelations are partial; and details are unending (infinite). Details alone are of little significance, but in the patterns of life comes comprehension. In simplicity there is beauty; and in beauty there is truth.

† Commentary No. 114

Sexual Sublimation

Sexual sublimation is the effort to refine and uplift the lower creative forces into their higher correspondences. The goal is the attainment of certain freedoms: freedom from sexual need, freedom from distracting physical and emotional sensation, freedom from the waste of propagative (creative) energy, and freedom to use such energy constructively according to spiritual purpose. The attainment of sexual freedom is one of the most difficult, for the way to success is a delicate and gradual balancing of internal forces.

The way of sexual frustration or suppression is definitely to be avoided, as that tends to create serious psychological problems. The proper way is based upon common sense and the alignment of the lower self with natural and higher

forces. Sexual sublimation is actually more natural (though difficult) than the sexual activity of most of humanity. But the way of sexual sublimation requires understanding as well as preparation and complementary spiritual efforts.

Sexual force is essentially spiritual (creative) force that has been passed through the sacral center (chakra) (one of the seven primary psychic or energy centers within the human form) and released through physical (sexual) activity. The proper and natural intention of such activity is procreation (not sense gratification), to provide opportunities for incarnation to souls who are magnetically attracted to the union. But many have been misled by sensation (entanglement), so that sexual activity is applied to personal and temporary ends. Many have become absorbed (mentally and otherwise) by such activity and have acquired (artificial) sexual dependence. But it is that same spiritual force that is the true creative force, required by the higher self for greater purposes. The spiritual student cannot properly develop and apply the creative mind when so much of the spiritual force is indiscriminately released.

The way of sexual sublimation is one with expansion of the human creative potential. Beginning with moderation and with the placing of greater emphasis upon spiritual matters, the spiritual student can gradually and quite naturally withdraw the spiritual force from nonessential or wasteful purposes and apply that force creatively and constructively. The key to success in this endeavor is mental discipline (balance) and the proper release of accumulated energies. Instead of lacking control of the creative force, the soul can then control and safely intensify the creative potential. This does not mean that the spiritual student must become and remain celibate, for the activity of controlled procreation even for highly evolved (and married) disciples can be appropriate. But it does mean that the student must eventually free himself from sexual need and personal sensation (distraction).

The student who is naturally and comfortably celibate may have attained sexual freedom in an earlier incarnation. The way of sexual sublimation is relatively easy where two (married) spiritual students, expressing themselves through opposite sexes, are able to uplift their love for each other, gradually from physical and emotional (personal) levels to mental and intuitive (impersonal) levels, ever concerning themselves with constructive and creative humanitarian and spiritual work. It is more difficult, but not impossible, for the

single student to attain sexual freedom. The results of sexual sublimation include an expanded spiritual potential (and consciousness) as well as opportunities to attract highly evolved souls into incarnation through the marriage relationship. The student who has been able to properly devitalize (control) the lower psychic centers should have far greater control of the higher centers, resulting in greater opportunities and spiritual responsibility.

† Commentary No.115

The Power of Love

Man must eventually learn that within his being is a spark of divinity, a God or Christ within, and that spark is characterized by love. Only through the application of that inner love-wisdom can the human being evolve that divine spark into Christhood, as the power of love is invoked and allowed to flow freely throughout the daily life and consciousness. The essence of love is the common denominator, weaving all lives and forms together.

Love is the key, for God is love (God is a second ray logos, characterized by love-wisdom), and all manifested forms and lives within the immanent and transcendent God are qualified by love. The warmth within every form originates from the sun, the outward sign of the solar logos; yet behind every physical form is the spiritual and superphysical force which brings that form into existence. Obscured or masked by the physical sun is the spiritual sun (son), the light and love and power of God, without which there could be no light or warmth from the physical sun to provide sustenance in the physical world. The spirit that lives through the solar system is that spirit of love which is the keynote of the solar logos, the essence of God, love in the highest sense.

That highest love is the attractive quality that is the bond holding all of local manifestation together. Without that presence (power) of love, the cohesive forces would be naught, and the created worlds would dissolve. The power of love is also instrumental in holding together the human form; for the soul is the Christ or love aspect that sustains the personality. And it is as that love energy flows through the mind and emotions that the human life on earth becomes more meaningful, as the individual finds his place within the coherent

plan or purpose of life. The mature and spiritual (impersonal) form of love is demonstrated through many active qualities, including kindness, compassion, humility, goodwill, aspiration, helpfulness, and forgiveness. Love to all creatures is a powerful beacon of light from the soul that fills the darkness with its rays and draws into itself greater light and love, a finer peace, the power of enlightenment and encouragement. Through the power of love are made the sons of God from the sons of men, creators of worlds as yet uncreated. Love creates beauty; that which endures in art, music, literature, and religion, has been infused with both human and divine love. Other works tend more readily to disintegrate and disappear because they lack this essential quality, a bond called love.

Bonds of love, like bonds of karma, transcend the boundaries of physical plane life and death. Bonds of karma between persons and experiences are usually dissolved upon fulfillment, when the needed lessons are learned; but bonds of love endure beyond ordinary karma. In fact, bonds of love are strengthened by the karma of love itself. The attractive power of love is the cohesive force par excellence. The love of the great ones for humanity will often draw them back into the world of human experience, long after their karma and need to incarnate have been fulfilled.

Human love begins with the personal form, but gradually transcends the personal as it becomes a selfless, impersonal love for God and for all lives within the consciousness of God (as all lives are). The impersonal love is greater simply because it is more inclusive and less selfish, and therefore closer to the love of God. The evolving love which embraces the aspiration of humanity is the love through which divine union is achieved. With each upliftment of love comes an increasing sense of unity, brotherhood, and oneness with all life. Such is the power of love; as love, and love alone, gives life.

The Ten Fetters

Within the framework of the Buddhist moral philosophy (Buddha Dharma) ten great fetters or obstacles to advancement along the spiritual way are identified. Each fetter is a form of bondage through desire or illusion, and it is in the overcoming of all ten obstacles that spiritual attainment is found. The ten fetters are naturally interdependent and range widely in scope and concept. The common thread is consciousness, for in the evolution of consciousness comes increasing freedom from bondage.

The first fetter is the delusion of self or the illusion that the soul is a separate entity. It is a human tendency to identify the personality (the body, feelings, and the mind) with the self, whereas in truth the personality is only the instrument of the true self (the soul). Life in the lower worlds gives the appearance of many separated units of life, whereas higher consciousness reveals the unification and continuity of all life. Wherever the student identifies with the lower self or considers himself apart from other lives, there is bondage. Another form of bondage (the second fetter) is doubt or the illusion of mortality. Fear (doubt) normally arises from misunderstanding; fear is a serious stumbling block because it closes the mind and prevents realization. Wherever there is doubt or fear there is bondage.

The third fetter is superstition or dependence upon external ceremony. There is value in meaningful ceremony and in symbolism, but in superstition (attributing significance where none exists) there is distraction. Another problem (the fourth obstacle) is sensuality or the illusion of the senses. It is through desirelessness and the refusal to accept blindly the testimony of the senses that reality can be experienced and truth known. Surely there are lessons to be learned in the objective world, but eventually the lower worlds must be recognized for what they are; then desire, sensuality, and the appeal of phenomena will cease and the student will go forth unhindered by such. The fifth great obstacle is hatred or ill-feeling, whether conscious or subconscious, obvious or subtle. It is through love and compassion that the wounds of humanity shall be healed and progress obtained.

The sixth and seventh forms of bondage are the love of life on Earth and the desire for life in heaven. Wherever there is desire or attachment there is limitation and bondage. It is in the middle path of observation (experience) and learning without attachment that freedom is won. The eighth fetter is pride, the illusion of self-importance. It is with humility and moderation that the spiritual student should view all things. Elation and excitement are unnecessary and hindering. The quiet, inner joy that embraces a gentle and peaceful relationship with all life is freedom enough from distraction.

The ninth obstacle on the path to self-realization is self-righteousness. Moral, ethical, and spiritual values are necessarily a personal matter. A leading virtue is respect for the beliefs and values of other persons. Self-righteousness undermines spiritual development. Another fetter (the tenth) is ignorance or the illusion of knowledge. Beliefs and opinions strongly adhered to impede the expansion of knowledge and understanding to a higher, broader, and more inclusive level. An open (not passive) mind is indispensable in the quest for wisdom. Through increased awareness of life (increased consciousness), right-knowledge is attained and properly evaluated. It is through adherence to the path (bringing elevated consciousness) that each of the ten fetters is broken and the goal fulfilled. May consciousness become enlightened, that the self-inflicted fetters and limitations of glamour and illusion cease to hinder.

† Commentary No. 117

Theurgy

In the popular sense, theurgy is the art or science of bringing into activity some beneficent or supernatural power. In the spiritual or philosophical sense, theurgy is the department of philosophy (and life) which is concerned with the manifestation of divine magic, the wisdom from within. It is the living of wisdom that is the practical goal of life on Earth. As philosophy, this theurgy is the synthesis and culmination of all philosophical domains. As knowledge and understanding are transformed and synthesized into wisdom, then the life on Earth becomes illuminated in its completion.

In the living of wisdom is the end of the search for truth. As the life of wisdom is attained, the quest for fulfillment is completed. It is not that the theurgist is no longer concerned with truth; nor is it that the theurgist has accomplished all knowledge and truth. But it is that in the living of wisdom is found the source of truth, hidden within. And in the living of wisdom comes the application and manifestation of the eternal fountain of wisdom. The completed student no longer seeks, for he has learned where to find the relevant answers. The quest is over. Those who seek truth in the external world may find knowledge, understanding, guidance, and even encouragement; but those who finally look within find wisdom, as all earlier knowledge and experience is transformed, assimilated, and synthesized by the light from within.

The way to the magical kingdom (wisdom) is the spiritual path in its many aspects and variations. Much preparation is required before the outer form (and mind) can respond to the inner life (the soul). On the path especially, knowledge and understanding require responsibility for the proper application of accumulated experience. The spiritual student must live up to the truth as it is understood; otherwise the conflict between what is done and what ought to be done will undermine the spiritual efforts. It is even more important for the student who has consciously tapped the inner source of revelation to live in harmony with its dictates. It is not easy for the spiritual student to allow that inner flow of energy to freely manifest, for it requires discernment. And spiritual inertia must be overcome before spiritual momentum can be built up.

There is a simple metaphysical injunction which sums up the idea of spiritual inertia and momentum: to let go and let God. On the approaches to the path, and even during the probationary work, the spiritual student learns humility and the reliance upon the inner self (the God within). On the latter reaches of the path this concept is refined as the student learns to consciously and intelligently cooperate with the inner fountain. The key is allowance, for so much of the ordinary consciousness and way of life disallows the conscious presence of God in every thought, every feeling, and every action. In the more absolute sense, God is present in all matters, but seldom is the waking-consciousness living in conscious harmony with the will and purpose of life.

The living of wisdom (when achieved) is the most beautiful expression of the human being in incarnation. The living of wisdom implies peace, balance,

harmony, completion, illumination, and irradiation. It is a constant sharing of spiritual energies. The practical energies of light (enlightenment) and love (wisdom) are manifested without hindrance. There is an inner rapport with all lives, human and otherwise, for the place of the individual within the grand flow of the greater life is realized. There is a magnetic encouragement given to all; and there is a life of service to God and to humanity unhindered by the personal self. In the living of wisdom comes perfection, and in perfection comes the deepest communion with being and life itself.

† Commentary No. 118

Visvarupa Darsana Yoga

The eleventh chapter of the Song Celestial (the Bhagavad Gita) is entitled Visvarupa Darsana Yoga, the yoga of the vision of the cosmic form, the vision of God, universal manifestation, manifestation of the One and the manifold. It is the story of the mystical experience (temporary) and inner (spiritual) vision (permanent). Arjuna has learned a great deal from his teacher, but to hear or to know is not quite the same as first-hand experience, the seeing of truth. Arjuna is treated to the divine vision, and with words not equal to the task he describes that vision. The God within is transfigured into the brilliance in convergence of the entire physical and superphysical universe. The true nature of spirit and consciousness is revealed.

Through Arjuna's experience in consciousness, his self-conception and his conception of the world have changed. As his outer vision is withdrawn and replaced by inner vision, there comes understanding incomparable to ordinary experience. With mortal vision can be perceived the wonder of the physical universe from the microscopic to the cosmic, but in the immortal vision comes the whole universe centered in the One. All things are then seen at once from an entirely different (subjective) standpoint. Where normal vision is buried in time and space, the vision of God is timeless and without space, for life is seen as all of time and all of space enfolded in itself, as a unitary but infinite brilliance. In the quiet and peaceful awe comes an exhilaration quite unknown to the senses, one that is not distracting or illusionary at all.

The momentary and timeless mystical experience is not, however, the true and permanent divine or spiritual vision. That spiritual vision can be evolved, so that reality can be seen within all things, whenever the inner eye is opened. But it is not an objective vision; it is a subjective vision (though it may act synonymously with the objective). Attachment to the worldly senses prevents the cosmic vision. Sometimes a glimpse of the vision can come, as encouragement, but the true mystical vision is a permanent ability, evolved through spiritual effort. It is insight into the nature of all things; it is a participation in the life and vision of God. And at the same time, it is the ultimate in humility and compassion.

In the grand vision comes the truth about all things, including oneself. Strengths, weaknesses, and limitations are seen and recognized with a realistic humility. The enemies (weaknesses) are revealed that they might be conquered in battle (self-discipline and purification). Limitation is destroyed on the path to perfection. In honesty (seeing the truth about oneself), the battle goes easier, for with understanding and determination come courage and strength equal to the task. The vision brings a change in the life and consciousness of the individual, for the soul is seen to be One in all humanity and in all of creation and beyond.

The form of light is revealed, but the key to that light is love. Only through heart quality can the vision come. Love, aspiration, and devotion are the keys to the vision of God. Objective (physical or mental) consciousness is not enough, for the head is essentially self-centered in perspective. But through the heart quality comes the rapport with life (God) and the ability (through the abstract mind and the spiritual intuition) to lose oneself in the divine consciousness. It is in losing oneself that the vision is contacted and reality experienced. The hymn of praise is devotion to God, seeking naught for the individual self. Thus is the illusion of the manifold transcended and the yoga (union) of the One achieved.

Meditation and Service

During the probationary years, the consciousness of the aspirant is naturally directed inward. The probationer is necessarily concerned with his own development through purification and self-discipline. Meditation is then primarily the method of introspection and integration, as the waking-consciousness seeks and ultimately finds the inner thread of soul consciousness. But as the probationary period is gradually transformed into discipleship, the thoughts and meditations of the spiritual student are increasingly turned outward to humanity and a life of constructive service. Continuity is maintained between the inner contemplative life and the outer life of effective activity. Meditation then takes on a new dimension as a means of service.

Service is normally thought of in terms of physical plane activity, and humanitarian efforts in the physical world are certainly meaningful. But opportunities for physical plane service may be limited, and in many cases meditation work can be more effective. Wherever there is outer (physical plane) work, meditation can be used to enhance and improve the quality of the work (through the sharing of spiritual energy). And on etheric levels meditation can encourage the flow of vital planetary forces while eliminating or discouraging (etheric) congestion. Proper meditation should also encourage the vitality (and manifested spiritual quality) of the spiritual student, thus improving the student's effectiveness in his relationships with others. It is the demonstrated quality of the life of the humanitarian or spiritual person in the outer world that offers the greatest encouragement, through example.

Meditation is also an effective means of improving the emotional climate of the planet. With a pure heart and disciplined (purified) emotional quality, the student in meditation can project (share) spiritual energies on astral (emotional) levels; those energies then can have quite a positive effect in the elimination of negative emotions and glammers. The force of aspiration is quite potent in sweeping the immediate emotional atmosphere into higher (purer and more disciplined) vibration. Even the contemplation of heart qualities in meditation is a sharing of spiritual energies.

Meditation is even more effective in cleansing the planetary thought-world and eliminating various illusions (attachments to wrong ideas). The concrete mental projection of positive thought-forms is one of the more significant ways in which the spiritual student can be of service to humanity. The emotional climate and the thought-world of the planet have quite an influence on humanity. The thought-forms and feelings generated and sustained by humanity usually breed more glamour and illusion. But through right-thinking and right-feeling higher quality forms are made available, with more beneficial influence. Through right meditation the quality of consciousness is improved and shared, giving encouragement to those who seek light in the outer darkness.

The various problems of humanity can be pondered and solutions (through consciousness) encouraged. Higher ideas can be contacted and shared on humanitarian levels, without attachment. Healing energies can be invoked and evoked for humanity through the service of meditation. And a life of selfishness can be transformed into a life of selflessness, as the right relationship between the individual and the group (humanity) is realized and attained. Meditation offers many opportunities for spiritual service, as well as the enhancement of physical plane efforts. As the bridge of consciousness is achieved for humanity, between the inner world of the soul and the outer world of illusionary activity, then so shall humanity be healed and further progress.

† Commentary No. 120

Synthetic Triangles

One of the more powerful aids to philosophical study is the utilization of synthetic triangles. Synthetic triangles are simple, equilateral triangles about which are placed various numbers, symbols, and (or) key words. The purpose of synthetic triangles is threefold: to provide an instrument for the study and clarification of the seven rays, with the emphasis on relationships; to provide a synthetic point of focus for the study and correlation of meaningful keywords; and to present esoteric formulas, the utilization and understanding of which depend upon the spiritual intuition. The method of study includes meditation and contemplation.

A synthetic triangle must be valid in order to be meaningful or significant. A valid triangle is one in which meaningful relationships or representations exist between the three points (numbers, symbols, keywords). Or in other words, the three elements of the triangle must synthesize or correlate information in order to be useful. One of the objects of synthetic triangles is to show how the various elements fit together. Where an item of information remains unrelated or isolated, its potential for understanding is limited. But where relationships are recognized, information (knowledge) becomes much more significant and a greater (broader), more inclusive perspective can be evolved.

Synthetic triangles are not fabricated or created; they are realized. The relationships between the points must already exist in order for the triangle to be significant. Relationships between the seven rays provide the foundation or framework for the synthesis of various concepts represented by keywords or symbols. Each point of the triangle represents one or another of the seven rays; each keyword is associated with one (in particular) or more (in application) of the seven rays. If the seven rays are well understood and if the rules for constructing synthetic triangles are known, then it is a simple matter to test the validity of any triangle. In studying the synthetic triangles, it is helpful, but not necessary, to understand the seven rays. It is the circulation (synthesis and correlation) of thought through the three points (keywords) that leads to understanding.

Each set of three rays is a configuration; since there are seven rays, there are thirty-five combinations of three different rays, or thirty-five configurations. Some triangle configurations are relatively more significant than others due to symmetry or special relationships. The more significant triangles are (1:2:3), (1:3:5), (1:4:7), (2:4:6), (3:4:5), (3:5:7), and (5:6:7). Each assignment of keywords to a particular triangle is a variation. The number of variations is essentially unlimited. A particular variation may be qualified by one or another of the seven rays; in that case, the three rays or points of the triangle are subordinate to the qualifying ray.

Synthetic triangles combine power (insight) and simplicity, symbolism and synthesis. The power comes from the circulation of energy (thought) through the three points of the triangle, linking the three rays and keywords. Simplicity is apparent in having only three points, the minimum unit of circulation. In

synthesis comes the unification, correlation, and integration of all of life, consciousness, and activity. Synthetic triangles may be relatively easy or difficult, personal or impersonal, exoteric or esoteric; they may involve universals or specifics and particulars. Almost anything can be simplified or resolved into a triangle structure; but actually, it is the basic triplicity (and septenate) of life and manifestation that provides the significance. May understanding increase, that harmony and synthesis prevail.

† Commentary No.121

Gentleness

One of the most important aspects of life on Earth is the improvement of right human relations. And one of the more helpful qualities in this respect is gentleness. Gentleness implies kindness and moderation, especially as far as manners and disposition are concerned. A gentle disposition discourages conflict and encourages cooperation in a peaceful and constructive environment. As the individual begins and sustains a life of enlightened living, so is it easier to induce the implied qualities of such a life within humanity as a whole. The improved quality of individual relationships is the beginning and foundation of right human relations for all of mankind.

Related to the quality of gentleness is the phenomenon of offense. Implied within the gentle disposition is the refusal to be offended, at anyone or anything. This is admittedly a high standard, but one that is eventually expected of each spiritual student. The refusal to be offended requires patience and self-discipline. It is virtually impossible (philosophically) to change another's disposition, so it is essential that the student concern himself with his own disposition. It is with a sense of rapport with the greater life (which overshadows any sense of separation from others) that the disciple views other persons while refusing to be offended. This requires a healthy appreciation of justice (karma) beyond that which is apparent, without any sense of self-righteousness or judgment with respect to the actions of others. It means accepting others as they are, with respect and appreciation for the greater life which lives through them (however imperfectly it appears).

With the refusal to be offended comes harmlessness (the refusal to be offensive). Though in the absolute sense it is impossible to offend another, it is possible to contribute to another's offense. A sense of responsibility and the cultivation of a gentle disposition should minimize the possibility of others being offended. Though the student is expected to do what has to be done, the manner in which it is done goes a long way toward encouraging or discouraging proper relationships and cooperation. With a gentle disposition, communication is usually enhanced as reasonableness and receptivity (respect) replace resistance and resentment. Though what is done may be right, it is how it is done that determines appropriateness (and corresponding karma). Apparent justice (rationalization) notwithstanding, the spiritual student can ill afford to be either offensive or defensive.

A defensive disposition tends to sustain a conflict rather than encourage harmony. Defensiveness implies insecurity and self-centeredness (a difficult combination). What need does a spiritual student ever have to be defensive? Gentleness in all matters transforms an offensive or defensive disposition into a harmonious one. Constructive change and progress pose no practical conflict for a gentle disposition. The gentle disposition makes for more effective communication (words and thoughts) and more effective silence (meditation).

In human courtesy and gentleness there is also a potent factor of healing quality. Emotional and mental wounds can lie beneath the waking-consciousness, but in gentleness there is the offering of love (respect) and light (encouragement) that is difficult for even human nature to refuse. In harsh words there is no healing, but in gentle words (and thoughts) of encouragement (rather than criticism) can come healing. The power for good of the spoken word is often forgotten among the noise and selfishness of mundane life. But with a gentle disposition (without imposition) can the spoken word and enlightened living help to restore the plan of God within the human fraternity.

Work and the Path

Work is defined as a sustained effort (energy transference) to overcome obstacles and achieve an objective or result. One might ask what is the relationship between work and the spiritual path, or what is the nature of the path with respect to sustained effort. The goal or objective of the evolutionary path is reasonably well-known for the human lifewave: it is the perfection of human consciousness. But what constitutes that relative perfection and in how many ways may it be achieved? Are there any specific requirements for liberation? The answers are rather simple and general.

The requirements for graduation from the human sphere of activity are rather broad, being in terms of quality of consciousness and quality in various areas of experience. The spiritual teachings are filled with suggested preliminary requirements and immediate goals that need to be fulfilled before liberation is possible. But every human being represents a path from self-consciousness to God-consciousness, and no two paths will be identical. Each must ultimately fill the general (subjective) requirements, but each way will embrace different (though similar in many general ways) experiences. Part of the beauty of the one path is that it is comprised of so many different (complementary) paths, each of which leads to the same objective and each contributes to the evolution of the lifewave. Though many paths exist, they all eventually blend and merge as the summit is approached. The common denominator is the objective and the overall work or sustained effort that is required for completion. And that completed consciousness can only be described subjectively and qualitatively.

The work involved (in the more abstract sense) remains approximately the same for all candidates. The overall effort (work) required for graduation is approximately the same for every path upward to divinity. But there is considerable flexibility in how that overall effort may be placed. Work might be defined as the product of two factors; where the overall effort remains fixed, the two factors may be varied inversely to accomplish the same objective. The first factor is force or the intensity of effort. The second factor is distance or the duration of effort. An intense effort over a short period of time may lead to perfection in just a few lifetimes. But a little effort over a long period of time

may lead to the same end after many incarnations. In either case (and period in between) the end result is the same (at least for the individual), and the overall effort (work) expended is the same. It is for this reason that it is said that there are no short cuts on the spiritual path, that all paths lead ultimately to the summit. But in each path there remains an element of grace to be considered, as well as individual and group karma.

The hastened (deliberate) path of evolution (greater intensity of effort over a shorter duration) is the spiritual path proper, the conscious effort towards evolution. The gradual path (lesser intensity of effort over a much longer timeframe) is the unconscious evolution of the mass of humanity. There are dangers involved with too great an intensity of effort, just as there are dangers inherent in too little intensity of effort. Karma is the overriding factor which compensates for every extreme, leading all elements onward.

Intelligent and conscious evolutionary effort (along the spiritual path) is necessary for the relatively few in order to encourage and sustain the evolutionary momentum of the entire lifewave. It is for this reason that the call of the path is sounded, that more of humanity might count the cost (sustained and serious effort) and dedicate themselves to the work and task of the spiritual path, service to God and service to humanity.

† Commentary No. 123

Bhakti Yoga

From karma yoga (the first six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita) through bhakti yoga (the second six chapters) is evolved dharma yoga, the yoga of divine responsibility. The path of right activity blends with the path of devotion, to introduce the path of philosophical discrimination (jnana yoga) (the remaining six chapters). From life (karma) follows love (bhakti), and from love follows light (jnana). Without love (consciousness), there would be little meaning in all of manifestation. Thus bhakti yoga from its lower form (emotional sublimation) to its higher (the development of the buddhi yogi), holds the key (linking) to the unfoldment of latent spirituality.

The twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of devotion (love) (aspiration) (idealism) (loyalty), religion by faith. Considered

are the personal God and the impersonal absolute, the nature of devotion or worship, and the attributes of the aspirant (devotee). God is considered to be personal (interior) (immanent) as well as impersonal (exterior) (transcendental), with form and formless. But the contemplation of impersonal God (indeterminate, imperishable, and unmanifest) is difficult, and practical only for those who have developed the abstract mind and spiritual intuition (and ability to dwell with equal-mindedness in the contemplative state).

The surest path to God for most aspirants is through devotion and contemplation upon the innermost divinity, the personal God-immanent. In this respect the personal becomes the super-personal, which is the impersonal. God transcendent is reached through the personal, inward path. But the need in devotional yoga for an intermediary is also recognized. For those who cannot yet conceive of the formless subjective reality, for those who cannot yet recognize the divinity (soul) within themselves, and even for those who can, the externalization of God through an intermediary (such as Krishna, Buddha, or Christ) can be quite meaningful. The divine incarnation and the teachings can be a powerful form of inspiration and guidance. The incarnation of expressed divinity (through example) is a showing of the way. And above all (on every level of approach) the aura of such an incarnation is real, is persistent through time, and can be touched and felt as a reality in consciousness.

The object of devotional yoga is to find the soul, and through that soul to consciously enter into the life of God. The reality of a divine incarnation can be a means of introducing the waking-consciousness to the soul or divinity within. Progressive devotion (meditation upon God) can lead the meditator from study and prayer, through concentration and meditation, to contemplation and illumination (union). Ritual is replaced by knowledge (understanding); knowledge is replaced by meditation; and meditation is replaced by contemplation (renunciation). Great is the power of the inner life.

The attributes to be attained by the student of bhakti yoga (and all disciples) are many and varied. The devotee is to be without hatred; to be friendly and compassionate to all; to be free from self-centeredness; to be free from exaltation, fear, impatience, and expectation; to be even-minded and contented; to be steady in spiritual exercise (meditation); to be self-disciplined and harmless; to be steadfast in the spiritual life; to be desireless, selfless, and

devoted to the cause (the path); and to be free from attachment. The list of attributes (building blocks) is almost eternal. It is through the bhakti (personal) yoga that the fires of purification burn away the obstructions of the separated self. And without thought of the outer self, the mind of the devoted student can soar with the energy of love and aspiration.

† Commentary No. 124

The Spiritual Student

The spiritual student is a student of life who has made a subjective commitment to the spiritual path of deliberate evolution. The spiritual student may be a seeker, an aspirant, a probationer, or a disciple, for each who lives upon the path is a student. A student is one who studies and learns from the experiences of life, whether or not the learning process is formal or informal, conscious or unconscious, attentive or casual, objective or subjective. The spiritual student seeks to learn (evolve) the lessons of life consciously, thus speeding up the unfoldment and expansion of consciousness while simultaneously contributing to the experience and developing consciousness of humanity. The learning process is really never-ending; the scenes and the circumstances change (deepen), but throughout is maintained the position as a student.

The spiritual (metaphysical) (theosophical) (esoteric) scholar is simply a spiritual student who applies a greater than average effort toward advanced or more comprehensive studies. The scholar is a student of somewhat greater intensity of effort or completeness. There are places upon (within) the path for both the student and scholar, though the emphasis upon the path is on wisdom and service (expression) more so than knowledge and self-invoked experience. Among the immediate goals of the spiritual student are self-transformation (improvement) and effective (selfless) expression of the inner life. Thus the student is concerned both with the depths of the internal life (the subjective world) and the extent of the external life (the objective world).

When an individual becomes a spiritual student, the ordinary learning processes (and the field of experiential and expressive life) are changed as the forces which provide the circumstances and lessons of life are transformed. Prior to commitment, the force of karma is relatively gradual and gentle; after the

individual has embarked upon the path, the rules of life are changed (and continue to change) (by degrees) to increase the time-effectiveness of experience. The standards and expectations are increased as karma becomes a much more potent (evident) force in the life. Considerable karma is expected to be fulfilled in a relatively short period, so that the student might be free from limitation, and at the same time, be able to constructively channel and express the higher consciousness. Thus life becomes a rather enhanced learning experience.

In the totality of being, the spiritual student is an onlooker, a perceiver, and an actor. The onlooker is the spiritual monad or virgin spirit which is not limited by involvement in the lesser worlds. The perceiver is the intermediary (the soul) which subjectively translates the experience of the actor (the personality) and encourages the right expression of the personality in the lower worlds. In one who is not a spiritual student, the relationships between monad, soul, and personality are not so direct, so that considerable time is required between incarnations for the assimilation of experience. The spiritual student, however, is expected to assimilate much of the experience en route, sacrificing much of the time between lives.

The real emphasis in the spiritual life is the cultivation and expression of spiritual quality. Human spirituality pertains directly to the quality of consciousness and the relationship of the individual to the group life (humanity). The spiritual student is concerned far more with humanity and consciousness than with appearance and matters of mundane (limited) (individual) consequence. The spiritual student is not considered to be special, for the mission of the student is to be helpful from within the lifewave.

Personality Integration

The process of integration and alignment is the culmination of the probationary effort. The probationary path is primarily a path of purification and preparation for discipleship. As the personality is purified it becomes easier to integrate the elements of the personality into a more unified, synthesized instrument. That unified personality can then be aligned with the overshadowing soul. There are basically two methods for the integration of a personality. One is a rather forceful method resulting in a temporary but functional form of integration which may even hold together for an entire incarnation. The other is a more natural method which involves refinement and adjustment, resulting in a more permanent and spiritually responsive form of integration, one that may hold together for a number of incarnations.

The method of integration by force involves considerable stress upon the elements of the personality, in order to hold them in check. Forceful integration calls for a strong, dominating mind, a relatively weak but homogenous emotional body, and a responsive physical body. It does not really call for purification or refinement. In fact, forceful integration actually discourages purification and practically disallows subsequent alignment. The dominating mind is generally not responsive to spiritual impression.

The method of forceful integration is normally used (unconsciously) by the intelligent, evolving individual who has not yet entered upon the spiritual path. The advantage of integration by force is the (temporary) lack of the need for purification. Such integration allows for considerable and meaningful (but not really spiritual) experience. The main disadvantage is its difficult and temporary nature which requires eventual integration through purification.

The natural method of integration involves the cultivation of a purified and disciplined personality. Force may be applied as a form of encouragement and guidance, but it is not really a forceful application. The idea is to win the cooperation of the various elements of the personality through purification and refinement. Natural cooperation is quite superior to forceful and strained obedience. Purified elements tend to fit together (integrate) easily, resulting in

an effective and spiritually responsive personality mechanism. The mind acts as the agent of integration, but as natural integration is achieved the personality acts as a coherent instrument rather than an amalgamation of competing elements. Only a personality that is naturally integrated can be effectively aligned with the soul. Then, in subsequent incarnations it is a relatively easy matter to reintegrate the personality.

The concept of integration can be used to illustrate various degrees of human evolution. The relatively unevolved individual has a homogenous physical body, a strong but incoherent emotional body, and a weak and somewhat scattered mind. In the unevolved individual there is no real cooperation between the three major elements (mind, emotions, and physical form). There are many minor centers of scattered and competing consciousness, resulting in a very complicated and difficult personality. On the other hand, in the relatively evolved individual the three major elements are reasonably well-developed (each integrated on its own level) and the entire personality may even be forcefully integrated. Such a personality is less complicated and easier to work with, but there still exist a number of competing elements, subdued somewhat as they may be. But in the fully and naturally integrated personality of the evolving spiritual student, there is only one center of lower consciousness, resulting in a simple (coherent) and efficient instrument for experience and expression.

† Commentary No. 126

Four Forces of Evolution

Among the many forces which come into activity during a period of manifestation are four basic forces associated with the law of evolution. Each of these four forces is overshadowed by the law of karma and other related laws of manifestation. The four forces of evolution are involution, evolution, devolution, and convolution. Each of these forces has its domain or field of activity, and each is interrelated with the others.

The involutory force is the force which dominates during the period of the descent of life into the complications of form or matter. Involution is unconscious evolution, as it is the period that precedes self-consciousness or

individualization. The elemental, mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms are examples of the involutory domain. It is the force of involution that gathers together the atoms of matter which comprise the form. Involution is primarily concerned with the preparation of various forms through which the various lives and lifewaves can evolve. The force of involution is also involved with the evolution of various group lives, prior to individualization. Evolution in the general sense encompasses both the path of descent (involution) and the path of ascent (evolution in the more specific sense).

The specific evolutionary force dominates the life and consciousness during the ascent of life out of complexity of matter and into the simplicity of higher existence. It is the evolutionary force which is of greater interest to the spiritual student who is concerned with the evolution of consciousness. While involution governs the preparation of form, evolution governs the utilization of the form by the indwelling consciousness, the expansion of that consciousness, and the ultimate withdrawal of life (consciousness) from the world of matter. Specific evolution begins with self-consciousness and ends (practically) with the relative perfection of life (the attainment of fully functional group consciousness).

While involution and evolution are basically constructive forces, devolution is essentially the destructive force of nature. Where evolution involves (ultimately) the simplification of life, devolution involves the simplification of form. The force of devolution is the force of disintegration and destruction. Forms are organized with purpose, and when purpose is accomplished (and the forms are no longer needed) the forms are released into their elementary constituents, the atoms of matter. Those atoms are then free to be re-formed into more useful aggregates. The devolutionary or destructive force is a natural and essential force, but great care must be evident as devolution is potentially very dangerous and a force that is easily misused.

Where the first three forces are concerned mostly with cause and effect, convolution (circulation) is a force that is concerned with the underlying processes of evolution, generally. The convolutionary force is bipolar in nature, and might be called the force of differentiation and integration, or the force of entropy (structure and organization). Differentiation is a process of increasing complexity and multiplicity (creation), while integration is a process of increasing simplicity and unification. During the involutory period, the

convolutionary force acts to differentiate the descending lifewave, and to integrate (in the elementary sense) the various forms. During the evolutionary period, the convolutionary force acts through the process of integration (as to consciousness). Convolution (through differentiation or integration) is a transformation, as the fabric of life and form is folded or transformed into a different mode or phase of activity.

† Commentary No. 127

The Open Mind

As the spiritual student proceeds along the ever-deepening and expanding lines of consciousness, it becomes increasingly important for the student to maintain an active, open mind free from attachments and broad enough to recognize the inclusiveness of truth. The degree of passivity (the extent to which something is active or passive) and the degree of closure (the extent to which something is open or closed) of the mind together indicate the possibilities for discernment and realization.

The open mind is subject to both external and internal impressions. If the mind is also passive, then the external impressions will normally dominate without discernment or any concern for relevance or validity. If the open mind is active rather than passive, then the individual will normally think for himself, giving consideration to conscious impressions consciously. A passive mind tends to accept as valid whatever external thoughts or impressions are offered, consciously or subconsciously. A passive mind also implies weakness and vulnerability to the glamour and illusion of the worldly atmosphere. It is the active and open mind that offers the best combination for the evolving student. The active mind gives (suggests) strength and the opportunity for self-control, plus the open mind gives flexibility and opportunity for growth.

The degree of closure takes precedence over the degree of passivity. A closed mind, for example, offers very little flexibility, while an open mind is far more workable and easier to develop and improve. A closed mind is usually the result or consequence of fear or inertia. Both fear and inertia are difficult obstacles to overcome. But as fear and inertia are slowly overcome, the closed mind becomes more active (along narrow lines, at first), which in turn encourages more

progress toward the gradual opening up (broadening) of the mental character. Though a closed mind is rather limiting as far as consciousness is concerned, the open mind is not without its problems.

One of the more serious problems of living in the objective world is the influence of the world's emotional and mental atmosphere upon the emotional and mental activity (or passivity) of humanity. That atmosphere is qualified mostly by human thought and feeling, glamour and illusion. That mixture of thought and feeling is impressed upon passive minds and emotions, which further complicates the problem. The problem is rather delicate, for the spiritual student needs to be open and actively responsive to both the external and internal worlds while maintaining self-control and thinking matters through to determine an individual set of values and beliefs. External and internal impressions need to be discerned and evaluated, that the individual might grow (deepen) and expand in perspective. Values and impressions received visibly, verbally, emotionally, or mentally should not be accepted passively as valid or true, but should be accepted, deferred, or rejected based upon recognized merit or realization. And it should be remembered that there exists no real authority for truth.

The student must be free to observe, evaluate, and respond appropriately to every experience in life, including every possible exposure to spiritual insight, internally through meditation and contemplation (and intuition), and externally through art, science, religion, and philosophy. With an active and open mind there is freedom for self-determination (and voluntary cooperation with the evolutionary pattern), and there is freedom to grow and expand. May closed and passive minds be transformed into minds of disciplined mental activity and openness (humility); and may unconscious and passive acceptance be replaced with conscious and voluntary discernment and self-realization.

Haste

The spiritual path is often called the hastened path of conscious evolution, but the implications of haste are not entirely appropriate for the spiritual path. The spiritual path is certainly quickened and accelerated, but the path does not imply haste, urgency, or rashness. The path is actually guided by experience, wisdom, and maturity, with deliberation and concern for quality, stability, and effectiveness. Haste implies undue eagerness and a lack of preparation or wisdom.

Haste tends to precipitate (encourage) (call forth) mistakes, and although mistakes are often a part of growing and deepening spiritually, they should be a natural part of qualified experience rather than a consequence of hurrying. Hurrying along any path can involve a reckless (inefficient) expenditure of time and energy. One of the many guidelines for progress along the path is to proceed with reasonable dispatch (speed and efficiency) and reasonable deliberation (carefulness and understanding). Flexibility, dynamic usefulness, and even momentum are associated with the path, but haste is not. Hurrying is often an unconscious process that undermines the flexibility and the momentum of the spiral path of increasing consciousness.

One of the greatest covert deterrents to spiritual progress is impatience. Impatience, like undue or intense seeking, creates stumbling blocks. Like haste, impatience is a potent force for blinding and distracting the individual from the inner guidance that is necessary for successful progression. Allied to impatience in its effects is a sense of urgency. Such a sense is usually founded in exaggerated importance (both for the individual and for humanity). There is a certain spiritual impression that is sometimes misunderstood and interpreted as an encouragement for urgency from those who subjectively guide the human evolution. But even on hierarchical levels there is no real sense of urgency. There is always concern and interest in humanity, along with encouragement and guidance in many ways (if it can only be properly recognized and understood), but there is no exaggeration of the significance of any individual nor is the value of humanity exaggerated, on those higher levels. Patience and constructive encouragement are among the guidons for humanity.

Another aspect of haste concerns the intensity of objective life, or the pace of life on Earth. Amid the noise and haste of common (worldly) existence is a powerful force for absorption into that which is mundane. Those who live a life of great intensity in the lower worlds are quite easily absorbed and distracted from a real sense of spiritual value. Where the pace is great, it is quite difficult (almost impossible) to maintain continuity between the higher self and waking-consciousness. But where the pace (intensity) of the lower, objective life is not so great; where the spiritual student maintains the inner calm amid the intensity (noise) of the outer life; there is an effective disciple of spiritual poise, where the waking-consciousness can function clearly and with wisdom through an aura undisturbed.

The relationship between human nature and haste is understood as the force for evolution and the pressures inherent in objective existence are recognized. Haste is simply a response to increasing pressure. But there is really no need for haste; humanity has an eternity in which to evolve. And each human being who heeds the inner call has time enough to accomplish the goals of evolution, with expedition (efficient promptness) and without haste. The disciple is asked to proceed conscientiously, that the pressures of the outer world might be balanced, and that spiritual poise might be enfolded and shared with all.

† Commentary No.129

Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga

The thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of the discrimination of matter and spirit, the knower and the known, the field and its knower. A synthesis of esoteric truth is revealed (and concealed) as the path of philosophical discernment (jnana yoga) is introduced. Considered are the one who knows (the knower) (the onlooker), the field of knowledge (and perception), and knowledge (activity) itself. Kshetra refers to prakriti (nature), the not-self, matter, and phenomena. Kshetrajna refers to purusha, the self, being, spirit, and the noumenon. These two (prakriti and purusha) (and their relationship) constitute everything. The discernment of matter and spirit is the task of consciousness.

From the standpoint of duality, kshetrajna can refer either to the level of spirit (as the monad) or to the level of consciousness (as the soul); likewise kshetra can refer either to the level of consciousness or to the level of matter (as the personality). Thus each is seen to be relative to the other, rather than absolute or arbitrary. Kshetrajna is the spirit or soul, the dweller within, the drummer, the realm of immortality. Kshetra is the field of knowledge (the fertility of experience), the realm of mortality (time) (transience), and that which responds ultimately to the higher rhythm. The body (in one case) refers to the causal body, the relatively immortal light body of the soul. In the other case, the body is the personality or the illusion of separated existence, the shadow of reality.

From another standpoint (perspective) (that of triplicity) there is the more abstract synthesis (and consequent discernment) of the knower, the field of knowledge, and knowledge itself. The knower is the energy (life) of being; the field is the force of consciousness; and knowledge is the material of objective existence. But each of the three elements can refer in many ways to the others, so that discernment becomes the lesson of relative distinction, value, and implication. The outer (secular) knowledge must be discerned from the inner (sacred) knowledge. The known must be discerned from knowledge, and the field of consciousness must be discerned from the knower. And all that is real (light) (immortal) (the self) must be discerned from all that is unreal (illusion) (darkness) (temporary) (the not-self).

The real object of knowledge is self-realization, the reality of the impersonal (super-personal) life, the attainment of (the realization of) immortality, the living (being) through all of creation (and that which remains uncreated), through the inclusive yoga of divine union. The field of change produces the wisdom (love) required for that attainment, through any of the four great paths (and their many variations and stages): karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, and raja yoga. Through each experience are the seeds of mundane life planted in the field of consciousness.

The key to all of this is the breeding (growing) of reality (wisdom) (self-culture) through the cultivation (assimilation) of higher knowledge (quality) (character), regardless of the particular method. Through the spiritual discipline is found reality, and in reality is found the divine self who dwells within the greatest

silence of being. The agent of the self (the personality) is thus lost in the (higher) self as diversity is seen in truth to be the unity of that self, and as that unity is perceived through all. The owner of the field then illumines the entire field or domain of consciousness and existence. In the union of the field and its knower is produced all that comes to be, for the divine self is the creator of all.

† Commentary No.130

Structure and Meditation

Much of the emphasis in spiritual meditation has been placed upon structured meditation where there is a form, format, or pattern of meditation. But equally important is unstructured meditation, where form and structure are replaced (overshadowed) by simplicity (purity) and quality. As the spiritual meditation life evolves, it may pass through various stages of different emphasis. Some of those stages will normally be structured; others will normally be unstructured. The degree of structure depends upon the purpose and the appropriate means of accomplishment or expression. The experienced disciple may choose between the various types of meditation as the situation warrants.

The main advantage of structured meditation is the pattern or organization which provides a form or point of focus. This advantage is quite applicable to the training and discipline of the mind, as well as to the guidance and direction (projection) of focused and constructive thought-forms. It is also helpful in bringing forth a coherent rhythm of meditation for group formation, but even the developing group meditation should provide for some unstructured meditation. The simple form of structured meditation is concentration. More comprehensive forms of meditation provide a sequence or pattern to be followed, in order to keep the attention and focus of the mind and in order to properly release the various energies involved in spiritual meditation.

The expansion of consciousness (through meditation) requires organization (structure) in order to support it. Beginning forms of meditation are often designed to provide a foundation or framework for expansion, whether consciously realized or not. Once that foundation has been established, much of structure becomes unconscious rather than conscious. If the structure or pattern

of support is deliberate and intelligent, then subconscious programming can expand naturally and easily without much attention. If however, there are habits or patterns of subconscious activity already present (by default), then those patterns must be clarified, purged, or purified as necessary for further progress. In higher forms of meditation structure is usually so fine (esoteric) and formless that meditation becomes unstructured (in the higher sense).

Unstructured meditation provides freedom from the limitations of overt structure, freedom to respond intuitively (with wisdom) to both external and internal impressions, and freedom to achieve true contemplation and realization. But the higher form of unstructured meditation cannot really be achieved or sustained constructively without the lessons of structured meditation having been learned. The thoughts of the beginning student are usually rather undisciplined and scattered; an unstructured meditation at that point would be fairly incoherent. The mystical experience and contemplation can be achieved by the pure heart, but without the co-requisite mental training it would be virtually impossible to manifest or express the higher energies.

Meditation in the heart or in the soul is normally unstructured, without form, while the expression of soul energies through the mechanism of the personality may be either structured (conscious and focused) or unstructured (unconscious or super-conscious) (wherever there is consistent alignment). The real joy of meditation involves the quality of the soul in a truly aligned and unstructured meditation. The disciple is one who recognizes the value and application of both types of meditation; the disciple is neither absorbed in the intensity of the soul, nor absorbed (distracted) by the pace of objective (mundane) life. The true disciple lives from the higher world, serving as a bridge of life, love, and light to all who are caught in the darkness below.

Personality Alignment

Once the personality has been properly qualified and naturally integrated it becomes possible to achieve and maintain the alignment of that personality with its higher self. Proper alignment requires the adjustment and upliftment of the purified personality into direct and immediate correlation (resonance) (harmony) with the overshadowing soul. This process is simple in concept, but normally quite difficult to achieve due to the many distractions of living simultaneously in both the objective and subjective worlds.

There are two basic methods for alignment: one method is head-centered and involves concentration and the element of will; the other method is heart-centered and involves aspiration. The best all-around method is a combination where the will is tempered by aspiration. Neither method will really work unless the personality is prepared and the soul is ready to permit alignment.

The preparation of the personality is quite important. Alignment involves the bringing together (mixing) of two fundamental energies: the personality and the soul. Both must be vibrating according to the same pattern if union is to be achieved. The probationary disciple is powerless to modify the character or vibration (quality) of the soul, so he must adjust the personality in order to achieve harmony (synthesis). It is the character of the personality that must be brought into higher rhythm. Once the soul and personality are vibrating together, the will or aspiration can be used to uplift the lower self into alignment. But the soul must be ready to permit alignment. If the personality proceeds prematurely, the gate between the soul and its personality will be closed and the effort will not succeed. Thus is it cautioned that development (alignment) should not be forced. It should be naturally encouraged from within. It is really the soul that sends forth the note or call for alignment and a willing and responsive personality that then enters upon the task.

The intensity of the soul should not be taken lightly. The soul is a powerful, yet subjective entity that does not relate very well to objective existence. The consciousness of the soul is far different from that imagined or conceived by the inexperienced student. But through right (spiritual) meditation and the method

of aspiration the gap between the soul and its reflection is more easily bridged. The gentle approach of aspiration and wisdom involves gradual adjustments based upon the experience (observations and intuitional guidance) of the projector (the mind of the personality). The less gentle approach, utilizing the will aspect, may be quicker, but will probably involve a somewhat forceful response on the part of the soul, as the soul demands (and enforces) the immediate adjustment of the personality.

Once alignment has been achieved (by degrees), the task is to maintain or regain that alignment. With experience and perseverance, the task becomes more and more reasonable. If the alignment is achieved in a strictly spiritual environment, it should be easy to maintain while in that environment. But alignment so gained may not be strong enough or of sufficient quality to be maintained outside of that environment. An alignment gained while living balanced between the two worlds is more difficult to achieve initially, but may be maintained far better in mundane or worldly surroundings. This is one of the greatest of spiritual tasks, and one expected of the disciple, to achieve and to maintain the spiritual alignment, refusing to be absorbed by the lower world while working and living effectively within the delicate balance. Great is the human tendency toward absorption (in the mundane or lower sense), but greater still, for those who strive (allow), is the power of the soul.

† Commentary No. 132

Vibration

In the perspective of form (complexity), all that exists is vibration, in one way or another. Every element and every aspect of the differentiated universe is vibration, from the microscopic realm to the macrocosmic. A vibration is a cyclic or periodic process having various properties, parameters, and characteristics. Matter consists of vibration; applied force is a vibration; even energy (life) is vibration, (being) a cyclic process of some well-defined character. It is such vibration that provides the basis and continuity (unity and coherence) of all of life and consciousness and form.

The perspective of vibration is quite potent due to its virtual universality and the insight it provides into the nature of form and manifestation. Physical forms have an atomic and molecular structure composed ultimately of simple vibrations. Every such complex form (vibration) can be (theoretically if not practically) resolved into a superposition or product of basic or fundamental components. Similarly, etheric forms and forces are composed of vibration. And analogously, emotional (astral) waveforms (feelings) and mental thought-forms (waves of energy) are composed of vibration. The interactions between the various types and levels of vibration further complicate matters, but at the same time provide the basic framework for integration and correlation.

A key to this perspective is rooted in the original process of manifestation. At the beginning of time, the unmanifested reality is stretched so that vibration can be inserted (this implies pressure or tension). From the simple insertion of basic energies (vibrations) the complexity (structure) of the manifested universe is developed through differentiation. The seven fundamental rays and the seven planes of consciousness are derived (evolved) from the original insertion and from the basic pattern of spirit, consciousness, and matter. The seven rays and the seven planes form an interlocking matrix of interactive vibration. From there, it is a simple matter to achieve further complexity (differentiation) based upon various combinations or resolutions of the components of the (ray-planar) matrix. Each derived vibration can be further complicated (structured) (hopefully with some purpose in mind) by the introduction, modification, and variation of various characteristics.

Among the various basic and introduced parameters are frequency, intensity, polarization (related to the plane or sub-plane of consciousness), ray character (or mixture), purity (degree of cleanliness (lack of distortion)), and quality. Some of the characteristics can be observed objectively; others can only really be discerned subjectively. The reference frame (perspective) of observation also has an effect on characteristics as perceived. A vibration of very large and well-defined frequency, for example, might appear as a very simple vibration when viewed from a distance time-wise (where the frequency of the reference frame is far-removed (in magnitude) from the frequency to be perceived). In this way (by changing the perspective), the greatest of vibrations becomes the least (or vice versa) as it passes from one domain (field) to another.

A study of vibration can lead into many allied areas, such as color and sound (the note and tone of the soul may be of interest to the head-centered student in seeking alignment). Vibration is also a key to the mystery of life (and time) (as a life-thread is (subjectively) integrated over time, conclusions can be realized concerning the wave-nature of life and the wave-nature of the monad) (are not vibrations and energy merely indications of the presence of life). A study of vibration can also serve to bridge the (apparent) gap between orthodox physical science and its metaphysical and esoteric correspondence.

† Commentary No. 133

The Higher Self

The soul is the abstract and subjective expression of the monad, the upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas, and the unit of human evolution and synthesis. It is the true individuality, of which the human personality is but a shadow (reflection) (expression) (instrument) in the lower worlds.

Whereas the personality is mortal (temporary), the soul is relatively immortal, incorporating the patterns for personality development (incarnation) and assimilating the character, experience, and quality produced through the personality. As the higher self, the soul is relatively insensitive to the pain or pleasure of the personality; the soul is not concerned with specific events in time and space in any objective sense. The soul is only really sensitive to overall quality, which is the integration of personality experience. Thus, quality (the soul) is beyond (the transience of) time and space.

The three aspects of the soul form a trinity in consciousness. The first or highest aspect is atma, which implies spiritual will and purpose, the seat of identification. Atma is the aspect which is most detached or removed from the lower life, and provides a thread or link to the monad. The second aspect is buddhi, which implies spiritual intuition, the seat of union. Where atma provides the power of choice (in the divine sense), buddhi provides the power of insight. Buddhi is the real seat of spiritual perception, being the central element in soul-consciousness. In buddhi is found the dynamic quality of the soul itself, which is love (inclusiveness) in its higher (impersonal) sense. The third or

lowest aspect of the soul is manas, which is the principle of mind. Manas provides the thread or link between the soul and its personality, through intelligence and spiritual activity. Through the union of buddhi and manas (love and intelligence) (soul and personality) is produced wisdom.

The soul is the consciousness of life which is expressed through the three elements (physical body, emotions, and mind) and the seven major chakras (and the many lesser centers) of the personality. The chakras provide for the communication of energy between soul and personality. The personality is the agent (means) of experience and expression, while the soul is the method of consciousness (uninvolved and unentangled). The soul perceives the effects (as integrated experience and quality) of life in the lower worlds, but only indirectly. For those who are not on the spiritual path, the soul extracts (assimilates) the experience of each lifetime in the interval between incarnations. For those who are on the path, that process of assimilation becomes more direct as soul contact is achieved during the lifetime.

At the interface between the concrete (rational) (personal) (objective) mind of the personality and the abstract (impersonal) (subjective) mind of the soul is found a key to soul-consciousness. The concrete mind is limited by form, whereas the abstract mind is free of thinking entirely. In the soul, thinking is replaced by direct realization and comprehension. In the soul is consciousness without form, and the awareness of consciousness itself. The soul is thus characterized by internal recollectedness and constant (unstructured) meditation. The various personal attributes relate to the higher ones through the principle of correspondence, but to think of the soul in ordinary human terms can be quite misleading. Through identification (in actuality) with the soul, the meaning of the character of the soul becomes apparent. Words are not enough to describe the true mystical experience (realization) imparted through the inner communion. The silence of the presence of the soul must be entered, almost constantly, in order to appreciate or understand that nature of reality.

Perception

An area of special interest to the spiritual student is perception. It is important (meaningful) because it involves consciousness, sense-impressions, and the paradox of reality. The concepts and mechanism of perception are keys to the ultimate resolution (clarification) of reality and the release of the human mind from the bias and habits of illusionary existence. The process and basic tenets of perceptions are actually quite simple.

An object or event has some sort of existence or reality. An observer (perceiver) interprets in consciousness certain sense-impressions received from the object or event. But those sense-impressions are received through a medium and through an agent. The medium includes the aura of the object, the aura of the agent, and the atmosphere or mechanism in between the two. The agent is the personality and its components (personal senses). In subtle matters, the mechanism of perception can even change the object (or event) itself. The medium is real; the sense-impressions themselves are real; even the agent is real, each having some sort of existence. But, the problem arises from the assumptions of identification, and the conclusion and interpretations based upon those assumptions. Most people assume unconsciously the identification of the object with the sense-impressions of the object, and the identification of the sense-impressions with the actual perception or interpretation (conclusion) in consciousness.

But sense-impressions are not the object, and conclusions made in consciousness are not the same as the sense-impressions themselves. At each stage in the process changes occur so that the reality of an object is far different from the reality of the conclusion based upon sense-impression. To identify one with the other is to introduce distortion due to its quality or character. The medium or mechanism will qualify the perception due to its character. The medium may include distortion due to the limitations of language (communication) or due to the transient and impression-filled nature of the atmosphere through which the observation is made.

Even the agent (the personality) is a source of distortion and confusion, depending on its quality, training (discipline), and intention. Perception is a very selective process. How often does a person see (hear) what he wants or expects to see (hear) while disregarding the rest? The senses cannot be trusted at face value; and even the interpretation in consciousness of sense-impressions introduces distortion due to desire, habit, and other forms of bias. The mind and feelings can exaggerate, substitute, and otherwise change impressions which are then accepted as valid in consciousness. Sense-impressions can be interpreted in the light of experience or in the darkness of ignorance. Personal energies tend toward distortion and self-deception; impersonal energies tend towards accuracy, honesty, and reality.

All of this is not to say that sense-impressions are not useful. It is to say that things are not usually what they appear to be; that there is a marked difference between sight and insight; that when dealing with sense-impressions, one must be careful to minimize distortion and confusion. The senses can be trained to be more useful, with greater accuracy, (outer) discernment, and quality. But the waking-consciousness must deliberately place matters in perspective, recognizing the distinctions between objects, impressions, and conclusions, discerning inwardly the values and conclusions to be accepted. As inner realization increases, the spiritual intuition and subjective rapport can be used to complement the sense impressions, thereby improving perception.

† Commentary No.135

Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga

The fourteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of division (distinction) of the three gunas (the three constituents of nature) (the three qualities) (the three moods). Therein Krishna discusses the field of nature, which is the field of human evolution, and the path to freedom, in the practical terms of karmic fulfillment and liberation from the three constituents of nature. The three gunas (conditions of nature) provide the framework of (apparent) limitation in the world of form. They are named sattva, rajas, and tamas; and together they constitute nature (prakriti) as a trinity in expression (while remaining one in substance). The three gunas are

the agents of nature which bind the forms of the lower worlds of human endeavor. They are inherent in the human personality, but may be viewed in many ways throughout manifestation. One of the three may predominate in a given situation or perspective (such as to character), while the others may prevail from time to time. Moreover, each is also a field or domain of expression as well as a grade or force.

The first of the gunas is sattva, the highest of the binding forces of nature. Sattva binds unto earthly happiness and to lower knowledge. As light, sattva is intelligence and the light of knowledge, giving birth to wisdom through the paths of ascension. The first guna is related to the fifth ray and the binding force is called illusion, or attachment to knowledge. The sattvika disposition is for those who seek truth, being relatively unbound by the lesser gunas. Sattva is also the realm of natural law (rhythm) and in the higher sense portrays response to divinity.

The second of the gunas is rajas, the middle ground, being fire and the nature of passion, the source of attachment through desire. Rajas is activity (unrest) which binds unto activity. The field of activity and experience is rajasic life, where karma finds its primary expression as action and reaction (consequence). Rajas is the level (gradual or preparatory) path and the realm of natural energy. Rajas is related to the sixth ray and the binding force is called glamour (entanglement in personal energy). The rajasika disposition is for those bound by activity, desire, and attachment, by mobility and change.

The third or lowest of the gunas is tamas, meaning darkness, inertia born of ignorance. Tamas binds through sleep and rest (dullness), maya which overclouds awareness. The attachment is that of matter itself and the inertia implied by every form. Tamas rules the path of descension (involution and devolution) and is related to the seventh ray. The tamasika disposition is for those who sleep while walking through the fields of life on earth. An understanding of tamas yields insight into the dullness (inertia) (resistance) of personality (form) to higher impression, as well as insight into the character of matter. Through tamas are the forms of nature held together or dissolved, as appropriate.

The intention of the path is for all to pass through and beyond the three powers (gunas) of nature: to fulfill the requirements of experience and activity, thereby loosening the ties that bind. The student progresses from the state of absorption by form (tamas), through the state of absorption by kama-manas (karma) (rajas), to the state of absorption by truth (sattva). The final freedom (transition) comes when one is liberated from all of the binding forces of earthly life, having learned the lessons well and having transformed one's own nature. The one who passes (or can pass) beyond the gunas is one who has neither distaste nor longing, who remains unruffled and detached from petty matters (and petty thoughts), who lives as the inner self, steadfast in wisdom.

† Commentary No. 136

The Value of Language

The value of language is manifold. Though the limitations of words and language are many and varied, and though more direct communication (mental or buddhic union) (realization) is preferable (and ultimately inevitable), thought-forms expressed through language remain the primary means of communication one to another. In communication there is the sharing of (approximate) thought-content and information which can stimulate constructive thinking and thereby enhance experience and consciousness. Encoded as language, information can be effectively and usefully communicated. Language is so much a part of the contemporary learning process that many persons take it for granted, without utilizing its full potential or realizing its varied expression.

The basis of language is symbolism. Every letter, prefix, suffix, root, derivative, combination, and word is a symbol (or composite) in its own right. Every phrase, sentence, and paragraph is a symbolic substructure. A language is a symbolic system, the superstructure of which is communication. The language of the poet is an artistic communication, often deeper than its appearance. The language (without words) of the painter is a communication of beauty or meaning potentially more comprehensive and unstructured than words. Even the complex and intricate technical language of scientist has its purpose and its value in transmitting subtleties and abstractions in specialized (and useful) terminology. The universal language of mathematics has an even greater and

deeper usefulness in symbolizing concepts. Even the language of computer programming has its contribution to mental training via symbolic thinking. Moreover, objective language is the basis of concrete thought and can be used in the training and discipline of the concrete mind. And the somewhat more subjective language and beauty of music can assist in the training and discipline of both the mind and the emotions.

The objectives of language include more effective communication, but also the attainment of deeper understanding of people, events, and things (forms), mental clarity, and the broadening of perspectives. A study of the various languages can aid in the understanding of various peoples and cultures, and can reveal the common threads (and derivatives) of words and language. Appropriate language can discourage prejudicial and self-defeating mental habits: the variations in language (in words, word order, and structure) from the commonplace can be used to stimulate thinking and avoid the habitual perspective and its concomitant limitations. A richness abounds in every language for the broadening and deepening of perspective and communication. Language is a tool for the student of life, as well as the scholar.

Wisdom and intelligence in the transmission (via speech, the written word, or other means) and the organization of (specific) language implies the reasonably accurate transmission (sharing) of meaning. The careless transmission or offering of language may be relatively empty of significance or even misleading. With the proper projection of energy, considerably much more than words (or even thought) can be shared through language.

Language then becomes the key to the release of energy, understanding, and realization far greater than the appearance of words. As the mind is trained and disciplined, the correlations of a broad enough perspective can encourage realization. As true realization is found, dependence on language is reduced, as the energy of an object or event or concept is perceived independently of language or ordinary perception. In that way, ordinary language is actually replaced by specialized and more abstract (composite) symbolism.

Compassion

Compassion is a quality that has to be experienced directly in order to understand. For the spiritual student, the experience of compassion can bring about (or result from) the unfoldment of the heart; it can place the waking-consciousness in touch with humanity (and life itself) and the consequent realization of the common thread (which is unity).

Compassion is defined as a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress coupled with a desire to alleviate that distress. But any emphasis upon pain or suffering is somewhat inappropriate for the spiritual student; the spiritual student is expected to concern himself mostly with positive matters, in thought and in deed. But the student must, at the same time, be realistic; besides, it is the rapport with humanity that should be the real emphasis in compassion.

For the heart-centered student, compassion can be a problem if it is offered or experienced on emotional levels without control or without detachment. For compassion to be meaningful and useful (in the sharing of energy and in understanding) it must be experienced in a mature manner, with love, but without distraction or undue involvement. One cannot afford to become entangled in pain or distress; yet one can hardly afford to forego a sharing of the feeling of humanity, if union with the soul of humanity is to be achieved (as it must). A compassionate appreciation of the problems of life (which appear to produce pain or suffering) is a way to understand the causes (or at least the intermediate causes) and possible solutions in consciousness. Through participation is revealed a means of healing and progress, as consciousness is gradually changed (raised) (both in the individual sense and in the sense of humanity). And this comes about through the heart and the prize of the heart which is compassion.

For the head is an altogether different approach. Compassion cannot be experienced in a purely rational or head-centered manner. Therefore, there are no problems relating to compassion in the head-centered student, except for the lack of compassion. Therein lies the real problem of the head-centered student: the undeveloped heart and the great difficulty in opening the heart in a

reasonable manner. For the head-centered student to become compassionate, a great deal of work is involved. Some of the protective mental barriers must be deliberately lowered so that the feelings of sympathy, compassion, and even others' pain can be experienced, by degrees. Compassion comes easily to the heart. But it does not really come at all to the head. The head must be brought into the heart; that is the difficulty, for the head must yield to the heart (not to the emotions, but to the unfolding and stabilized heart center).

The complementary approach of the head and the heart to the feelings of other persons (or humanity) involves both compassion and impersonality. Controlled (impersonal) emotion (via the stabilized heart center) is the key to (meaningful) sympathetic, compassionate, and even empathetic expression. Though the evolving student is expected to cultivate increasing impersonality, that impersonality needs to be balanced with the experience (and the identification with the experience) of humanity, through the instrument (and quality) of compassion. Evolution is mutual and interdependent; the student must not only understand the lifewave to which he belongs, but the student must also contribute to that lifewave. The understanding can be found and the contribution can be made, with intelligent participation through the head and the heart linked inseparably. Compassion is a primary theme for that experience and expression, compassion that is a dynamic expression of love (the heart quality), leading to atonement and to harmlessness.

† Commentary No. 138

Waves and Matter

In the classical (traditional) (orthodox) view of the material world, matter is that which can be considered as an aggregate of material particles. Material particles are supposed to have well-defined mass and observable positions in space-time (localized, with sharp boundaries).

But in the modern (orthodox) experience (especially on sub-atomic and atomic levels), matter has been found to exhibit the properties of waves or particles, depending on the method or perspective. Fundamental particles have been discovered in which the mass is not well-defined; such a particle might appear to

be an energy resonance rather than a distinct particle. In quantum mechanics, even traditional particles (like the electron) can be observed (indirectly) as well-defined particles or as wave phenomena. By wave phenomena, it is meant that a particle may be spread out in time and space (a distributed mass, for example, or a distributed position or probability).

The phenomena of wave-matter duality sheds some light upon the etheric realm and even further (though the proper relationships of energy and matter are quite well-known in the esoteric tradition). Physical vision is awfully objective (in which macroscopic objects are well-defined), but the resolution of atomic and sub-atomic phenomena is denied the ordinary vision. Etheric vision (and its astral counterpart) is less well-defined; etheric vision is concerned more with an energy (wave) (aura) perspective than it is with the perspective of matter (well-defined forms). Subtle vision or perception may be relatively objective (turned outward) while maintaining an energy perspective, or it may be rather subjective (turned inward) in which the energy perspective transcends even wave phenomena. In either case, the reality of energy is confirmed, and the transience of matter is recognized.

In the superphysical, but objective realms, wave phenomena predominate. Thought-forms and feelings (emotions) are examples of energy phenomena that take on some wave properties. Feelings tend to be rather poorly defined (vague) but are transmitted almost objectively, in waves. Thought-forms can be fairly sharp (focused) (concrete) or relatively vague, but either way remain somewhat objective, being within the world of form. It is only when the abstract regions (beyond the concrete mental) are entered that subjective forces predominate. On those levels, forms are nonexistent, but a subjective phenomenon (analogous to waves) does exist, called consciousness. The world of form is a world of matter and waves; the world beyond form is a world of consciousness and finer energies. But there are other, more profound implications to wave-matter duality.

Some of those implications (linking waves and matter, depending on point of view) elucidate the reality of a universal thread. An example is the appearance of an isolated individual human being (matter perspective) compared with humanity (wave perspective). Another example involves the appearance of an individuality isolated in time and space (objective, matter perspective)

compared with an individual life (monad) which is distributed in time and space (subjective, wave perspective), living simultaneously (beyond time) (through self-projection) throughout the past, present, and future. The appearance of an individual in incarnation, then, is merely part of a life extending along the individual space-time track and extending also across the distributed wave front of the human lifewave. The perspective of matter (particles) (discrete lives) leads through various chains of complexity; but the more powerful (meaningful) perspective of waves (energy) (integrated or continuous lives) leads more directly to simplicity through the universality of the subjective lifewave.

† Commentary No. 139

Stoic Philosophy

The stoic school of philosophy was founded by Zeno of Citium in 300 B.C. The foundation of stoic philosophy is based in the subordination of the individual to the logos (law) (God) (nature). The Stoics held that the wise should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law. Or in other words, the orderly nature of the macrocosm (universe) should be reflected in the self-disciplined lives of the wise. From idealistic and almost unattainable standards of conduct, Stoic philosophy developed over a period of 500 years into the practical philosophy of Marcus Aurelius. Though somewhat materialistic and deterministic, Stoic philosophy is not without its contributions to (derivations from) (and accord with) the esoteric teachings.

Stoic materialism is founded in the identification of monistic deity (God) with the entire (material) universe. That God is said to be the consciousness (creative fire) (reason) of the world, and relatively providential. Stoic determinism includes natural predisposition (tendencies), eternal change, relative free will, and eternal recurrence (a cyclical universe of manifestation). All of the parts and events of the universe are said to be mutually related. The individual human being (soul) is said to have within itself the spark of creative fire (divinity), and therefore a direct relationship with God. The Stoic universe is definitely ordered; thus the logic and physics (theology) of the Stoic is based upon that natural order.

But the real strength of Stoic philosophy is in ethics. Derived from the orderly (rational) nature of the universe, Stoic ethics tend toward inward tranquility and social duty. Stoic values are dependent on conformity with natural law, and Stoic ethics are therefore (ideally) self-sufficient (motivated without hope of reward or fear of punishment). The wise man is one who consciously follows (chooses) the path of (group) destiny (intention), by living voluntarily according to the laws of nature. The instinct of self-preservation is eventually transformed into self-perfection (self-mastery) under reason (the law of nature within man). Virtue is said to be the means of achieving that ultimate peacefulness (conformity of the human will with divine will).

The four cardinal virtues (of Stoic philosophy) are intelligence (moral insight), bravery (courage), justice, and self-control (temperance) (self-mastery). Each of these are said to be interdependent, requiring the others for consistency. As the Stoic system developed, a path was envisioned to allow practical (ordinary) humanity increasing degrees of wisdom. The discipleship of the Stoics implies the simplicity of gradual moral progress. Wisdom includes the inner freedom to choose (and attain) the higher values. The wise man of the Stoics is to be free from passion (pleasure, depression, desire, and fear) and (ideally) indifferent to pain (unruffled by circumstances). It is perhaps the standard of indifference to pleasure or pain that is the greatest contribution of Stoic philosophy.

The Stoics concerned themselves more with the merit (or demerit) of intention and motive rather than the action itself. With rational self-control (tranquility) there should be no resentment for received injury or injustice; and in discernment there should be wisdom based upon humility and honesty. Though rather head-centered, the Stoics set a standard for the resolution of the conflict between human reason (the mind) and animal passion (the body). The allegiance of the individual should be to the universal (God) and to humanity, rather than to the nation-state. The Stoics also developed a sense of social duty (behavioral appropriateness) that went beyond the cultural standards.

The Waking-Consciousness

The waking-consciousness is the focus or attention in consciousness. The normal (human) state for the waking-consciousness is the conscious (concrete) mind which lives through sense-impressions and thought-forms. But the waking-consciousness can vary widely in scope and quality, from enchantment by (absorption in) the lower phenomenal world, through various stages of mental (manasic) activity, to buddhic (intuitional) experience far beyond the mind.

The conscious mind (waking-consciousness) is the lens (link) through which experience is obtained and expression is achieved. That lens may be relatively focused or unfocused. Purely instinctual experience and expression implies the working of a mind that cannot really be focused; and in that case the waking-consciousness is rather vague. The next higher stage of experience is somewhere between the instinctual and the intellectual, where the waking-consciousness is absorbed (preoccupied) through kama-manas (the desire mind). The desire-mind involves glamour and distortion, so that the waking-consciousness (at that stage) remains somewhat out of focus. Much of the activity and experience of the desire-mind is governed and conditioned unconsciously, especially by the external forces present in the immediate emotional and mental atmosphere which resonate with the tendencies (vulnerabilities) of the personality.

As the conscious mind gradually frees itself from the binding forces and limitations of kama-manas, the intellectual realm of focus is entered. The waking-consciousness may pass freely between the lower and higher states (depending on experience and development), but once the mind is reasonably developed (clarified), experience on any level becomes a matter of consciously or unconsciously directing (focusing) the attention of the intellect or mind. A great deal of coupling (interaction) then exists between the various states of emotional and intellectual experience. Patterns (habits) of thinking and feeling then tend to replace the purely external forces as the dominating influence for the waking-consciousness.

As the mind becomes more and more developed (disciplined) it becomes possible to pass the waking-consciousness into the abstract (higher) mind. Meditation (holding the purified mind steady in the light of the soul) is the method leading to such contemplation (abstract mental activity). When the waking-consciousness functions with form (thought-forms), the focus remains in the concrete mental region. When the waking-consciousness functions without form (in the higher sense) the focus is within the abstract mental region (or beyond) (of the soul). Beyond purely mental activity is the intuitional realm (buddhi) and the interaction between the mind and the intuition (buddhi-manas).

The intuitional realm should not be confused with the instinctual or astral. On intuitional levels, the waking-consciousness experiences awareness and realization, without thought. There may be awareness of consciousness itself, or awareness of thought (as in looking within the subconscious mind from the standpoint of the soul), but there is no direct expression in form, except consequentially as the lower mechanism (personality) attempts to interpret or respond to the higher impressions and subjective experience. The soul (and even the mind) can function practically independently of the waking-consciousness (the temporary focus for consciousness). A great deal of activity occurs on more subtle levels (subconscious and super-conscious). One of the goals of the spiritual student is to so expand the focus of the waking-consciousness that the subtle activities can be consciously programmed, thus increasing the utilization and usefulness of the entire human mechanism.

† Commentary No. 141

Purushottama Yoga

The fifteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Purushottama Yoga, the yoga of the supreme self, the tree of life, consciousness of the supreme, devotion to the supreme spirit, the attainment of the supreme. Therein Krishna (the logos) discusses the eternal fig-tree, the reincarnating self, the eye of wisdom, the immanence of God, and the attainment of the transcendent (supreme self). The common thread is the spiritual path and its encouragement toward supreme realization (perfection) (completion).

The eternal fig-tree is the tree of life, the entire (transient) universe, which symbolizes the (almost) endless cycle of birth and death. The tree finds its origin in Brahman, but becomes more and more entangled in the material world. So do souls become involved (through the instrument of the personality) in the objective world and temporarily enslaved by the gunas which nourish the tree of life. The cycle (circuit) can be ended, as perfection is achieved and the place is reached from which there is no return. The trimming of the tree suggests the reformation of human character, leading finally to constructive (harmonious) detachment. As the roots and branches of mundane existence are cut free, phenomena vanish in the ascendant light and vision of reality.

Without worldly delusion, the ascension becomes possible. But the soul (as a projection of divine life) reflects itself into the world of matter and is naturally absorbed by that lower realm as it becomes equipped (through its instrument, the personality) with senses and mind. As purpose is fulfilled in the lower worlds, the soul evolves beyond the divine maya (illusion) that hides the timeless peace of reality. The soul is never separated from the greater (common) life, but its reflection appears as a separation in the objective realm. The one life lives through the many forms, but the individual lives are ever one in that higher reality. As the individual consciousness returns to the soul levels and beyond, the individuality is not lost; it merely finds the reality of itself, as an expression within a sea of higher consciousness.

The participation in the greater life is directly dependent on the control of the senses (the lower life). Those who are deluded by the senses and personal interests (desires) cannot see the reality of the world (inwardly or outwardly). But those who are free from delusion become aware of the self and of reality; the eye of wisdom brings understanding (of pertinent matters) and inner vision. One cannot find or develop the wisdom-eye (of divine immanence) without first reforming and refining the ordinary human nature. The words and perspectives may differ, but the message of the scriptures is ever the same: an encouragement onward and upward for every human being regardless of the stage or particular nature of existence. The path implies continual reformation and progression until the inner life is revealed in all of its (impersonal) glory and the cycle or rebirth is no longer needed.

The immanence and transcendence of the godhead are clarified (through the participation of the individual consciousness within the life divine). The immanence of the logos persists through the various transformations of energy (life). The four kinds of food refer (on one level) to the four elements: earth, fire, air, and water; each of which is an expression of the divine life. Though matter, form, and even lower (human) consciousness are perishable (transient) (mortal), higher consciousness (the soul) belongs to the imperishable (eternal) (relatively immortal). But the transcendent (supreme self) (monad) (purushottama) is beyond even the imperishable. And it is to that transcendent reality that the evolutionary path ultimately proceeds.

† Commentary No. 142

Positive and Negative

The concept of contrast involving positive and negative elements (or terminology) is frequently encountered by the philosophical student. It is often important to be able to distinguish the meanings of each, drawn from context, since positive and negative can refer to things in several different ways, with numerous variations or implications. These may refer to good and evil, to activity and passivity, or even to something more or less arbitrary.

In the sense (illusion) (appearance) of good and evil, positive can refer to something that is beneficial, constructive, or appropriate; while negative can refer to something that is detrimental, destructive, or inappropriate. In a related sense, positive and negative can refer, respectively, to that which is superior and inferior, ordinate and subordinate, higher and lower, definite and indefinite, qualified and unqualified (a paradox), conditional and unconditional (another paradox), real and unreal, objective and subjective, or independent and dependent. Or they may refer to an action and reaction (response), a presence and absence, or an affirmation (assertion) and denial. And yet, in each of these pairs-of-opposites there is not necessarily any sense of good or evil. So one must be careful in using these terms, to avoid the unintended implication of positive with good and negative with bad.

In another sense, there is not necessarily any correlation of positive with good. In this sense, positive and negative refer respectively to that which is active and

passive, objective and subjective, or masculine and feminine. Here, masculine and feminine refer to polarity, a universal concept that goes far beyond apparent human sexual distinctions. That which is active by nature is called positive or masculine, while that which is passive by nature is called negative or feminine. The human lifewave (souls) is masculine, while the angelic lifewave is negative or feminine. A soul expressing itself temporarily through a male or female physical body may have an emotional nature which is positive (masculine) in some respects and negative (feminine) in other respects.

So polarity is not necessarily fixed or absolute. Positive and negative, active and passive; these terms usually have meaning only in a relative sense, as a plane of consciousness may be positive with respect to certain lifewaves or subordinate levels of consciousness, while being negative with respect to other lifewaves or to superior levels of consciousness. Furthermore, polarity in the sense of positive and negative is generally not discrete. There is normally a wide (continuous) range of intermediate values (degrees) between the extremes. Not all things are either black or white (rigid contrasts); many shades of gray may exist. So much depends on context and perspective. Many of the various pairs-of-opposites are actually rather arbitrary. That which is white is defined as the composite presence of light, but it may equally as well be defined as the absence of darkness. Even the so-called good and evil are not without some arbitrary implications.

Most everything involves some sort of moderation between extremes. The point or region of balance is often a matter of constructive neutrality (freedom) while each extreme remains relatively distracting. In this sense there can be considerable variation in the point of balance (the paradox of rightness) from one individual to another, or from one context (perspective) to another. But the vagueness of diversity and contrast is resolved and simplified in the resolution of the positive and negative elements of each of the pairs-of-opposites. Greater unity (synthesis) (harmony) ultimately replaces (in consciousness and being) the lesser (temporary) realm of paradox and duality.

Identification

Identification means the orientation of consciousness in regard to some inner or outer object, value, or reality. The orientation or association (at some depth) may be super-conscious, conscious, or subconscious (or some combination). In fact, many such (various) associations may exist simultaneously. In the external sense, the identification might be with some particular impression, value, or principle (or some set), or it may be with some individual, family, racial, cultural, or national object. In the internal sense, the identification might be with some aspect of the individuality or its instruments, or even (further) (in a contemplative way) with the inner reality of an apparently external or objective existence (such as humanity).

Most forms of external identification come about unconsciously through the conditioning effects of life in the outer (objective) world, such as the influence of society, culture, and family which is sustained by the external glamour and illusion. The values that are unconsciously identified with (and accepted) must ultimately become conscious and progressive. The path of freedom requires the individual to attain self-knowledge, and with that self-knowledge the spiritual student can begin to consciously reprogram the lower consciousness. Thus, as the individual (and analogously, the group) grows, so should the values upon which the objective life is clarified be expanded and refined, progressively and without attachment, with increasing self-control.

Identification does not necessarily imply attachment. As the quality of that which is identified with increases, and as the quality of the process is improved, there is less and less attachment. The identification of the evolving individual with a family, racial, cultural, or national unit gives way eventually to an identification with humanity, life itself, and ultimately to that which is cosmic or universal. And yet, the universal identification is of greater reality (coexistence) and lesser attachment than anything of a more personal nature. Personal (external) identification binds. Impersonal (more universal) identification liberates.

The process of internal identification parallels that for external values. The identification of the waking-consciousness with the physical body gives way to identification with the emotions (feelings) and the mind (and its thought-forms). Identification with the personality is eventually replaced by the identification of (with) the soul. In each successive transition, a crisis and transformation of consciousness is implied. Inner identification carries with it a relative reality (unification) (experience) (inseparability) beyond the association of thought with objective; for inner identification is a realization on some level, conscious or unconscious (from the standpoint of the waking-consciousness) as the case may be. The very act of identification is a lifting up (sending forth) to that plane (or object) of consciousness.

Wisdom is identification with eternal being (reality), whereas ignorance is identification with phenomenal appearance (illusion). The act of identification carries with it considerable potency for change and improvement. To identify with eternal being is to send forth (inwardly) one's life and consciousness toward that wisdom. To identify with phenomenal appearance is to sustain the enchantment of lower existence. The power of positive thinking and projection is allied with that of identification. Identification is essentially and inherently creative and evocative. If the best of spiritual values and qualities are identified with, then the group-identification can be creatively and progressively improved.

† Commentary No. 144

Frequency

Frequency is intimately involved with time and space, and yet, within itself, frequency is beyond any realm of time and space. Frequency is defined as the number of cycles or repetitions (of some phenomenon or activity) in a unit interval of time. By normalizing time (integrating over the time variable), the phenomenon is transformed into the frequency domain. In that domain can be found a number of keys to the various mysteries of manifestation, for manifestation is a periodic (recurring) (cyclic) function.

One of those keys has to do with the variation in frequency of the progressive spiral of evolution. In the frequency domain is found the natural tone of the

logos and the various permutations of the creative Sacred Word. Each of the variations holds a unique and creative aspect of manifestation. As creative manifestation proceeds, the frequency of cyclic unfoldment varies according to those (musical) potencies. As the frequency changes, so does the nature of objective experience (in the space-time reference frame) change. It would be misleading to assume the constancy of the time-interval in classical (historical) (non-relativistic) experience. The objective experience (time-wise) changes gradually throughout history.

Another key provides some insight into the relationship of the soul to its personality via meditation, since the microcosm reflects on its own level the natural experience of the macrocosm. On human levels, the (frequency of the) rhythm of the soul changes as the individual continues the pilgrimage (along the path). The soul is itself a creative word, related to the natural unfoldment of the human lifewave. And as a creative word, that soul has a natural rhythm (and frequency) through which it subjectively interacts (communicates) with its instrument (primarily the mind and the heart of the personality). Meditation is therefore much more meaningful if it coincides (in some significant way) with the natural tempo of the soul. Infrequent or occasional meditation is generally ineffective as far as the soul is concerned, for it lacks the continuity necessary for substantial progress. Too frequent meditation likewise becomes ineffective since the natural response is violated and is therefore confused. A meditation frequency of once per day (minimum) to several times per day (maximum) is usually quite appropriate for any spiritual student, but the specific timing is mostly a matter of the individual rhythm.

Throughout manifestation are additional clues and hints concerning the natural order and rhythm of the universe which can be directly related in a helpful manner to human existence. The natural frequencies of the solar and lunar cycles, for example, determine the (effective) meditation rhythm or pattern for group endeavor. There are cycles within cycles, with harmonics and overtones of significance; each of which can reveal a natural frequency. In the atomic and molecular realms are found natural frequencies that can provide information concerning the various orders (and structure) of manifestation; and each may have its analogy for human experience.

The unit (dimension) of frequency is inverse time. Inverse times are the common threads of every rotation, revolution, and progression throughout all of nature. For every modulation (communication) and pulsation (evolution), regardless of level, there exists (in the frequency domain) a common thread through which all things are bound (conditioned) (qualified) (sustained), the music of the spheres. In the frequency domain is found also the relationship between objective time and subjective time, and the ease of transition from the world of limitation (time and space).

† Commentary No. 145

Absorption

In a practical, spiritual context, absorption refers to the entire occupation of the conscious mind, the process of being absorbed. In the practical mental life of the spiritual student there are two processes of absorption which are of special concern: absorption in the mundane world and absorption in the world of the soul.

Absorption in the mundane world is one of the most peculiar problems for the spiritual student. The vast majority of intelligent human beings are completely absorbed in the mundane world. And even the vast majority of spiritual students are absorbed in mundane affairs more often than not. It is through such absorption that much of the basic human experience is attained; thus it is both natural and necessary. But for the spiritual student (as well as the intelligent, but thinking human being), progress requires that the consciousness be lifted out from mundane preoccupation. Gradually, objective experience is placed into a higher perspective which requires a relative detachment from lesser forces. Personal values are gradually refined and improved, and the mental life begins to take precedence over the mundane or worldly life.

The transition between mundane preoccupation (absorption) and mental polarization is natural and ultimately inevitable. But during that (usually very lengthy) transition period the waking-consciousness will naturally oscillate back and forth between being absorbed and not being absorbed. There are many factors which tend to keep the waking-consciousness absorbed. Personal energies and interests are paramount in sustaining absorption. Glamour

(mundane experience) in its many forms is perhaps the most serious of personal (individual and group) energies. The great planetary momentum of sustained glamour makes the task of intelligent withdrawal from the mundane consciousness a most difficult one. To be absorbed by glamour is easily the path of least resistance. Spiritual inertia is a most formidable adversary.

But, there are a few factors which encourage the upliftment of the personal life into the realm of (impersonal) mental polarization (and the sustained alignment of soul and personality). The soul itself is the most potent factor, for it gradually draws the mind (and the waking-consciousness) away from mundane preoccupation, according to the rhythmic (subjective) outpourings of the soul. The conscious mind can deliberately withdraw from mundane habits. New mental habits can be programmed to trigger withdrawal upon entering the absorbed state. The problem of absorption is complicated by the fact that the mundane world is usually entered unconsciously (by circumstance, habit, and tendentiousness). It is further complicated by the prime characteristic of absorption: the inability of the conscious mind to recognize the absorbed state while being absorbed. Therefore it is helpful to achieve conscious and subconscious mental discipline, so that self-programming becomes an effective means of avoiding absorption. It is further helpful to dwell upon impersonal, abstract, and spiritual energies, to achieve soul consciousness, and to live in the lower (objective) world from the higher standpoint.

The avoidance of mundane absorption faces another test in the need for the spiritual student to consciously live and work (serve) in a relatively mundane environment, to identify with humanity without being absorbed by the glamour and illusion of everyday human experience. It is a most difficult assignment, living in both worlds so that the energy of the higher may be made manifest in the lower; but with dedication and persistence, and with the guidance of the inner life, it becomes possible and practical.

Individual Freedom

Individual freedom is a relative state, limited by capability (potential), natural law (physical and superphysical), and the freedom of others. The concept of individual freedom is an interesting one for the spiritual student, for it has a bearing upon the personal (individual) life as well as the relationships of the individual with others. What appears to be individual freedom is actually an internal phenomenon (from the standpoint of humanity), but it can be considered from the vantage point or focus of the individual.

The exercise of freedom is one of the more sacred (and well-earned) of opportunities. Relatively unevolved individuals flow with the inherent and instinctual current of the personality, as that personality is exposed to the internal and external forces of heredity and environment. Such a flowing is relatively devoid of individual freedom, or at least lacking the exercise of freedom (as decisions are made unconsciously). As the individual evolves, the intelligence emerges (withdraws) somewhat from the surrounding sea of external forces, and the exercise of freedom is begun (on purely personality levels) (as decisions are made more or less consciously).

Ultimately, the individual must face the crisis of decision between the (apparent) values of the individual and the values of the group. That crisis (transition) (interaction of values) continues until the individual becomes deeply committed in consciousness to the evolutionary path. The higher (impersonal) values take precedence over the lower (personal) values and the exercise of freedom gradually becomes a matter of living in harmony with a far higher current, that of the path itself. Individual freedom then means the freedom of acceptance and the freedom of creatively (and responsibly) applying the higher energies (subject to the guidelines of natural law). Decisions are then made in conscious response to higher impression.

On a more practical level, the individual is free to choose the particular path or direction in life (subject as always to karma) and free to choose the values of life. The right to choose (the right to self-determination) is an important one. Not only must the spiritual student exercise his freedom, but the student must take

care to allow others to do so also. Values cannot really be impressed upon others; values must be self-realized. Individual freedom (sphere of influence) (rights) should extend only so far as the rights of others are not compromised. The principal means of constructive influence (without interference) is by encouragement and example. Constructive energy (values) can be made available, so that the individual can choose the response (if any), but the energy should not be forced.

The principle of non-interference (in the lives of others) is deeply rooted in the purpose of the differentiation of human lives. That purpose implies creativity and the development of new qualities and characteristics (through diversity and the freedom of expression). Each individual contributes experience and expression to the greater life. Creative (active) consciousness (as distinguished from passive consciousness) cannot be impressed or forced. It must be cultivated through (relative) freedom and tension. Though natural law provides boundaries (and encouragement), the potentialities to be realized would be of an altogether different variety (character) if values (decisions) (paths) were forced explicitly. Forced adherence (for the human evolution) is temporary at best; unless the higher values are accepted (realized) in consciousness (and interpreted and experienced creatively), the individual contributes little to the greater life. The lessons of individual freedom are subtle and many.

† Commentary No. 147

Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga

The sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of the division (distinction) between the good and evil natures, between heaven and hell. Discussed are the cardinal virtues and the deadly sins, the effects and consequences of the two paths, the triple gate of hell, and liberation from the path of bondage.

Among the cardinal virtues (divine traits) which lead toward God and liberation (deliverance) are: fearlessness, purity, steadfastness in wisdom, generosity (unselfishness), self-control (as to the senses) (self-harmony), austerity, straightforwardness, sacrifice, harmlessness, serenity (truthfulness),

compassion, gentleness, modesty (humility), and freedom from pride. Among the deadly sins are ostentation, arrogance, self-conceit, anger, harshness, and ignorance. The cultivation of the cardinal virtues is encouraged by karma (natural law); the deadly sins are discouraged by karma. By living in harmony with natural law, the spiritual student progresses in consciousness. Those who live in direct obstruction to the law bring upon themselves the difficult and painful lessons (encouragement) necessary for ultimate progress.

Heaven and hell are considered both as states of mind and as destinies in consciousness. As a state of mind, heaven is living in harmony with self (and therefore with every other life) (God). As a disposition (and state of consciousness), hell is living in conflict with self (in opposition to natural law). As a destiny, heaven (expanded consciousness) (completion) (freedom) is the consequence of the right-hand (spiritual) path. Similarly, hell (self-destruction) is the consequence of the left-hand path (darkness) (bondage). Progressive reincarnation is a manifestation of the law of evolution; all lives (with or without form) must evolve along a progressive spiral. Even those who live in the bondage of material or phenomenal existence are forever urged onward and upward. But for those very, very few who become absolutely obsessed by selfish endeavors, the path of darkness brings about self-destruction. The (pattern of the) personality is destroyed, and the soul must begin the evolutionary cycle anew with a subsequent lifewave.

The law of karma (evolutionary consequence) cannot be compromised. There can be no transmigration (passage of life into a lower kingdom), for that would be contrary to law. The forms may disintegrate and a few lives may be withdrawn from the present cycle, but only that the life might be free to begin again.

The triple gate of hell refers to three serious distractions (the three doors of darkness) which are especially in conflict with progress: lust (desire), anger (wrath) (hatred), and greed. These tendencies are easily acquired through self-indulgence and self-centeredness, but are not easily lost. The karma of such self-indulgence must necessarily be serious (the farther one wanders from the evolutionary path, the more severe are the consequences). But even those who are bound by the worst of ways may reform themselves, as the urging of evolutionary intent finally enters the (unconscious) mind. The path of liberation

for them is the path of liberation for humanity. As the consciousness of the group evolves, so are the members of the group drawn onward and upward. Thus it is important for the spiritual student to work primarily with the consciousness of humanity (rather than with isolated individuals). The momentum of the lifewave is considerable, and (for the most part) sufficient to carry with it even those souls which are chained to the earth (through desire). May spiritual impulse increase, that group endeavors might achieve the needed maturity, that all of humanity might contribute consciously to the greater life.

† Commentary No. 148

The Noble Eight-Fold Path

One of the most important (spiritually meaningful) of Buddhist disciplines is the living of the Noble Eightfold Path. The object of the eightfold path (as a system) is to provide a framework or focus for right spiritual living (and all that that implies). The noble path consists of eight interdependent categories or aspects of proper mental and physical practice: right belief, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right exertion, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This contribution of the Buddha Dharma is quite applicable within the lives of serious students of all religions and spiritual philosophies.

Right belief (as to karma) is the holding of right attitude, being at all times free from prejudice, bias, glamour, illusion, superstition, doubt, fear, and animosity; the holding of right understanding, right view, broadmindedness; the holding of right knowledge about the path that leads to the cessation of ill. Right belief also implies freedom from opinion. Right thought implies the living of the highest standard of conduct which the mind can conceive; living the truth that is known or realized; right aspiration towards renunciation, benevolence, and kindness. The link between right thought and right conduct is not a casual one; the harmony (lack of conflict) between belief and practice is most important. The spiritual student is actually obligated (by karma) to put into practice the teachings that are understood and accepted.

Right speech means the control of speech so that it is always true, simple, gentle, and entirely honest; the abstention from idle talk. Right speech is a

significant key to living in the lower worlds without being absorbed by mundane matters. The spiritual student needs to develop sufficient poise that speech occurs not for the sake of speech, but only where necessary, useful, and constructive. Idle talk contributes greatly to mundane absorption, while wisdom in speech is essentially creative. Right action means right conduct, abstaining from the taking of life and from taking that which is not given; the development of honest, just, and enlightened relationships with other living beings; to do that which is right to do.

Right means of livelihood is closely related to right conduct. It is the practice of harmlessness, living without hurting or causing sorrow (physically, emotionally, or mentally) (is it possible to cause sorrow?). Right means of livelihood has considerable karmic significance; the spiritual student should be aware of the consequences of livelihood, especially as karma is worked out and a life of service is begun. Right exertion is right effort, perseverance in noble action; the overcoming of all the illusional life (and glamour); determination and the building of right spiritual momentum, based upon self-control and the wise application of resources. The spiritual student must be willing to work hard (without attachment to the work), if the goal for humanity is to be attained (as the student loses and finds himself).

Right mindfulness is right thinking, the directing of the mind toward the understanding of the supreme wisdom (and the nature and needs of the lifewave); right remembrance and self-discipline; remaining ardent, self-possessed (without distraction) and mindful. Right concentration leads to right meditation (the practice of the inner experience) and right contemplation; the focus of the mind upon appropriate matters, the joy and ease of solitude (higher union), and the cultivation of the deepest equanimity. Right meditation is the spiritual exercise which ties all of the eight categories together, as a means of reinforcement of intent, and as a means of allowing the higher energies to flow.

I Am That I Am 1

One of the most famous and more potent of esoteric formulae is an ancient biblical mantra for self-identification. In the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14) are found the words "I am That I am." This formula is actually a triple (progressive) mantra; each of the three aspects (relating to the personality, soul, and monad, respectively) can be used (depending on consciousness) to achieve integration, identification, or alignment on some level.

The first (basic) mantra ("I am") can be sounded in consciousness (with a suitable focus and realization and projection) to fully integrate and unify the prepared (purified and disciplined) personality. The object is to project the singular and coherent focus of the waking-consciousness upon the personality. Until the personality is properly integrated, the energy and forces of the personality are scattered throughout many (separated) centers of consciousness. Properly projected, the "I am" dominates the many centers, brings them into cooperative alignment with each other, and integrates the entire personality, by stages, until there is but a single unified and responsive mechanism.

The integrated personality is thus a disciplined and easily controllable instrument for the soul to utilize more effectively. For many spiritual students the projection of the "I am" may require many years of sustained and complemented effort in order to achieve the necessary degree (quality) (completeness) of integration. For others it may be a simple matter of using the "I am" as a form of recapitulation. In either case, the successive mantras have little significance until the personality is properly integrated (and sustained in the integrated state automatically without directed consciousness).

The first mantra actually identifies the waking-consciousness with the personality from the standpoint or perspective (source of energy) of the soul; thus it leads the waking-consciousness from integration through alignment with the soul, to the soul itself. It is the second mantra ("I am That") which secures that alignment of soul and personality as the personality is dedicated (through the projection of the mantra as it is sounded in consciousness) to its overshadowing and indwelling source of guidance and meaning. But in order to

be effective, the mantra must be projected properly (with understanding), and that cannot be without the inner guidance of the light of the soul itself. These first two mantras are relatively safe, but are recommended (in sequence) only for the spiritual student who is approaching the alignment of the soul and personality, based upon serious spiritual dedication and preparation. The “I am That” cannot be achieved without considerable spiritual progress (the cultivation of a spiritual personality). Even the most powerful of mantras contains no shortcut to progress.

The third mantra (“I am That I am”) refers to the ultimate union (alignment) of the soul and its monad. The third mantra is not recommended for indiscriminate use (by the conscious mind), even for the serious spiritual student. The monad must sound forth the call, before the soul can adequately respond; thus the sounding of the (full) triple mantra is only really meaningful on soul levels (not on any level of the personality). Each stage of the triple mantra also carries with it considerable group significance. With group identification or in group alignment, the mantra can be sounded in consciousness, for humanity. With the power of projection, the mantra in its several stages can be applied in various ways, both in the individual sense (seeking group identification through the soul) and in the group sense (seeking humanitarian progress).

† Commentary No. 150

Ray Relationships

A study of the seven rays provides the basic framework for the entire field of the esoteric psychology. The first step toward understanding the seven rays is to understand the universal and synthetic nature of the rays: what they are (as a synthetic whole) and how they relate to life, consciousness, and form.

The second step is to study and understand the nature and characteristics of each of the seven rays in manifestation, both in terms of human psychology (through the monad, soul, and personality) and in terms of universals. The third step is to understand the various basic and applied ray relationships and correspondences. It is this third and final step which brings the deeper understanding of the rays, as comprehension dawns as to how each ray (and

each relationship) contributes to the entire field of ray phenomena. And it is this third step which brings the student back to the universal and synthetic nature of the rays, as the cycle is renewed.

The seven rays cannot ever really be separated, one from another; they can be differentiated in various ways, and they can be studied, perceived, and related to individually or collectively (or in certain groups), but the rays remain interrelated, and the energy of any ray is modified and qualified by the other six. No ray can be wholly isolated because of the fundamental pattern or structure which supports (allows) the manifestation of the rays in the first place. During the early stages of (universal) manifestation, it might appear that one, two, or three of the rays (the major rays of aspect) exist without the lesser (the minor rays of attribute or the rays which follow in sequence during manifestation), but such is not the case, for the higher (early) rays contain rays to follow (in latent form, not in any dynamic sense). The integrated whole contains within itself the differentiated aspects and attributes; and within each of the differentiated aspects and attributes can be found the basic integral nature of the whole (and consequently the other six aspects and attributes).

The internal (basic) ray relationships include the distinction between higher (major) (primary) rays and lower (minor) (secondary) rays, the differentiation of the rays into the two paths (the occult or head-centered path and the mystical or heart-centered path), and relationships based (apparently) upon symmetry, polarity, and numerological considerations. Through various ways, at least fourteen significant ray sets can be discerned (derived) (along with sixteen interpretations (relationships)). Each set or group of rays can be studied to obtain further insight into the nature of the (ray) members of the set, the special relationships between rays (and the significance for human psychology and manifestation), and the contribution of each ray (and each set) to the synthetic whole.

The internal ray relationships set the stage for the application of esoteric (ray) psychology to the outer and inner worlds. Every plane (and sub-plane) of consciousness, every cycle (greater and lesser), and every lifewave (and stream or set of lifewaves) has a direct and indirect correspondence with the rays. Every aspect of life (spirit) (energy), consciousness (quality) (force), and form (appearance) (matter) is qualified, conditioned, or otherwise related to one or

another (or all) of the seven rays. With a comprehensive understanding of the rays and their relationships (basic and applied), the panorama of esoteric psychology opens up innumerable (and interrelated) avenues of study and subsequent understanding in all aspects of manifestation (according to consciousness).

† Commentary No. 151

Self-Knowledge

The understanding of the manifested universe is generally dependent upon the ability to correlate, interpret, and assimilate information gained through observation and experience (through the senses). But that understanding of the outer world is also (somewhat) dependent upon an understanding of human nature. Man tends to understand the world around him in proportion to how well he understands himself. There are many correlations between the inner (human) and outer worlds; many keys to understanding the universe are held within the human form for those who would know themselves truthfully.

Self-knowledge begins with self-observation, self-examination, and self-evaluation. Important ingredients of this process are honesty (humility) and sincerity. The seeker must be open to the truth about himself, and must remain unbiased by preconceived ideas or conclusions. The exercise of retrospection is part of this process, but it should be complemented by serious spiritual exercise (meditation) and the calming of the entire personality nature. By steps the layers of self-glamour and illusion are revealed for what they are, and the deeper truths about the self (and its relationship to every other life) are uncovered. Each action, activity, feeling, thought, and tendency should be examined carefully. Above all, the motives and intentions should be evaluated, for these are the real keys to understanding any action.

The intelligent student should realize that he is influenced (to a certain extent) by both internal and external forces. Each source of influence should be examined and the response of the personality to each influence should be assessed. The student should honestly accept responsibility for his own behavior and his response to any situation. As understanding increases, so can the response be conditioned or qualified by will (intention). The student should

be able to apply self-knowledge or understanding to the task of self-improvement (the continuing (probationary) effort of purification, preparation, and refinement) as well as to the task of understanding the reality or purpose that underlies all events and appearance in the manifested universe.

Outer knowledge can be tested inwardly for significance if self-knowledge is based in truth (honesty). In accordance with the awareness (acceptance) of the truth about oneself, will be the ability to discern truth from (within) information or knowledge obtained externally. Similarly, knowledge can be obtained internally and tested for significance. The test for apparent significance depends a great deal on the degree and quality of alignment (of soul and personality) and the quality of values which condition the personality. An individual who is personality-centered will normally accept as significant any impressions which reinforce his own (personality-centered) values and interests; this will, of course, reinforce his continued self-glamour. An individual who is reasonably aligned (with the self) and who is honest with himself (and whose values are predominantly spiritual and impersonal) will accept as significant only those impressions which have some basis in truth (reality), rather than appearance.

Self-knowledge is the beginning of self-realization. In humility and with compassion, the self-realized spiritual student understands himself (at some level) (and knows his limitations) and the world around him, with honest detachment. Such a spiritual student is continually aware of his actions, reactions, and interactions with the inner and outer worlds. Balanced nicely between the spiritual self and the outer world, the self-realized student stands as a responsive and willing servant of life (God) and humanity (the lifewave).

Spiritual Absorption

Spiritual absorption means the absorption of the conscious mind (the waking-consciousness) (and the entire personality) in the world of the soul, in direct contrast to the phenomenon of mundane absorption. Spiritual absorption requires the direct cooperation and complete alignment of soul and personality.

In the spiritually absorbed state, the waking-consciousness may not have any conscious awareness on personality levels (physical, emotional, and concrete mental) or there may be a form of (indirect) perimeter awareness in which the waking-consciousness is aware of internal (personality) conditions or conditions at the periphery of the aura, but in either case being detached from any conditions in the lower worlds. There may be a partially absorbed state in which the waking-consciousness has a (self-imposed) limited ability to interact with the lower state of consciousness and the immediate environment.

Among the goals of the spiritual student are the elimination of the susceptibility (tendency) toward mundane absorption, and the cultivation of the ability to enter and withdraw from the spiritually absorbed state at will. The spiritual student needs to be continuously aligned with the soul and should be able to pass between the spiritually absorbed state and a state of intelligent (and fully conscious) interaction with the lower worlds, at will. Serious spiritual meditation and continued personality refinement are the means of achieving that ability. From the spiritually absorbed state, the energies of the soul (and its group) may flow unimpeded, and even more so than while (simply) in a state of alignment; but there can be little conscious control or direction of those energies in the lower worlds. That is as it should be, for the student who can easily achieve the spiritually absorbed state has a personality that is so purified and disciplined that it functions instinctually as a consequence of personality conditioning and training. The properly prepared personality is an effective extension of the soul itself.

There is, however, a phenomenon of the deception (glamour) of spiritual withdrawal. An individual may (without spiritual achievement) attempt to withdraw from the lower worlds, either temporarily or permanently, while still

in incarnation. The appearance (deception) of spiritual absorption may be achieved, when actually the individual is simply absorbed on astral or concrete mental (personality) levels. Those who are especially susceptible to the glammers of the spiritual path might do well to guard against such distraction. The purpose of the spiritual student is not to withdraw from the lower life (world), but to so conquer the lower life (personality) that the interaction (expression) of the individuality (the soul) and its personality with the outer (objective) world becomes spiritually meaningful.

Directly or indirectly, the spiritual student has work to do in the lower worlds; otherwise there would be no incarnation. The student (who can) may find the need for occasional or even frequent periods of spiritual absorption throughout the incarnation, but the purpose of such is to assist in the expression of the (higher) spiritual energies in the lower worlds, for regeneration and the elimination (through spiritual strength) of periods of mundane absorption. The need for balance is (almost) paramount, if the spiritual student is to effectively express the needed energies and serve as a meaningful observer in the human world. Through daily spiritual meditation and continued reference to the aligned state of heart and mind, the spiritual student can remain (reasonably) balanced between the world of activity and the world of the overshadowing (indwelling) soul.

† Commentary No. 153

Sraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga

The seventeenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Sraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga, the yoga of the threefold faith. Considered are faith and human nature in relationship to the three gunas; exaggerated asceticism; the three constituents of nature in food, sacrifice, ascetic practice, and in giving; and the application of the sacred words: Om Tat Sat. The underlying theme is the need for purity (sincerity) of motive in all of the activities of life. Motives and faith are related to a person's nature in accordance with sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), or tamas (darkness). In the sattvika disposition (nature), faith (devotion) is to God and to humanity; in the rajasika disposition, faith is to oneself in relationship with others; and in the tamasika disposition, faith is to oneself entirely.

A man is as his faith is; the quality of consciousness (and disposition) is related to that faith. Actions of the past appear as tendencies (inclinations) and vulnerabilities in subsequent incarnations. Thus a person's nature (faith) is determined by previous experience. The (true) spiritual student (having the sattvika disposition) is characterized by constant faithfulness and pure (selfless) motive (discretion), which have been cultivated. Exaggerated asceticism (and any form of exaggerated or false religious or spiritual activity) (such as psychic demonstration or display) is not a spiritual activity. That which is psychic or superphysical is not (usually) necessarily spiritual. Motive and purpose (and quality of consciousness) determine spirituality; phenomenal powers are (generally) no such indication.

The respective disposition is manifested (and therefore revealed) in various ways. In food (knowledge) (understanding) (the taste and values of a person), the sattvika disposition is indicated by values which are relatively pure and (spiritually) meaningful. The rajasika disposition is indicated by values which are distorted somewhat by desire (emotional or selfish interest). In sacrifice (worship) (service), sattva indicates performance according to duty, while rajas indicates performance for the sake of personal reward (such as recognition or self-glorification). In the ascetic practice (austerity) (continence) of the spiritual student, the sattvika nature is revealed as a threefold harmony: the purity (meaningfulness) (harmlessness) of physical activity, the purity of words (in peacefulness and truth), and the purity of mind and heart.

The sattvika nature is also distinguished in the giving of gifts according to dharma (duty) (appropriateness) (without publicity), rather than the giving according to expectation (in either direction). Any activity performed with the intention of karma indicates (some) selfishness and the rajasika temperament. Spiritual practice (or any practice) in any form loses its value (purity) to the extent that rewards are sought. To perform any task according to dharma (to do what needs to be done because it needs to be done) is an indication of sattva (goodness). Right motives become increasingly important as the student progresses along the path. As the (necessary) qualifications of the path become increasingly refined, motives and methods take precedence over actions.

The sacred words "Om Tat Sat" can be used to qualify intentions and activities. "Om" (purity) can be used as a dedication (a qualified beginning). "Tat" (It) (That) is a word of sincerity. "Sat" (It is) (reality) (goodness) can be used as a consecration (benediction). Together, if used properly and sincerely, these three words can clarify any activity. One of the many objects of the spiritual student is the qualification of all of the life and activity with spiritual purpose.

† Commentary No. 154

Spiritual Telepathy

Telepathy is communication from one mind (or soul) to another by means other than the senses. There are three forms or levels of spiritual telepathy: concrete mental, abstract mental, and buddhic (intuitional). Any form of clairvoyance or clairaudience which utilizes astral (sense) impressions is not considered to be telepathic in nature. Telepathic communication is above and beyond the plane of astral phenomena. Effective telepathic communication requires a fully-conscious and well-developed (but well-disciplined) mind. It also requires a highly purified and disciplined emotional (astral) nature.

There are two serious stumbling blocks to (valid) spiritual telepathy; both involve personal energy. First is the emotional nature which can play heavily upon the mind and distort mental impressions. Second is the mind itself which must necessarily interpret and translate mental impressions. The validity of impressions received in the waking-consciousness depends almost entirely on the purity of the mind and the emotions. For this reason (and for other reasons) the serious spiritual student must transcend personal energies. Personal desires and interests serve to compromise the mental and intuitional faculties.

The spiritual student is not encouraged to develop psychically or telepathically. The student is, however, encouraged to continue to purify the entire personality nature and to engage in appropriate humanitarian and spiritual work. Naturally, and as a consequence of the purified and disciplined personality, the higher (telepathic and intuitional) faculties are developed, without effort. But heart and mind should be in the right place, first. The purpose of spiritual telepathy is to aid in the sharing of spiritual energies (thought-forms) (ideas)

(understanding) (realization). Purposeful and helpful energies can be shared (projected) (transmitted) through focused meditations. The proper reception and interpretation of (meaningful) (impersonal) telepathic impressions (to aid in understanding) is also a matter of (purified) (disciplined) (responsive) mental quality and the (spiritual) meditative life. Wherever the student is absorbed in the lower worlds (personal energies), there is no real (valid) (conscious) (consistent) telepathic impression or insight.

Concrete mental telepathy is a form of communication between minds (personalities) involving externalized thought-forms. Abstract mental and intuitional (buddhic) telepathy is a form of communication between souls (in a group context) and internalized thoughts (ideas) which can be translated by the waking-consciousness into (concrete) thought-forms. External (mental) impressions (forms) must pass through the mental aura and are therefore subject to distortion depending on the quality of the mind. Internal (mental) impressions (from or via the soul) are subject to translation and interpretation by the concrete mind. It is quite essential that the mind be disciplined and aligned properly with the soul, if the impressions are to remain valid.

This problem (of reception, translation, and interpretation) is further complicated by the tendency of the lower (concrete) mind to fabricate internal thought-forms and pass them off to the waking-consciousness as higher impressions. This is one of the dangers inherent in personal energies. Wherever there is desire or personal interest, the lower mind is invited to masquerade as the soul (or as the teacher). This form of self-deception is quite subtle and quite serious. If spiritual telepathy is to be a means of understanding and realization and a means of sharing spiritual energies, then the need for clarity (and purity) of mind and emotion cannot be over-emphasized. One must remain as free as possible (mentally unencumbered) to discern truth.

Basic Ray Relationships

The basic ray relationships reveal the internal structure and inter-relatedness of the seven rays. In studying these relationships, the student can understand more fully the energy nature of each of the rays, the rules and ways in which that energy nature can be applied, and the application of ray phenomena as the foundation of universal manifestation. The two fundamental divisions of the seven rays are vertical (higher and lower) and horizontal (parallel).

The vertical differentiation of the rays involves the process of manifestation itself, as the three major rays of aspect (the upper division) (1,2,3) are reflected (transformed) into the four minor rays of attribute (the lower division) (4,5,6,7). The major rays are also the rays of inward direction (introspection). The three rays of outward direction (expression) (experience) (5,6,7) also form a set; each set constitutes a ray relationship. The rays of the third aspect (3,4,5,6,7) form the largest significant set (short of totality), which sums to 25 and reduces to 7. The minor rays sum to 22 and reduce to 4, which is significant since the fourth ray is the ray of balance (contrast) between the lower and higher elements.

This relative distinction of higher and lower sets does not necessarily indicate relative importance. The major rays (1,2,3) (as a group) are reflected into the minor rays in three ways, as shown by the three lower sets: (3,4,5,6,7), (4,5,6,7), and (5,6,7). This particular distinction of ray relationships holds the key (for correspondence) to all generalized vertical relationships (such as the relationship between the soul and its personality).

The horizontal differentiation of the rays involves the manifestation of ray energy (life) through two parallel streams or paths: the set of occult rays (1,3,5,7) and the set of mystical rays (2,4,6). The occult (odd-numbered) rays are particularly head-centered, whereas the mystical (even-numbered) rays are particularly heart-centered. This horizontal distinction is ultimately superimposed upon the vertical to form a basic ray matrix (for synthesizing the contributions of each path). Each of the two distinctions constitutes a basic duality. The mystical path reduces to 3 (the largest single-place integer of base 4 (a perfect number (power of 2))), whereas the occult path reduces to 7 (the

largest single-place integer of base 8 (likewise a perfect number)). Together, the two paths (the seven rays) reduce to 1 (totality).

Another important relationship involves higher and lower correspondence through an intermediate. The three sets of rays which demonstrate the intermediate relationship are (1,4,7), (2,4,6), and (3,4,5), all of which sum to 12 and reduce to 3. Each is centered on the ray of balance, and each involves a reflection about that point of balance. The central significance of the fourth ray should not be overlooked. Each of these three sets has an associated spread: (1,4,7) is broad; (2,4,6) is moderate; and (3,4,5) is fairly narrow. It is interesting to note that the mystical rays also form the moderate, intermediate set.

Another derivative of major relationships involves complements and reflections, by pairs. The special case includes the three complements (1,6), (2,5), and (3,4). The general case includes the three simple reflections (1,7), (2,6), and (3,5). The special case reduces to 7, while the general case reduces to 8. The real significance of the reflections is that each ray and its reflection constitute a single energy (quality) perceived in different ways. Each of the sets (and basic ray relationships) can be studied in order to discern the contribution of each set to the evolution of the seven (the One) and all that is contained therein.

† Commentary No. 156

Honesty

One of the most fundamental of qualities to be cultivated by the spiritual student is honesty. It is not enough merely to meet the orthodox standards of honesty; the spiritual student is (ultimately) expected to achieve the very spirit of honesty, the deepest intention and experience that is the realization of truth (reality) that exists at the core of one's being. Honesty is actually a simple quality, but the implications for the student are quite considerable.

Basically (literally), honesty means fairness and straightforwardness of conduct; and adherence to the facts. Honesty is directly related to both integrity and sincerity. Honesty implies a refusal to lie, steal, or deceive in any way. One of the problems associated with honesty (and dishonesty) is the matter of interpretation (perspective) and meaning. Fortunately, as spiritual

consciousness is evolved it becomes (increasingly) easier to discern truthfulness. Considerable effort (intention) may be needed for the student to cultivate (and refine) the concept and expression of an honest nature. It may not be so easy to be completely honest in thought, in word (speech) (communication), and in deed (action). To the extent to which it is possible, however, the spiritual student must endeavor to be entirely honest in every way.

One might ask at this point, why honesty is so important. The answer is that the cultivation of an honest nature is very closely related to the realization of truth (God) itself. If the student earnestly seeks truth (the God within) (reality), then the student must become truthful, in every possible way. How can a student expect to realize truth unless he is of a nature quite similar to truth? There are other reasons why honesty should be quite important to the student. The consequences of dishonesty are of a nature to undermine and impede spiritual progress. Dishonesty is related to disharmony, not only between individuals but also between the individual and the various cosmic (spiritual) laws, and between the personality and the (overshadowing) (indwelling) soul. Dishonesty actually creates (and sustains) the disharmony (which might be called illusion) which is a barrier between what is said (thought) (done) and what is true (real) (meant). Honesty, on the other hand, sustains reality and discourages illusion.

There are many forms of dishonesty, some quite obvious, others rather subtle. To say one thing and mean another is a form of dishonesty. To believe something but not to live in accordance with that belief is dishonest. To misrepresent oneself, to pretend, or to wear a face (facade) (appearance or behavior) is to be dishonest (to be in disharmony with reality or oneself). Dishonesty is also possible by omission or implication. Dishonesty (disharmony) is also related to disease. Wherever a discrepancy exists between what is said or done and what should be, there is disharmony. Awareness of such (by the person involved) implies dishonesty: lack of awareness of such implies either self-deception (which is worse than dishonesty) or ignorance (darkness).

It is essential that the spiritual student cultivate truthfulness in all regards; to be as honest as possible in all dealings with others (inwardly and outwardly), and to be entirely honest with oneself. Self-honesty is the very basis or

foundation of truthfulness, for in self-honesty there is cultivated an awareness of truthfulness. There is no substitute for the cultivation of humility, honesty, and truthfulness in matters large or small, if the student expects ever to find the true self. It is necessarily a progressive cultivation, for as momentum builds, the student will realize more and more the nature and reality of truth and his relationship to (That) truth.

† Commentary No. 157

Tension

Tension refers to stress or pressure, whether it is physical, emotional, or mental in nature. Understanding tension in both the orthodox and metaphysical domains can be quite helpful to the spiritual student, for tension is involved in the structure and manifestation of the universe, and tension is involved in every stage of experience and evolution. Wherever force exists, a tension of some sort is present. Wherever there is mass (matter); wherever there is motion; and wherever there is consciousness, there is tension.

Every aspect of the form world involves tension. Every atom of matter is a force-field that is held in place through tension. Every interaction between forms or between form and consciousness incorporates tension. Wherever there is an opposition of forces, and wherever there is balance, there is tension. For tension is directly related to energy and interaction (communication).

Without tension, matter could not be held in place; the human form could not exist; and human consciousness could not be focused at all. Without tension there would be no potential (future). Tension might even be defined as the urge or impulse to progress or release (to achieve potential). Tension is inherent in the laws of karma and evolution. Therefore, tension is directly related to the plan or purpose of life, and the manifestation (fulfillment) of that plan. Wherever there is an objective that is unsatisfied there is tension (contrast) (conflict) between what is and what should be, between existence and anticipated existence (destiny). That tension is a manifested force that urges progress toward completion. The law (plan) of evolution places continuous pressure (tension) upon humanity, and in various ways upon all who are a part of that lifewave. Similarly, karma places pressure upon every unfulfilled energy,

whether it belongs to an individual soul (in perspective) or to the group or lifewave. The pressures of evolution (and karma) are continuous but not necessarily constant; those pressures and tensions are continually changing in magnitude, type, and application, as the dynamic interaction of life (purpose), consciousness, and form progresses.

Tension might also be defined as the accumulation of energy, and it is in this respect that the spiritual student might (especially) well be aware, for everyone is continually receiving and accumulating and transmitting energy. The spiritual student actually invokes and attracts (consciously or otherwise) spiritual energies to be utilized constructively and shared appropriately. If these energies are allowed to accumulate without proper disposition, then the energy tension will necessarily find its release in ways which may not be intended. Disease (disharmony) is almost universally a matter of unresolved and unreleased energies. If the energy is released improperly (or selfishly), then disease (of some sort) may be the consequence. Or if a needed lesson is not learned, then the energy of the lesson may accumulate in the form of tension.

Tension in itself is neither good nor bad. Some forms of tension are absolutely essential to life and progress. Other forms of tension may come and go according to karma (action, the sending forth of energies; and reaction, the tension or consequence of those energies). In every form of tension there is information (lessons) (purpose). The esoteric student may (eventually) be expected to determine the cause of every tension to be faced or experienced, so that appropriate release and resolution can be achieved. Psychological tension must also be resolved appropriately, just as the tension that forms the foundation of existence must ultimately be released (completed). The relatedness of tension is quite profound; may understanding increase.

Moksha Sanyasa Yoga

The eighteenth and final chapter of the Bhagavad Gita is entitled Moksha Sanyasa Yoga, the yoga of liberation (freedom) through renunciation. The chapter consists of a comprehensive summary and recapitulation of the preceding seventeen chapters, though in somewhat different terms. Considered is the primary thread of the treatise: renunciation (and self-surrender). Two forms of renunciation are viewed (almost) interchangeably. Sanyasa in its highest (human) form implies the renunciation of (all) personal desires (glamours). Tyaga (in its highest form) implies the abandonment (renunciation) of the fruits of all works. As freedom from mundane absorption is achieved, and as spiritual work is entered (performed) (with proper attitude), then liberation (potency) is attained (almost incidentally).

Renunciation is further clarified by a consideration of the three constituents of nature (with emphasis on sattva) in metaphysical doctrine (knowledge), in works, in the agent, in the intellect, in constancy, and in happiness. In the renunciation (transformation) of (lower) knowledge is found the higher (unified) knowledge (truth), the inner and inclusive realization of the continuity of all life. In works the higher (sattvika) disposition is shown wherever work (action) is performed without attachment to the work or to the fruits of the work. It is important for the spiritual student to (begin to) work from duty and without becoming entangled in the work itself. Such entanglement suggests continued bondage and distraction on personal (personality) levels. The work of the disciple is the work of appropriateness, to do what needs to be done, whether it is mundane and necessary or entirely spiritual, whether the work is associated (attracted) with karma or dharma (or both). Renunciation is disentanglement (fulfillment), not withdrawal.

In the agent, the sattvika disposition is also free from attachment, as the spiritual student attains a non-egotistical and stoic temperament (indicating freedom). As God is realized, so is the distinction and nature of the agent clarified. The sattvika disposition contributes the quality of discernment to the intellect. As personality values are renounced (transcended), the wisdom of (realization of) discernment (appropriateness) is achieved. In consistency

(firmness) the (student having the) sattvika temperament remains ever poised with spiritual fortitude. And in the (quiet) happiness born of self-realization does sattva prove to be quite superior to the senses, as the pleasures of the lower life lose their hold on the spiritual student.

One of the keys to (appropriate) renunciation is the acceptance and performance of dharma (which is complementary to the right attitude toward karma). Liberation is not (cannot be) attained by avoiding karma or by declining to accept responsibility. Liberation is attained through the proper fulfillment of karma. In wisdom is this distinction well-known. Work should not be suspended; work should simply be placed in a more (spiritually) meaningful perspective. The performance of duty without attachment is the needed form of renunciation.

Perfection cannot be attained without practice (effort) and the elimination (renunciation) of self-centeredness. It is this mastery of self that is the object of the synthesis of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga, as set forth in the Bhagavad Gita. Self-surrender is the achievement of selflessness. As the ego (lower self) (personality) is conquered, the will (unity) of the lower self is uplifted and aligned with the (divine) will of the One (soul). Self-surrender is merely completion (ultimate fulfillment).

† Commentary No. 159

Privacy

Privacy is defined as the quality or state of being apart from company or observation. Privacy implies personal secrecy and seclusion. Most people may think of themselves as having complete privacy of thought and feeling; but the sense of human isolation, of independence one from another, is merely a perspective that has no real basis etherically, emotionally, or mentally. Man lives and works in a dynamic field of etheric, astral (emotional), and mental energies, most of which are quite interactive in the superphysical worlds. Thoughts and feelings are continuously being impressed upon the immediate mental and emotional environment. Consequently, there is no real privacy.

As spiritual and psychic sensitivity and understanding increase, the student may become more and more aware of the feelings and the quality of thinking of others. No attempts may be (need be) made, for the properly trained spiritual student will simply be aware of any thoughts or feelings for which such awareness is appropriate, or such awareness may be incidental. The trained esoteric student is as comfortable and capable in the mental world as most of humanity are (apparently) comfortable and capable in the physical world. To the advanced spiritual student, thoughts and feelings are very real energies to be dealt with constructively and intelligently. But before the aspirant can be trusted with such talents and capability, the motives must be purified, and a high degree of spiritual quality and self-control must be attained.

As the spiritual student progresses in self-mastery, his own thoughts and feelings become purified and well-disciplined, almost completely contained (coherent) (controlled). Without such discipline (focus), thoughts and feelings are usually scattered indiscriminately and unconsciously. The thoughts and energies of the spiritual student should not be wasted, for with each moment comes an opportunity for useful spiritual work, and the effective application of resources and abilities for the good of humanity. Though the spiritual student may need occasional periods of solitude to place the thoughts (and aura) in order (or for serious and undisturbed contemplation), there is still no real privacy. With purified mind and emotions there is simply no basis for compromise or embarrassment; in truth is born true humility and its commensurate fearlessness and selflessness.

The ethics of privacy are actually very well-defined. The spiritual student is seriously warned against the conscious or subconscious (motivated) violation of another's privacy. Though no real privacy exists, there are, however, degrees of privacy; and the esoteric student is pledged to respect the privacy of others. The consequences of the violation of privacy, of interference in the affairs of others, are quite serious. But the esoteric student may still be well aware of the quality of the thoughts and feelings of others, even though he may have no intentions and no realization of particular thought-forms. Such awareness may come simply with the proximity (interaction) of auras.

As human evolution proceeds, everyone must eventually become accustomed to such (conscious) interaction between auras, between minds, as it is already

between souls. The personality must be cultivated to accept openness and honesty, for there will someday be no real barriers between the minds and hearts of men. There may still be certain internal and external barriers or mental shields, but even those will be (are) open to view from the higher domain (and even those will pass eventually). There are no barriers between souls; there is only complete freedom (which actually replaces privacy) in open unity. May the minds of men achieve such integrity.

† Commentary No. 160

Applied Ray Relationships

The proper application of esoteric (ray) psychology to the outer and inner worlds can offer (yield) considerable information (insight) (understanding) of life and consciousness (purpose and experience). The applied ray relationships are essentially those of correspondence and analogy, both in the general sense and in the particular (specific) sense. In fact, ray psychology (and the esoteric (theosophical) teachings in general) would be of little significance were it not for the powerful tool of correspondence. The quality and characteristics of any of the seven rays (or any meaningful combination) may be applied to any valid correspondence, to learn (understand) by association.

Every class or set of seven members can be (intuitively, if not rationally) analyzed in terms of the seven rays and their relationships. The seven planes of consciousness are directly associated with the seven ray energies: the physical plane (1,7), the astral or emotional plane (2,6), the mental plane (3,5), etc., depending on relative sequence. For example, the character of the physical plane can clarify the nature of the first ray (and its reflection, the seventh ray), and vice versa. The same is true for the various (seven) elements of the human constitution. Through the (2,4,6) relationship, the human monad is related to the intuition (buddhi) and to the astral body.

The upper triad of atma-buddhi-manas is related to the rays (3,4,5) by virtue of correspondence with the seven planes of consciousness; but the upper triad (the soul) is also directly related to the rays (1,2,3) by virtue of having three relative aspects. The soul, as a class, is qualified by the second ray (and its reflection,

the sixth ray), as the soul is the second of three major aspects (the monad, the soul, and the personality).

Similar analysis can be applied to the seven kingdoms in nature (of which the human kingdom is the fourth) and the seven lifewaves which inhabit the seven kingdoms. Superimposed upon (the analysis of) any set of seven elements may be the various cycles (greater and lesser) that manifest in a triple (for the three major rays) or septenary (for the seven rays) fashion. The present incarnation of the solar logos is the second of a series of three, and is therefore qualified by the second ray. The present Aryan root-race is the fifth in the (present) sequence of seven, and is therefore qualified by the fifth ray (which implies some emphasis upon the mental evolution since the fifth ray also corresponds with the mental plane (and especially with the concrete mental)). And wherever there is qualification by one ray, there is (subtle) qualification by the other rays to which it is especially related (through the basic ray relationships, which vary in relative significance).

In addition to the general ray associations, certain elements may be qualified individually. The soul (as a class) may be governed by the second ray in the general sense, but an (apparently) individual soul may be individually qualified by any one or another of the rays (in the particular sense). Particular qualification (and the implied relationships) must then also be taken into consideration. The ray relationships between a person's soul (ray) and personality (ray) might be analyzed, or the relationship between individuals might be considered in terms of ray relationships. It is essential, in dealing with the particular sense, to also consider the degree of development along ray lines. A second ray personality may be relatively undeveloped and demonstrate the weaknesses of that ray, or it might be rather well-developed and drawing upon integrated relationships with other rays. There is much to be considered, and much understanding to be gained through applied ray relationships.

Four Points of Conduct

Though many guidelines exist for spiritual effort, the following four points of conduct are offered as a general complementary focus (intention) for the serious spiritual student. These points of conduct should be complemented by serious heart-centered work (such as the development of humility, compassion, and goodwill). Each of these points may be studied meditatively.

The first point is personal sacrifice to the cause of good. Attachment to personal (mundane) energies (desires) (limitations) (values) must ultimately be sacrificed. That attainment cannot be accomplished without a beginning; this point is an overall qualification of spiritual intent. The spiritual student should resolve to progress beyond personal energies, by letting go (releasing) the bonds of personality-centered existence. Personality-centered existence includes not only physical and emotional attachments, but that aspect of mental life which involves opinions and rationalizations as well. The spiritual student should value the cause of good above purely personal causes. This implies increasing selflessness (unselfishness) as the reality of God and the (esoteric) relationship between the individual and the group (humanity) (life) are realized. But what is the cause of good (appropriateness)?

The second point is absolute integrity in all situations. Life (and progress) in this lower (human) (objective) world is a thread (string) (stream) (sequence) of situations (circumstances) (crises) (tests) (opportunities) to be faced and conquered. Each situation (and every moment is a situation) offers lessons to be learned and opportunities for contribution to the cause of good. But progress requires continued (and continually refined) honesty and integrity. Integrity implies (in part) purification (preparation), integration (of the personality), and alignment (of the soul and personality) (with the cause of good). Absolute integrity may be a goal, but it is also an attitude and a frame (intention) of mind with which to face every situation, a qualification of every effort (and response) in the daily life.

The third point is impeccable wisdom in relationships with others. Impeccable (flawless) wisdom is to be cultivated and applied (with integrity) to every

situation. The most (generally) important of situations are those which involve human relationships (and relationships which involve life-forms). Right human relations must be achieved, between individuals and between groups, until (ultimately) all are integrated consciously into the reality of one life. The proper interaction of personalities is a constructive and complementary (mutually completing) experience. Personal or purely mundane relationships are discouraged. With the proper spiritual cultivation (preparation), each relationship with others becomes spiritualized (enlightened) (meaningful) (but not glamorous or personal), automatically. With spiritual poise the student is not distracted, ruffled, or drawn into mundane compromise (absorption) by any situation or relationship; but rather, the spiritual student offers encouragement to all, through every relationship, conscious or otherwise.

The fourth point involves dedicated times of the search for truth and the study of self. This search and study requires the establishment of a dedicated pattern of meditation. A regular rhythm and commitment must be established and inertia (resistance) overcome. Such a dedicated pattern requires determination, an open mind, and a willingness to make whatever adjustments are discovered to be needed. The search for truth (the study of self) is a never-ending quest, but one which must be embarked upon and realized without attachment, if the spiritual student is to find the real purpose of life.

† Commentary No. 162

Plotinus and the Enneads

Plotinus was an Egyptian-born Roman philosopher who lived in the third century A.D. He was a student of Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria, Egypt and was exposed to the esoteric (theosophical) tradition which underlies all enlightened philosophy and religion. Plotinus is generally regarded as the founder of Neo-platonism, a philosophy which synthesized the metaphysical and spiritual teachings of the Peripatetic, Platonic, Pythagorean, and Stoic systems. Plotinus was probably influenced the most by Plato, but above all, the (underlying) esoteric tradition was the basis of his life and work.

Another student of Ammonius Saccas was Origen, the Christian theologian and foremost member of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Origen applied the esoteric teachings within the framework of orthodox (third century) Christianity, while Plotinus applied the teachings within a parallel (complementary) philosophical (rather than religious) framework. There was no real (inner) conflict between the two expressions, just as today, where many true Christians work within the framework of the orthodox church, and many others (true Christians) work without that orthodox framework. Both Origen and Plotinus developed the ideas of divine triplicities: Origen refers frequently to the Trinity; Plotinus refers often to the One and the Triad of divinity.

The philosophical mysticism of Plotinus has had a considerable influence on (orthodox) Christianity, since it has, as its basis, the esoteric Christian tradition. That esoteric Christian religion actually predates the popular (historical) Christian religion. The philosophy of Plotinus concentrates on the soul and its relationship to God and its relationship to the personality. For Plotinus, salvation was not something to be sought; it was something to be realized. He taught the reality of Christ (the soul) and the meditation through which the spiritual student can become aware of that (real) (inner) spiritual self (but he did not use the Christian terminology). Plotinus was not a sentimentalist, nor was he given to personalities or phenomena. As an esotericist, he maintained a rather strict control over the circulation of the teachings, being careful not to reveal any teachings prematurely (to unprepared or unqualified students).

The written papers of Plotinus are in the form of commentaries or discourses on the philosophy. The existence of a (the) metaphysical (theosophical) (esoteric) system of knowledge (philosophy) is assumed in each of the various commentaries. Each separate discourse or commentary is a development or clarification of a significant point or question. The papers were not written as consecutive or sequential chapters of a larger work; however, the commentaries of Plotinus were collected, titled, and organized by one of his students into a systematic work entitled the *Enneads*.

There are fifty-four commentaries in all, and they are organized as six *enneads* of nine tractates each. The First *Ennead* considers living being and the nature of man. The Second *Ennead* considers the heavens and the two kinds of matter.

The Third Ennead considers the cosmos. The Fourth Ennead considers the soul. The Fifth Ennead considers the nous and first being. And the Sixth Ennead considers the existent and the good or the One (including human and divine freedom). In reading the Enneads, care must be taken with regard to terminology, as many of the words translated from the Greek have somewhat different meanings than contemporary usage. The terminology can be reconciled in its consistency with the esoteric tradition (that depends on various keys) (without which much of the meaning would remain inaccessible).

† Commentary No. 163

Meditative Study

The object of meditative study is to enhance the search for truth and the study of the self, thereby contributing to the effectiveness of the spiritual student. A (spiritual) meditative atmosphere contributes to the serenity of emotion, the clarity of thinking, and the responsiveness to intuition that is vital to esoteric study and self-realization. Studying in a meditative environment helps to place the student in touch with the thoughts behind the written word, and ultimately with the energy behind the thoughts. A meditative approach to study tends to evoke a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The distraction of physical, emotional, and even mental existence is minimized, if not altogether eliminated.

Purely rational study is quite limited (by and to the concrete mind). Meditative study can (if the concrete mind has been properly prepared and disciplined) go far beyond the concrete mental, by bringing to bear the abstract mind and the intuition of the soul. Meditative study can be applied to reading, listening, or undistracted thinking. It is important to recognize the appropriateness of the chosen subject matter, for in meditative study the student is concerned with an (impersonal) energy flow of some spiritual or philosophical significance. Thus, works chosen for study should be relatively meaningful. According to the quality and appropriateness of the material to be studied, and according to the cultivated ability of the student (and according to the quality of the meditative atmosphere) shall be the relative success.

In the course of meditatively studying some subject, the student may be placed in attunement with the energy (atmosphere) of the inspiration of the material, as well as the energy of the thought-forms themselves. If the material is suitably chosen and the student is sufficiently prepared (relaxed, at peace, and spiritually responsive) a thread or stream of energy may result (flow), permitting the student to follow (without attachment) intuitively into an expansion (clarification) of the subject (and related areas). The material being studied is actually used to trigger the flow of energy contained within each thought. Therefore, each thought should be read and pondered for as long as its energy persists, before going on to the next one.

The beauty of meditative or intuitive study is that through increased (purified) awareness and correspondence, any subject matter can be simplified. As each of the various relationships are explored (realized), everything may fall into place with proper (inclusive) perspective. Patterns can emerge which tie everything neatly together, without paradox, even though the conclusions may not be translatable into words. Each new seed thought can become a trigger for correlation; new and deeper understanding can then be achieved.

The rules for effective meditative study can be learned and realized as the student proceeds. As long as the meditative atmosphere has been properly created (though sincerity and a well-developed pattern of daily meditation), the student can be responsive to energy patterns that work directly on subconscious, conscious, and super-conscious levels (as the soul utilizes the meditation for its own purposes). Meditative study provides for an exposure on deeper levels than the merely conscious, and that exposure may be retained inwardly even if the outer mind is unaware of the significance. Significant energies may be assimilated unconsciously, only to appear consciously at a later time when the consciousness is more fully prepared. In fact, in esoteric study, this process of exposure as a precedent to conscious understanding is the usual rule rather than the exception.

Service and Discretion

Service has been defined as work or action performed that is helpful, useful, and beneficial to others, a contribution to the welfare of humanity. But in a deeper sense, service is the consequence of soul contact, and as such is directly related to the evolutionary urge of life itself. As the student begins to achieve soul contact with increasing regularity and quality, the natural energies of the soul being to stream forth along lines of light and love (and purpose), so that the soul finds increasingly unimpeded expression through the qualified and obedient personality. This natural outpouring of spiritual energies is the real (immediate) objective of the spiritual path, as each who treads the path ultimately becomes wedded to the path.

If the student becomes concerned with service prematurely (or without sincerity), then the efforts of the student are likely to be personality-centered, and therefore impediments to the free-flowing (apparent) spontaneity of the soul. Even the student who has achieved some measure of soul contact may be (frequently or otherwise) distracted by the rational (or irrational) personality. The student who seeks fruit in action, the student who tries to serve, is a student who fails to understand the fundamental (esoteric) nature of true service. The spiritual student is urged to maintain consistency in soul contact and to respond freely (almost unconsciously) to the evoked energy.

Discretion in service (in the deeper sense) is by no means a rational (consciously deliberate) act of discrimination. Discretion is the ability to make responsible decisions and the act of such decision-making. In the deeper sense it is an (almost unconscious) intuitive process that guides all efforts of the (truly aligned and spiritually responsive) spiritual student in the lower worlds. It is the wisdom of appropriateness, for the enlightened spiritual student intuitively recognizes the appropriateness of every action (or inaction); even if the reasons are not apparent, there should be a sense of appropriateness. In this way, the student is guided (by the soul) into the proper place (approach) (disposition) and the influence that the student exerts is more meaningful (in light of higher purpose (law) rather than personalities or reasoning). The poised spiritual

student cannot therefore infringe upon the rights (freedoms) (responsibilities) (karma) (dharma) of others.

Discretion in service involves a higher sense of responsibility (which is dharma). Dharma (duty) involves living in harmony with life and the law (purpose) of life. The spiritual student should live harmlessly and with wisdom (discretion), in harmony with the soul and in harmony with the energies (laws) which govern the evolution of consciousness on all levels. A life of service (commitment to the soul and to humanity) is a life of complete cooperation with the destiny (intention) of all lives. And at the same time, it is a life of utter simplicity, since the entire focus or concern is centered on the source (the soul). With one-pointed attention to the higher self, the actions performed in the lower world become natural, automatic, and without the infringement of (distraction by) personality-centered energies.

The only truly substantial dharma incurred by the spiritual student is the alignment of the lower life with the higher, for then everything else is placed in proper perspective. The consequence of such alignment (soul contact) may be inexplicable to the ordinary senses, for the law (karma) (evolution) is all-pervasive, and the dedicated (and freely obligated) student is then in atonement with the law, a servant of greater forces than the purely personal (selfish), an intelligent and meaningful expression of the divine life and wisdom.

† Commentary No. 165

The Path and the Seven Rays

The spiritual path may be viewed in many ways or perspectives, each contributing its share to the clarification or elucidation of the path. One perspective involves the esoteric psychology and the nature of the seven rays. The basic idea is that each individual or group is a latent potentiality (synthesis) of all the seven rays, and that through successive incarnations, the individual or group develops the character or quality of each of the seven rays.

The relatively unevolved student is qualified by a relatively loose conglomeration of several rays within the personality ray; one ray each for the

physical body, the emotional nature, and the lower mind. These rays (and the ray of the personality) may be relatively undeveloped, and may be characterized by the so-called weaknesses of each of the particular rays. As the individual evolves in experience and consciousness, those weaknesses and limitations are transformed into the strengths and positive attributes of the respective rays. As the student progresses further, the three rays of the personality are gradually synthesized (integrated) (qualified) by (into) an increasingly dominant personality ray.

Each incarnation or lifetime of experience is an expression of one or another of the seven personality rays. In each incarnation the student normally develops along the lines of the personality ray. Through a succession of incarnations, the student is able to develop the positive characteristics of each of the various rays (the personality ray varies from one incarnation to another). Many such cycles may be required for complete development. This process is complicated (simplified) by the ray of the soul. Each soul is qualified by one or another of the seven rays, and that soul ray (in turn) qualifies the reflection (expression) of the soul through its personality. As the individual progresses, the soul ray comes more and more into play until it dominates the integrated personality ray. The soul ray is relatively permanent and offers continuity over a succession of lives.

Ideally, the development of the soul (and its personality) is perfectly balanced through the entire range of the seven rays. However, in practice, the situations or circumstances of each incarnation are limited (qualified) by certain rays which periodically influence greater and lesser cycles of evolutionary activity (for the various life-waves and for the planet as a whole) and the individual must adapt (the incarnation) to those circumstances. The result of this is relatively unbalanced development. An individual may be well-developed along certain ray lines, but relatively undeveloped along other lines. Particular incarnations (circumstances and opportunities through conditions) must then be chosen for particularly needed experience and development (and consequent contributions to the greater life).

There is a similarity in this approach to the astrological approach to the spiritual path, in which the individual (or group) passes successively through each of the signs in (some) sequence (time and time again) until the proper synthesis and balance of all of the attributes have been achieved. Yet there is

no real difference, for the path is One, and each approach (perspective) is coincident (concurrent) with the other. In either case (and there are others), the soul must incarnate many times under varying circumstances and opportunities in order to achieve completion. And completion does not imply that each person is identically (ultimately) completed; for in each completion, the student has traveled a different path to achieve the same (overall) degree or quality of consciousness; and in each completion, the student remains uniquely qualified.

† Commentary No. 166

The Human Aura

The human aura is the energy field associated with the mind and personality. It has several aspects, including the etheric or energy body, the astral or desire body, and the mental aura. All of the sensations, feelings, experiences, thoughts, actions, and characteristics of the personality find their existence or counterpart within the human aura. Each of the several aspects may be considered an aura in itself, on its own level or dimension. Thus, in referring to an aura, one might be referring to any one or more of the several aspects.

The aura is a field of influence and a means of interacting consciously and unconsciously with the immediate environment. As a field, the aura may be large or small, potent or impotent, active or passive, transmissive or reactive, bright or dull, controlled or uncontrolled, dynamic or (relatively) static, stable or unstable, strong or weak, offensive or defensive, impersonal or personal. The aura may be constituted as any combination of the preceding variables or dimensions, and in varying degrees. The aura may be ever-changing or varying in one or more of these characteristics.

As the aura interacts with the external world, it serves as an instrument of experience. Through the aura the personality is influenced (to a certain extent, depending on the character of the aura) by the environment, and through the aura is the environment (and other lives) influenced to a certain extent by the individual. The bulk of information (experience) obtained by an individual comes through the human aura (and is perceived and interpreted) (consciously or unconsciously) by the personality. The aura is the primary element of sense-

perception, because it colors or influences perception according to its character. A person is influenced more by the environment through the aura than through the (apparent) faculties of the ordinary senses. And how a person influences the environment is mostly a matter of the aura and its interaction with the external world.

As the individual progresses spiritually, the aura becomes more and more purified and disciplined and responsive to the inner self. The distortions of mundane emotional and mental life are minimized (if not altogether eliminated), and the influence of the spiritually-centered student is then enhanced as the aura transmits the quality (potency) of the spiritual character. It is not so much what is performed in the outer world by the qualified spiritual student as much as the presence of such a spiritualized and influential personality. Such processes are mainly unconscious, a result of being, rather than a consequence of doing or trying.

The various aspects of the human aura (body) relate in various ways between the personality and its environment. The etheric or vital aura is concerned with etheric (physical) energies. The stability (balance) of the etheric body is essential to physical well-being and vitality. The astral or emotional aura is larger, more subtle than the etheric body, and inherently more interactive with the environment. All of the emotional characteristics, feelings, desires, tendencies, and vulnerabilities are contained within the astral body or aura. The astral body of the well-disciplined spiritual student is quite stable, clear, serene, and mature, being relatively undistracted by emotional currents. Similarly, the mental aura is larger and even more subtle than the astral body. If the aura is relatively pure and responsive to the inner spiritual potency, then the energies of the soul can flow easily into and through the clarified mental aura and its subordinate elements (astral and etheric counterparts) which together constitute a singular and effective spiritual instrument.

The First Ennead 1

The First Ennead of Plotinus considers living being and the nature of man. The first tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "The Animate and the Man." Considered are the relationships between the soul, the waking-consciousness, and the body; the place of sense-perception, discursive reasoning, and intellection; and the relationship of the (individual) soul to the (soul of the) lifewave. A number of pertinent questions are addressed, as the author ultimately defines man as the waking-consciousness, an important distinction in view of the ways in which a person can exercise identification.

Where (what) is the seat of the human (personal) interests (desires) (feelings) (affections) (experiences) (sensations)? The seat of personal interest and experience is the seat of sense-perception which is the personality (the body and the emotions). Discursive (analytical) (concrete) reasoning is attributed to the lower mind which is also the highest aspect of the personality. The soul employs (deploys) (influences) the body (personality) as the agent to the instrument yet the soul remains unaffected by and unreceptive to the acts and experiences of its personality. Thus, the soul uses the body as an instrument but does not share the experiences of the body.

What aspects of ordinary life (in incarnation) can be assigned to the soul? Very little, for the soul is only related to as the waking-consciousness reaches the levels of the soul (in contrast to that of mundane or common existence).

What is meant by the Animate? The living organism (mind and body) which is that instrument of the soul. The body has acquired a life of its own, but how does the body stand to the soul? There is certainly an interaction (relationship) between the soul and the body, but that is not a coalescence. For the soul is veritably noble (immortal) (impassive). But the soul might be considered in two (or three) ways. The individual soul is at all times inseparable from the essential soul (of the lifewave). The soul derives its nobility from the intrinsic divinity of the outpouring of life which is the essential soul. But that noble, individual soul is also related (in some occult fashion) to the personality of its own creation (appropriation). The lowest aspect of the soul is the abstract

mental, which links to the concrete mental nature of the personality. The noble nature (mind and soul) is related to the human nature (emotions and the mind) and the animal nature (body and emotions).

The couplement of soul and body is essentially the mind (or more accurately, the waking-consciousness which is designed to function through the mental faculties). The couplement (waking-consciousness) subsists by virtue of the (indirect) (impersonal) presence of the soul. The man (the mind) is considered the associate of the reasoning soul. The soul is considered the realm of higher causation (insofar as the person is concerned), yet the realm of lower causation (which is an interrelated reflection of the higher) incorporates the mind, the emotions, and the body (and their environment). The desire faculty (and the experience of desire (sensation)) is seated entirely within the personality, whereas the higher (noble) faculties (the experience of judgment and realization apart from the senses) (the abstract mind and the intuition) are within the presence and influence of the soul. The soul stands apart from that which is lesser, and yet exists within the form. The soul remains not sympathetic, though the most noble of thoughts and feelings do begin to touch the place of the soul. The divinity of that greater life begins to shine forth into the lesser in accordance with the receptivity (purity) (preparedness) (responsiveness) of the focus of the waking-consciousness.

† Commentary No. 168

Importance 1

Importance is defined as the quality or state of being significant or meaningful. Importance implies the power of influencing or the quality of having evident value, through relationships, effects, or existence. There are three aspects of importance that deserve mention and elaboration; self-importance (and its extension to the group), the importance of a particular effort or activity, and the discernment of significance (relative importance).

The proper balance of self-value is essential to spiritual progress. Any exaggerated sense of importance (or lack of importance) is an impediment and a distraction. Everyone is important in the sense that all souls are noble (of divine heritage and in support of the greater or spiritual existence), but no one is

important in any personal, personality, or separated (exclusive) sense. The basis of this truth is the common life which is noble with respect to the lives and forms through which that common life functions. The cultivation of true humility (self-respect) and a lack of (separated) self-importance is expected of everyone who would tread the spiritual path. The vanity of man is one of the greatest stumbling blocks. The spiritual student would not consider himself important relative to others. Likewise, no group should be considered especially important with respect to other groups. Each individual and each group may be significant in its own (particular) way, but it remains inappropriate to attribute much significance to any with respect to others.

The importance of any particular effort or activity should also be viewed dispassionately. The spiritual student is encouraged to do what (seems) ought to be done, to perform whatever work is worth doing or seems to be appropriate. To attribute any special (exaggerated) importance to a task or project (no matter how worthwhile it seems) is to invite further glamour and illusion. There is indeed much significant work to be done, but that work should be (is better) performed and viewed dispassionately. To be attached to the work is to be distracted by it. To view any particular work as especially meaningful is to enter as well the glamour or fallacy of importance. The spiritual student is encouraged to cultivate an attitude (and perspective) of appropriateness, rather than importance.

The discernment (determination) (realization) of significance in information or experience is not necessarily an easy or rational task. The spiritual student should learn to discern the (relative) significance of information (through correlation) and experience (through assimilation) without any exaggeration or distortion by means of personal energies (bias). To attribute significance where none exists is as inappropriate as to miss entirely the significance which does exist. Actually, it is better in many ways to forego (conscious) realization of significance than to exaggerate or attribute significance that should not be. For in the former case, the significance may be realized later or on deeper levels of consciousness; while in the latter case, mistaken or exaggerated significance can create strong mental and subconscious barriers to the truth, which in turn discourage understanding.

The spiritual student should sincerely try to place everything into a moderate perspective. If significance is self-evident (and right), then so be it; otherwise (and even so) let no claims be made of great significance or importance. To concede that nothing is important is to admit that everything is important, and that that importance is merely relative and moderate. The essence of the problem of importance is the glamour of importance, but with a dispassionate approach, even such glamour may be dispelled and truth revealed.

† Commentary No. 169

Differentiation

Differentiation is the first of two major processes involved with the manifestation of the universe (the other process is integration). The process of differentiation is the process by which simple, singular variables or elements (or aspects) become more complicated and diverse. The object of differentiation is to develop a diversity of forms within a diverse structure or fabric of manifestation, in order to develop different and various characteristics. Without this process of differentiation, there would be no field for creative manifestation, experience, and subsequent evolution.

Through the process of differentiation primordial atoms of matter are each transformed into many and varied subordinate atoms. The original outpouring of precursory life is differentiated into many and varied streams of life-waves. Each stream is differentiated in turn into individual (apparently separate) lives (souls) within the stream. And each soul is further differentiated into constituent lives (forms) (atoms) on various levels and in various ways. Forms are differentiated and the lives within the various forms are differentiated. And yet, even though differentiated or distinguished one from another (which is merely a perspective), each remains one with every other, for the essence of the source remains an intrinsic unity, living simultaneously and concurrently through the myriad of differentiated lives and forms. Thus each aspect of manifestation at its greatest point of diversification remains quite related to the other aspects and to the chain of derivatives (or path) from (through) which such a state (aspect) has been achieved.

In the beginning of manifestation, a single dimension undergoes successive differentiations into an increasing multidimensional existence. A number of interrelated schemes of differentiation occur simultaneously and interactively. The homogenous (simple) one is transformed into the heterogeneous (complex) many; and yet, esoterically, the original homogeneity and simplicity is maintained, as all of manifestation is merely a reflection (and a perspective). Each act (process) of differentiation is an act of will, related to the purpose of manifestation and being self-consistent with evolutionary intention. As diversity (variety) is achieved, the life force is diffused (thus differentiation is also a diffusion process).

Hints to the process of universal differentiation may be found within the framework of differential calculus, the mathematics of the rate of change of functions (aspects) (elements) with respect to their characteristics (variables). In the case of simple (one-dimensional and ordinary) variables, differentiation is a process of reduction in the power of the function and an increase in the magnitude (extent) (spread) of the derived activity. In the case of complex or multidimensional variables, differentiation is easily a process of increasing complexity (distinction). In either case, the power of the variable tends to decrease as the essence of the variable is diffused, and as the power (implication) of the subordinate elements is increased. The energy of the system remains relatively constant as the power and diversity change mutually and (relatively though not necessarily directly) inversely.

The scope of the process of differentiation is almost completely interactive, as each subsequent act of differentiation gives rise to new and different (various) rates of vibration (with corresponding characteristics). Differentiation is a development of the framework and scope of manifestation as a grand prelude to the development of life. But the real work of manifestation (evolution) occurs as the processes of differentiation and integration interact.

The Ray of Life

The first of the seven rays of qualification and manifestation is the ray of life which supports and sustains the entire field of evolution. This first ray of power is basic or fundamental to each of the other six rays, while none of the other six rays are fundamental to the first ray (but may be fundamental to each other). The first ray is the first to manifest and the last to withdraw from manifestation. Without life (spirit) and the first ray there could be no love (consciousness) (second ray) or light (form) (activity) (the third ray).

The first ray in manifestation interacts with all of the rays and with every element or aspect of life and manifestation. There are a number of primary (major) keywords which are associated with the first ray. Each of these keywords can contribute significantly to the understanding of the nature and character of the first ray. The equivalence (interrelatedness) of these provides the basis of an esoteric analysis of the quality or energy of the ray. Among the primary keywords for the first ray are life, purpose, power, spirit, will, energy, and law. Each of these keywords is fundamental to the first ray but may be applied (through aspect) to each of the various rays. There are also a number of secondary keywords derived in various ways from the major keywords, such as freedom, vitality, leadership, government, emergence (creation) (genesis), and strength.

First ray analysis begins with life and purpose and ends with death and the fulfillment of purpose. Purpose provides the meaning or significance for life, and life allows a purpose to be accomplished. Life is power (potency) (potential) and the momentum to ultimately achieve some (evolutionary) intention (object) (goal) (completion). That power (life) (principle) animates (vibrates) (sustains) and motivates every atom on every level, every form and every aspect of differentiated life. The essence of life is the spirit which utilizes consciousness and form. Purpose is accomplished (is projected) (in reality) as an act of will, and in the highest sense, all of life and the field of manifestation is a simple consequence of an act (formulation) of divine will. All is energy; naught can possibly exist (conceptually or otherwise) apart from energy or life. Purpose, on every conceivable level, is indelibly stamped or impressed within every form of

energy. And law is but another aspect of will and purpose, for all is qualified by the various laws (greater and lesser), and law (evolution) (life) itself. The law of karma, for example, is especially linked to the first ray of life.

Each of the various qualities may be clarified by equivalence and direct association, pairwise, such as: life equivalenced with purpose, power equated to energy, law associated with will, and energy associated with spirit. This may be done with secondary keywords as well. Further clarification may be obtained in the consideration (contemplation) of the basic first ray paradox (and its several derivatives). That paradox is essentially the equivalence of life and death, the beginning and the end, freedom and destiny. From the association of these concepts can be realized the essential unity of the first ray that underlies all of life. That unity expresses itself (esoterically) as the end pre-existent in the causation (precursor to life) (and various corollaries).

The first ray is manifestation. The first ray is also the ultimate synthesis and assimilation (abstraction) of manifestation (experience). The ray of life is the ray of creation, vibration, animation, and ultimate dissolution (withdrawal). But what is life, really, besides its equivalence and association with purpose, power, spirit, will, energy, and law? Life is.

† Commentary No. 171

The Impersonal Life

The life of the spiritual student through the various stages of probationary effort and discipleship is properly considered to be an increasingly impersonal life. The impersonal life is as necessary and as vital to the spiritual student as the personal or personality-centered life is to the development of the individuality (in the form of the personality). But why should the impersonal life be so (relatively) important to the spiritual student? For the simple reason that the soul is so very impersonal, its nature being that of impersonal love. Through conscious and deliberate union with the soul, the waking-consciousness seeks to participate in (and share) that impersonal love.

The impersonal is that which is not personal, that which exists without reference (deference) to the personality. Impersonal activity is that which does

not engage the (independent, separative, or uncontrolled) aspects of the human personality or the emotions. Or in other words, the impersonal life is a life that is centered in the soul rather than the personality, but a life in which the personality is utilized in a practical, disciplined, and spiritually responsive way. Such a personality must be properly and naturally integrated, purified, uplifted, and aligned with the soul. This is in direct contrast with the personal life in which the personality reigns (uncontrollably) supreme as the center or focus of waking-consciousness. The personal pertains to a particular person or individual (as an end in itself) and to the lower human aspects of existence. To be personal (personality-centered) is to be imprisoned in the world of self-sustaining glamour and illusion; to be impersonal is to be free from the limitations of (petty) personal existence.

Impersonality can be easily misunderstood, so it is essential for the student to properly embrace the impersonal life as well as to use the proper approach to impersonality. Impersonality should not imply or suggest coldness or indifference. The right (spiritual) approach to the impersonal life is one of genuine warmth, compassion, and interest (but not to the point of emotional or mental absorption or distraction). The impersonal life is actually transpersonal and super-personal (and spiritually meaningful).

The typical (beginning) heart-centered aspirant is warm, caring, and entirely personal. The typical head-centered aspirant is cold, uncaring (selfish), but still almost entirely personal. In either case, the student must gradually transform the personal nature into the impersonal nature. And as that transformation proceeds, the student will necessarily come closer and closer in consciousness to the reality of the soul, and the impersonal energy of the soul will resonate with the spiritually responsive personality, and radiate through that aura in an impersonal way.

The spiritual student should be concerned with truth and reality, and as the individual becomes more impersonal, greater truth can be realized. This is so simply because personality-centeredness (self-centeredness) distorts the truth in practically every conceivable way. Even groups can manifest or sustain a dimension of personality-centeredness or impersonality, and thereby contribute to the relative clarity, quality, and meaningfulness (of the effort). Groups that are personality-centered exist primarily to sustain and entertain the personality;

and yet, personality-centered groups are definitely appealing (to personality-centered individuals) and may therefore be utilized in some constructive fashion. Impersonal groups serve altogether different aspects of spiritual purpose, and are (fortunately) not very appealing at all (except (unfortunately) to those who fail to recognize the impersonal nature).

† Commentary No. 172

The First Ennead 2

The second tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "The Virtues," but the real focus is the concept of likeness to God, and the attainment of such likeness (and the role that the virtues play in such attainment). The soul's purpose is acknowledged as liberation (escape) from (through) the world of form (matter) (evil) and reunion with the supreme aspect (the human monad). The process of liberation implies that sufficient progress (evolution) has already been attained in the pilgrimage in matter and that the soul has sounded forth the call for liberation. This reunion also implies completion and fulfillment (abstraction) of purpose. Plotinus is concerned with the path of liberation and the means through which that liberation should be rightly achieved. That path may require several lifetimes, for the withdrawal of the soul from active manifestation is a relatively difficult and tedious process.

Much philosophical reasoning (enquiry) is set forth in pursuit of the proper approach to the soul (and its monad). The virtues are analyzed, but especially the nature or concept of virtue. The supreme (monad) is said to possess (by reflection) archetypes or exemplars which are patterns (intentions) (potentialities) for evolutionary development. Each archetype has a correspondence on each successively lower level of existence. The civic virtues are said to be good (meaningful and worthy of attention), but nevertheless, somewhat removed from the reality of the exemplars themselves. The ordinary virtues are said to be stepping stones to higher correspondence. There exist several categories of virtues, including those that are preliminary and have to do with (mostly) human personality interactions; those that are considered purifications, which further lead the student toward the beauty (purity) of the soul; and virtues which actually resonate with the undamped character of the

soul itself (which are therefore much closer to the archetypes). A distinction is made between virtues and the source of virtue.

Goodness is said to be something more than purification. The nature of the soul is obscured by the personality. As the personality is developed, purified, and refined, the nature of the soul (goodness) becomes evident. The soul is seen to be inviolately free from (above) all passions and affections (desires). The process of liberation is considered as a disengagement from (release from absorption in) the ordinary mundane (human) world of activity. That process is actually one of assimilation and attraction, as the fruits of experience in the lower worlds are withdrawn (transformed) into their higher correspondence (in fulfillment of the original archetypes). What is actually abstracted is quality (consciousness). Experience in the lower worlds is intended to develop the waking-consciousness to the point where it can function at the level of the soul. At that point, the primal excellence of the soul can be fully manifested, on its own level.

The mystical path which Plotinus develops is essentially a conscious process of abstraction; it is not a path of development *per se*, because it presupposes sufficient preparation. It is simply a path to restore (to) the primal excellence. It is a path in which the preliminary virtues give way to loftier virtues, as a means of attaining the likeness of God.

And in this path it is the power of the soul (having been developed through assimilation) that produces all of the virtues. This paradox is easily resolvable in the exchange of energy between the soul and its reflection. Through the increasing quality of consciousness, the aspirant attains to the likeness of God, as that quality becomes (directly) God (the soul itself).

Competition

Competition is a somewhat separative but natural (even intentional) response to the evolutionary urge present within all lives and forms. That response may be exaggerated or distorted by the personality, but it does have some basis in the overall plan for diversification and epigenesis. Depending on the context (perspective) (circumstances) and intention (motives) (and spirit), competition may or may not be appropriate, and competition may or may not be constructive and useful. The real object of competition is to produce new or improved opportunities for experience and progression; it is deeply rooted in the need for (overall) development, and primarily in the group context.

In this intended sense, competition may actually contribute to the good (progress) of the lifewave, as individuals and groups contribute their share of experience to the greater life. However, competition may be simultaneously productive (in some sense) and destructive (in other ways). Care should be taken to assess the impact of competition, and what is even more significant (in the destructive or separative sense), the impact of the spirit of competition.

If competition (diversification) (parallel development or experience) is overshadowed by a conscious realization of true purpose, then no spirit of competition can exist. Rather, a spirit of cooperation will pervade all efforts and parallel or mutual experience. Is not cooperation merely the highest form of competition (or more precisely, are not cooperation and competition merely two forms of mutual or interactive development?)? The (destructive) spirit of competition is simply the result of attachment and personality (separative) involvement. The spiritual student is urged to moderate and actually eliminate any sense of competition, for the spirit of competition is also associated with a (temporary) stage of experience, and one which has no real (significant) usefulness in the spiritual context. The spiritually-minded individual has no spirit of competition, for such a spirit only strengthens the personality-centeredness and the separateness of objective (personality) existence.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the disciple is inherent in the refusal to compete (which implies the refusal to consider as separate from or superior to

any other person). There should be no rivalry among spiritual students of all faiths, nor should there be any rivalry or sense of competition among the various religious or metaphysical (or philosophical) groups. When the student (and the group) approaches the reality (unity) of the self, it is realized that no advantage one to another can possibly exist. It is realized too, that the struggle for survival is, at best, an experimental scheme to develop certain characteristics for all to (later) benefit.

The ways of the world may be well and proper for those who are passing through that stage (and who are absorbed in the mundane world) (and who are even so contributing somehow to the greater life), but the spiritual student must refrain from much of the worldly atmosphere in order to be properly established as a link between the lesser and greater domains. The world of individuality (in the personal sense) and concomitant involvement in processes of competition (and the fulfillment of desire in its many mundane forms) must ultimately yield to a world in which a growing sense of cooperation and interrelatedness (for the good of all) shall predominate. As the individual ceases striving for personal ends, and begins to strive purely for the good of humanity (or for the planetary life (balance)), then a new stage is entered in which it is possible for the individual to actually consciously participate (cooperate) in the greater life. And ultimately, even striving must cease, as being is realized.

† Commentary No. 174

Death

Death has been defined as the permanent cessation of all vital functions, the ending or completion of a cycle or particular activity. A more appropriate (metaphysical) definition is to equivalence death with transition, the passage or change from one state of consciousness or manifestation to another.

When a particular human being dies, that individual simply experiences transition, the passing from (focus) waking-consciousness in the physical world into the (lower) superphysical worlds. That transition suggests the ending of life in the physical world and the preparation for continued life (existence)

(experience) on a higher plane of consciousness, or the preparation for a return for further experience (reincarnation) in human form in the physical world.

But there is not (and cannot be) any real death (destruction). The life (consciousness) continues to exist independently of the form. That life is indestructible, though it may be manifested in various ways and upon various levels. And even the form itself (matter) cannot be destroyed; for the form is merely transformed from one state to another. The physical body disintegrates as the constituent atoms are returned to their natural state of formlessness, only to be reformed in various ways in other times. The universal manifestation is forever changing, as one experience leads to another, as one form outlives its usefulness and is set free to begin anew, as the life evolves from one state of consciousness to the next. Life and death are as natural as experience and manifestation themselves, and should be viewed and accepted as natural.

The spiritual student should recognize the appropriateness and meaningfulness of life in the lower worlds, but should also recognize the natural inevitability of death (transition) for all living creatures, each in its own way and in its own time. The student should not be attached to life in the lower worlds, nor should the student fear or otherwise resist death when the time comes. Furthermore, the spiritual student should not be attached to the lives of others. There may be (should be) a sincere measure of compassion in recognition of pain or suffering, but at the same time, the student should recognize and understand the processes (action and consequence) that result in pain, suffering, and even death. To express sorrow (grief) at the death of a loved one may be natural, but it indicates a measure of attachment and selfishness. Even the most detached of spiritual students may feel sadness in response to the death of a living creature, and yet, at the same time, a certain (inner) (quiet) joy should temper all sadness, the joy of release (freedom) into higher existence, as every death contains within a new birth.

For souls fully conscious in the (human) superphysical worlds (as so few souls are), the birth (reincarnation) of an individual into the physical world is viewed as death and with great compassion. For life in the lower worlds is a most difficult (but necessary) life of limitation and (apparent) separation from the realities of higher existence. Because of the appropriateness (karma) of life (experience) in the lower worlds, lives should not be terminated prematurely (nor

should they be prolonged needlessly). Certainly, reasonable measures may be taken to support continued (useful) life and experience in the lower worlds, but when the soul attempts withdrawal, then the human efforts (or interference) should cease. The need for dynamic harmlessness should be readily apparent to all who tread (or seek to tread) the spiritual path, and a reverence for (all) life should overshadow and qualify every waking moment. Needless to say, the deliberate or careless taking of another's life is strictly forbidden, for such is in direct conflict with the intention of life (and death).

† Commentary No. 175

The Ray of Love

The second of the seven rays of qualification and manifestation is the ray of love-wisdom which qualifies all of manifestation as consciousness. The second ray of love is fundamental or basic to all but the first ray of power (life) (and even to the first ray in some respects). This second ray of love (consciousness) is the ultimate ray of relationships, since it is the ray of interaction (communication) on all levels and in all realms.

The second ray is one of the three major (primary) rays and life through manifestation (experience and expression) would not be possible without it. The first ray provides the foundation of manifestation as life (spirit). The third ray provides the field of manifestation as form (light) (matter). But it is the second ray of consciousness which provides the link between purpose and activity, and the means for growth (evolution) and the abstraction (assimilation) of experience through unfolding consciousness. The purpose (ideality) of the first ray is reflected into the activity (practicality) of the third ray, but it is the moderation of the second ray which provides the balance necessary to sustain meaningful evolution.

There are a number of major keywords which are associated with the second ray. These keywords may be equivalenced in various ways to elucidate the character of this central ray of love-wisdom. Among the primary keywords for the second ray are love, wisdom, quality, consciousness, union, and moderation. There are also a number of secondary keywords that may be derived in various ways, such

as teaching, magnetism, discipleship, healing, reformation, patience, compassion, and intuition. The two major aspects of the second ray (which are love and wisdom) may be equivalenced (in the esoteric sense), along with the other keywords. Love is the wisdom that underlies all of creation; love is also the wisdom to be gained from all manifestation. Love (wisdom) is the supreme quality of life in every respect, the beauty of consciousness itself. Love (in its impersonal sense) is the union or process of interaction between higher and lower, masculine (active) and feminine (responsive) principles. As such, the second ray is the supreme ray of duality (and, esoterically, the ray of the resolution of duality).

As balance (moderation) it is the second ray of love (wisdom) which must temper or moderate the light of the third ray and the power (will) (energy) of the first ray. It is the heart (compassion) (inclusiveness) which must temper or moderate the head. It is the soul which must balance the ultimate purpose (life) of the monad with the (temporary) independence and arrogance of the personality. The second ray in its highest aspect is the ray of impersonality. During manifestation, that ray is reflected through the fourth ray of beauty (harmony) (contrast) and the sixth ray of personality (devotion). Thus is the second ray also the ray of conflict (contrast) between the personal and the impersonal, between personal love and impersonal (all-inclusive) love. It is the second ray which constitutes the soul of all life in manifestation, and therefore the inner link (which is love) between all lives.

As the ray of the solar logos, the second ray qualifies every aspect of manifestation (purpose) (experience) (expression) within the solar system. God is love, for God (the solar logos) is (for all practical purposes) the second ray of love-wisdom. And as the Christ principle, the second ray of love overshadows all of consciousness and the entire spiritual path of unfolding divinity. It is no wonder then, that love should constitute such a central position in the heart and soul of all creation.

Wisdom

Love and wisdom are the twin features of the second ray. Both love and wisdom are deeply related to the soul and the aspect of consciousness. In the esoteric sense, love and wisdom are equivalent, but in approach and application they can be considered as complementary and distinct (though ever related). Increasing wisdom is a chief characteristic of the evolving soul, and the pursuit (and attainment) of wisdom is said to be the purpose of philosophy.

Wisdom implies understanding, comprehension, the assimilation of knowledge and experience, and discretion as to conclusion, disposition, and action. Wisdom is not a characteristic inherent in the unevolved soul; it is an intangible and elusive attainment of an experienced (relatively evolved) soul, the potential (archetype) (intention) of which is pre-existent in the unevolved soul (which is itself merely an archetype). As a soul progresses and wisdom is attained, that wisdom becomes increasingly manifest in the personality which is the soul's link to the objective world (arena). But wisdom is not a tangible concept; it exists only through its efforts and characteristics (manifestation).

The first inklings of wisdom arise as common sense and prudence. Common sense suggests sound practical intelligence; prudence implies cautious practical wisdom (especially as it relates to the individuality). From these simple personality-centered beginnings comes sagacity, the acuteness of mental discernment and soundness of judgment. As the mind is developed and intelligence expanded, more and more knowledge is transcended or transformed into wisdom. The active ingredient or catalyst in that process is love (consciousness). Knowledge alone is not enough. Rational thinking (reasoning) alone is not enough. Wisdom requires more than knowledge and reasoning, for wisdom requires the impersonal love born entirely of the soul. Such wisdom then carries with it the deepest sense of understanding and comprehension, through spiritual intuition and realization. Such wisdom is quiet qualification for every activity in the lower worlds as well as for every relationship.

Two hallmarks of wisdom are discretion and a sense of appropriateness. Discretion and (spiritual) discernment (in the sense of true wisdom) are the

consequence of mental qualification and enlightenment (and their relationship to observation (right interpretation and conclusion)). Wisdom does not necessarily suggest complete or objective knowledge; often there is a confidence and a sense of appropriateness superior to knowledge. The wise student acts with discretion and appropriateness, even if specific knowledge or understanding is remiss. Reasoning remains a worthy instrument to the unenlightened mind, but it should always be subordinated to realization (spiritual intuition) (wherever a student is so capable of evoking intuition). The spiritual student should take great care to properly discern and recognize appropriateness.

Wisdom also suggests higher forms of knowledge and the discernment of truth and rightness. But wisdom cannot be taught, and neither can it be possessed in any concrete sense. Wisdom and truth are intimately related, but truth must be recognized if wisdom is to be manifested. Higher knowledge can be shared or revealed, but much depends on consciousness (character) (quality) and how the student responds to higher knowledge. Knowledge carries with it responsibility (for proper application), as wisdom carries with it the impulse and momentum of the soul. Wisdom carries with it even higher responsibility than knowledge. That (soul) wisdom can be characterized simply by humility, compassion, and goodwill. But of all the virtues, perhaps the one most characteristic of wisdom (in the esoteric connotation) is silence and the emptiness that that implies.

† Commentary No. 177

The First Ennead 3

The third tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "Dialectic" and concerns what art, method, or discipline will spiritual attainment or perfection be achieved. The answer or response is an elucidation of dialectic (as defined and used by Plato and Plotinus). There are many definitions of dialectic. In the orthodox sense dialectic is logical discussion, reasoning by dialogue (or questions and answers) as a method of philosophical investigation. In another major sense, dialectic is a process in which an entity passes over into and is preserved and fulfilled by its opposite. Both of these definitions provide some foundation for understanding dialectic in a higher sense.

According to Plotinus, dialectic is the science, method, or discipline of spiritual realization. The nature of dialectic is alike for all, but the approach (preparation) depends on the student's temperament, capabilities, and experience. There are two stages to the path: the lower degree incorporates the paths of approach and the probationary path; the higher degree incorporates the path of discipleship and beyond. In the first stage, the student is striving upwards, being concerned with the conversion of the lower life. This includes self-assessment and a training program designed for the particular student. The second stage is for those who have overcome the lower life and have reached the upper sphere (or in other words, have purified the lower self and have achieved alignment of soul and personality). It is in this second stage that the true (higher form of) dialectic is experienced.

The lower form of dialectic is a discussion that involves (primarily) the rational mind. A middle form of dialectic involves an internal reasoning process that is enlightened by the energy of the soul, as the concrete mind comes into (approximate) contact with the soul. The higher form is pure realization (on soul levels) with the concrete mind standing by as the recipient and benefactor. Such dialectic brings with it the power of truth (reality) to every analysis, but that analysis transcends rational thinking and reasoning. The rational mind can only respond to that higher knowing (realization). Dialectic (in this higher sense) deals with certainties (realities) rather than hypotheses. It is a super-reasoning process on abstract mental and intuitive (buddhic) levels. Dialectic is the internal dialogue of the soul itself, which is also the dialogue (interaction) with the realm of universals.

Dialectic is thus said to be the supreme philosophical method, leading always to reality. Philosophy is said to be the supremely precious, and dialectic the precious part of (esoteric) philosophy. Dialectic relates philosophy to true contemplation and the elimination of personal energy. One cannot master dialectic without having cultivated the lower (and intermediate) virtues. The supreme (human) virtue is said to be wisdom, which is the virtue peculiarly induced by dialectic. But neither wisdom nor dialectic can be attained without spiritual refinement and preparation.

The master of dialectic is one who ever knows what questions to ask (which are really no questions at all), how to ask them, and how to respond to the threads of energy received as a result of the questions-which-are-not-questions. The master of dialectic is the master of himself and the master of silence; he knows which energies to avoid and which energies to cultivate. He knows how to enter the quiet, still place, and he knows how to follow any and every thread without distraction or distortion. The master of dialectic is a heart (and mind) and soul uplifted to God, with no thought of selfhood, with only the love of truth and a willingness to live wholly by its dictates.

† Commentary No. 178

Cooperation

The chief value of cooperation lies in the ability of a group to accomplish what members cannot do individually. A group effort may succeed in some task where individuals fail, or a group effort may simply be more effective or more efficient than individual efforts. Cooperation may exist (or be cultivated) between individuals, between groups, between groups and individuals, and between individuals or groups and laws (concepts). Cooperation is itself a constructive effort, the goal of which is some sort of mutual or universal benefit.

The motives and goals of cooperation may be selfish or unselfish, concrete and tangible, or abstract and timeless (removed from immediate experience). The gains of cooperation may be mundane or spiritual, personal or impersonal, individual or collective, limited (to the members and participants) or relatively unlimited. But even in the less spiritually meaningful forms of cooperation are lessons to be learned. And in the more spiritually meaningful forms of cooperation are tasks performed for the greater group (humanity) (life) with concomitant lessons for all concerned. In a sense, all cooperative efforts are preliminaries to group consciousness and the reality (unity) of life. Through constructive and cooperative efforts people may learn to get along with each other. There are many subtle benefits and products of cooperative endeavors, beyond that which is readily apparent.

One of the key values of cooperation is the cultivation of self-discipline (which implies subordination of the members to the group effort or goal). In this way,

cooperation may be a stepping stone toward the transformation of self-centeredness to universal values and principles. The spiritual student is encouraged to cultivate a discerning but cooperative disposition. An attitude of helpfulness goes hand in hand with qualities such as kindness, compassion, and goodwill. A sense or spirit of sincere cooperation may go a long way toward the transformation of separateness and exclusiveness into group consciousness and the inclusiveness of life itself. But a commitment to cooperation does not require or imply a commitment to any particular worthwhile cooperative effort. Discernment is still required for the spiritual student to recognize the more appropriate course of action and disposition.

Cooperation is an intrinsic part of the evolutionary plan for all lives and kingdoms. A bond of cooperation exists between each of the various kingdoms, whether realized consciously or not. Man contributes directly to the evolution of the elemental lives which constitute the forms in the external world. Likewise bonds exist between the human kingdom and the other subhuman kingdoms (mineral, plant, and animal). Bonds also exist between humanity and the angelic kingdom (the multidimensional world of deva lives). In various ways do all of the kingdoms of nature cooperate with each other as an integral part of the divine evolutionary plan. Cooperation is a major keyword and seed thought for evolution. Karma and cooperation are linked together in a most interesting fashion, as the unity and interrelatedness of all life and consciousness (and form) is demonstrated throughout the karmic (evolutionary) arena.

One of the greatest of bonds for the spiritual student is the dharma of cooperation with the evolutionary laws (principles) (concepts) and higher lives (as they are understood). The spiritual student is expected to live according to the highest principles and standards that he can realize and accept. And in so living is the cooperation of the aspirant with evolutionary intent assured. The commitment of the student to the spiritual path is a major undertaking, and one which incorporates wisdom and cooperation on a grand scale.

The Death of Self

One of the significant milestones in the spiritual life is the elimination of separateness or the death of self. In this sense, death does not refer to the end of incarnation, but rather, it refers to the end of self-centered existence, and the beginning of the enlightened life (without self). The true individuality (the soul) is not lost, nor is the personality terminated. Only the independence and separateness of the personality is ended, as the real self (the soul) takes complete control of its reflection in the lower worlds.

The death of self involves the complete sublimation of the personality, as the mind and the emotions, and the physical instrument lose all sense of resistance to the downpouring energies of the soul. The personality is the ego, and it is that sense of ego which must ultimately be destroyed (transformed) into useful cooperation and complete subordination to the higher self. It is the vanity and conceit and deception of the ego that are finally overcome as the humility of true spiritual strength (freedom from the limitations of self-centered existence) is achieved. And in that newfound spiritual poise is found the three-fold ray of life (love) (light) in God.

The true self is the (relatively) immortal soul which is forever coexistent and atoned with every other soul. The false self (the personality) (which is usually centered in the separative concrete mind) is quite mortal and, of its own accord, separated from other lives by the illusion of its selfhood. In reality, the ego (personal self) is merely loose association (integration) of elemental (involutionary) lives identified wholly with the aspect of form (matter) rather than the aspect of consciousness. As the false (lower) self is overcome, the individual is reborn (in the midst of life in the lower worlds) into higher consciousness. This process (transformation) has some analogies, including some emotionally-polarized orthodox religious experiences as well as some daily esoteric exercises in which the humility of higher existence is brought forth into the responsive mind and heart of the dedicated disciple.

The death of self is a most potent transition for the aspirant, because it includes (suggests) (leads to) a complete repolarization of consciousness and a deep

commitment to God (the spiritual path) and to the world of souls (humanity). The true self is a noble existence in which the life of God predominates. The individuality exists as a powerful focus of energy, but in such a refined, impersonal, selfless way that complete harmony qualifies every relationship in a group (lifewave) context. There is no independence, yet there is perfect freedom. What seems to be a paradox is resolved by the underlying purpose of life and the revelation of divine existence. The individual who becomes God (while retaining the individuality) experiences that greatness through deepest humility. No sense of separation can exist on those levels, and no personal energy can enter the field of causation for the lower worlds.

The individual who refuses to die to self clings to the temporary form of futile existence. The individual who conquers himself achieves the freedom of creative consciousness unbound by the form through which it works. The death of self (self-centeredness) is essential (mandatory) to ultimate progress upon the spiritual path, for there comes a time in the life at which a certain major crises must be faced. The spiritual student who passes that test must die to self (be transformed and reborn in the spiritual self). It is a gate through which each must pass who is to evolve beyond the human experience, a gate through which independence and separativeness and ego cannot pass, a gate through which can pass only the individuals who have achieved self-mastery.

† Commentary No. 180

The Ray of Light

The third of the seven rays is the ray of active intelligence which qualifies all of manifestation in the sense of form (matter). It is the ray of activity and the ray of matter, and it provides the foundation for existence of the four (minor) rays of attribute. As the first ray is the ray of life and as the second ray is the ray of love, the third ray is the ray of light.

Matter is a form of crystallized spirit; light is a form of energy, a form of radiation inherent in the third aspect of manifestation. That form of energy is evident in many ways, including the light of the atoms (atomic lives), the light of integrated forms (on the various planes of consciousness), the simple light of

intelligence (wherever it is found), the light of mind, the greater light of the soul, the light of the world, the light of the Sun (Son), and the light of the universe. Light has both concrete and abstract connotations, all within the third ray and its relationships. The electromagnetic radiation that is involved with physical plane vision is one concrete example. The inner light (enlightenment) and spiritual truth are more abstract examples. The source of light is simply activity (active intelligence).

Active intelligence is the field of manifestation. And every aspect of manifestation is reflected in the keywords which are associated with this third ray of activity. Among the primary keywords for the third ray besides active intelligence are manifestation, thought, understanding, comprehension, light, form, matter, appearance, evolution, and truth. Other related (secondary) keywords include philosophy, economy, adaptation, contemplation, and expediency. The third ray is very much the ray of evolution through experience, knowledge, and development, and as such it works closely with the second ray of consciousness. Where the second ray is the ray of the soul, the third ray is the ray of the mind and the personality. The mental principle is essentially third ray, and the relationship between mind, light, and form bears close study.

The spiritual student must learn to work with light energies in various ways (according to temperament). As the student progresses he contributes more and more to the blending of two aspects of light energy: the light of the form and the light of the higher self. As these two are properly fused the student becomes a radiator (and channel) of light energy. Radiation is actually a consequence of transformation (transmutation) as the hidden energies of matter (form) are released (purified and transformed) into higher experience. The mind is primarily the instrument of focus for light energy. As the mind is purified, disciplined, cultivated, and prepared, it becomes lighted and the entire aura engages in the processes of light. That radiation of light enables other energies to be released and transmitted, the most important of which is love. Thus light and love complement each other in a profound way, through evolutionary interdependence.

The third aspect is vibration (oscillation) in its infinite variations. Light is essentially motion or periodic movement. Manifestation is activity; activity requires vibration (which is adaptable) beyond inertia; and vibration is itself a

form of light. That field of manifestation incorporates four rays of light (the rays of attribute), each with its characteristic light, vibration, domain, and interaction (exchange of energy) with the others. The fourth ray of balance allows the energies of the upper triad to be reflected into the lower triad. The fifth ray complements the sixth ray as the head complements the heart. And the seventh ray reflects the power (energy) (life) of the first ray into the structure, organization, and rules (order) of manifestation.

† Commentary No. 181

Composure

The composure of the spiritual student (disciple) is characterized by an aura of serenity and tranquility. That aura is an interactive energy field that reflects (transmits) the quality of thought and feeling. In the case of the spiritual student, that aura is to be cultivated as an instrument of composure, a means for maintaining a spiritual orientation in the waking-consciousness, and a means of maintaining a moderate temperament (as to the personality).

The student achieves the proper composure through intelligent meditation, spiritual discipline and refinement, and through the careful programming of suitable energies. The methods of programming for composure may vary widely according to the talents and temperament of the student, but inevitably the aura is properly qualified by light and love and potency. Such an aura must be properly stabilized and balanced, for the energies utilized can be quite distracting if not entirely manageable. It is very important for the student to maintain his spiritual composure at all times (if at all possible), for the student is held responsible and accountable for the energy which is evoked and released through his presence in incarnation. If the composure is lost, even momentarily, some energy is also lost or wasted (not lost in any absolute sense, but scattered and removed from effective utilization).

From time to time, even the most dedicated and cultivated of disciples may become ruffled or distracted or unsettled, slightly or otherwise. In such a case, the student must make a conscious (and semi-automatic, pre-programmed) effort to recompose (regain the proper composure) as soon as the out-of-balance

state is realized. In fact, the mind should be programmed (cultivated) to trigger an immediate awareness or recognition of the situation for the benefit of the waking-consciousness. This allows the student to recover almost immediately, and minimize the scattered energy. In due course, the student learns to recognize his vulnerabilities (in time and situations) and actually learns to overcome the possibility of lack of composure. The potent tranquility and equability of the dedicated student is quite a contrast when compared with the condition of the aura of ordinary consciousness.

The opposite of composure is confusion. Confusion is characterized by a lack of clarity or distinctiveness, perplexity, bewilderment, even vagueness. In a deeper sense, the state of the aura during a period of confusion is actually a clouding of consciousness. Confusion may be a slight or simple matter of indecisiveness, but whatever the degree or extent, confusion (lack of composure) suggests a scattering of energy (a scattering of consciousness) and an impure mixture of energy (a mixture of impurities). By impurities it is meant inconsistencies, two or more energies of dissimilar vibration (tone) (quality) that are not harmonious. These can be quite subtle in nature and arise even from simple contrast or conflict. The inconsistency between what is done and what should be done (according to conscience), for example, creates an energy conflict (confusion of energies) within the aura.

Consistency and composure are quite related, objectively and subjectively. The spiritual student should intelligently resolve inconsistencies, that he might remain quietly composed throughout whatever experiences and situations may need to be faced. If the student is not easily disturbed (bothered) (upset), he may be trusted with more (highly qualified) energies to be properly released into the environment (through the radiation of the aura). But the implacable student must also be spiritually responsive (easily impressed by the quality of the soul), if his composure is to be properly utilized and remain meaningful.

The First Ennead 4

The fourth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "Happiness." The object is to distinguish between true happiness and welfare or prosperity. Welfare and prosperity are considered within the reach of all (lower) lives, but true happiness is said to be a condition in consciousness (disposition) in which the awareness of the soul is required. The lower order of happiness is simply the good of life, based upon appearances, the conditions of life, achievements, and even inborn tendencies. True happiness is a higher order of happiness altogether, centered in the inner peace of being, in accordance with the purpose of nature. In this sense, even the soul of the lower kingdoms can participate.

The state of well-being is seen as a good in itself, apart from perception, and therefore goodness can be experienced on all levels, even in the lower kingdoms. But true happiness is not based upon any (artificial) sense of well-being, nor is it dependent on sensation or any form of outer experience, attainment, or condition. True happiness is inherent in the possession (realization) of the perfect (divine) (inner) life. All beings possess (participate) in this divine life, either potentially, unconsciously, or effectively. True happiness is said to be related to the effective inner life and the end of seeking. Those who are proficient in the inner life of the soul, work no longer for themselves, but for God, the lifewave, and the soul itself.

One who has attained true happiness is (relatively) unaffected by pain, suffering, or sorrow. True happiness is not affected by any form of (apparent) misfortune, since true happiness depends only on the divine changeless (existing beyond the outer world of changes) essence within the form. Even drugs (food or drink) and disease, which are viewed as bringing about a suspension (distortion) (compromise) (clouding) of consciousness, deter not the happiness based upon inner peace. The inner peace pervades both the waking and sleeping states, for it is dependent upon neither. Furthermore, there are no means to true happiness. It exists, and it can be experienced, but it cannot be attained in any objective or deliberate sense. As one becomes centered in the soul, one simply realizes that quiet, inner joy that is true being.

Pleasant conditions may be sought for the sake of integrity (the simple, purified life of the spiritually responsive personality) rather than compromise (the complicated or distracting life of involvement in lesser matters). But even with inner peace there must be an acceptance of karma (conditions). Even with true happiness, one may carry personal suffering (and the suffering of humanity) as well as can be. But with strength, untroubled by appearances (even painful ones), the inner life persists. The enlightened view and experience the world quite differently than other mortals; the outer events do not penetrate the inner calm of the enlightened, only the observation and assessment are reflected into the inner being. The one who is proficient in the esoteric peace retains his composure, having the consciousness centered (focused) within, while simultaneously functioning effectively in the outer world.

True happiness is thus removed from sensation or emotion, removed even from the joy of reasoning, as the mind is held steadfast in the light of the inner self. The true individuality is neither the male or female body (expression) nor the personality nature; thus, happiness centered in the lower self is at best, temporary and impotent when compared with the reality of higher existence. Happiness that is centered upon the real is a form of immortality in which the proficient ever bathe, while helping the balance of humanity onward and upward, from darkness into light.

† Commentary No. 183

Humanity

Humanity is the lifewave which inhabits the human kingdom of nature. There is a natural tendency to identify the lifewave with the particular kingdom which it happens to be passing through, but the student should be careful to distinguish between them. The lifewave is a thread of life (consciousness) which evolves progressively through the various kingdoms of nature. Each kingdom provides special conditions for the lifewave to experience. The lifewave evolves through experience, and the various kingdoms change (very slowly) to provide the proper conditions for each (successive) lifewave.

The lifewave (life) (lives) which presently constitutes (inhabits) the human kingdom will someday pass on (collectively) into the next kingdom, just as the

life which is presently passing through the conditions of consciousness and experience which characterize the animal kingdom will someday pass into the human kingdom (though that kingdom will necessarily be quite unlike it is today). People (in this human experience) tend to identify with the human form and the human kingdom, but this is only a temporary stage in experience (lasting millions of years perhaps, but nevertheless temporary). The reality of the soul transcends the human experience.

One of the major characteristics of the human experience is self-consciousness. Even the most highly evolved animal lives are lacking this essential ingredient. The birth of self-consciousness suggests the temporary illusion of separateness through multiplicity. The human being is usually very much aware (unconsciously) of his separateness (in form and apparent consciousness) from other human lives. Even when the student begins to appreciate the existence of the soul, it is thought of as a particular, individualized soul. And it is a uniquely individualized entity related to its reflection as an incarnated personality. But it is also much more. The soul is an integral part of humanity, but all of humanity is an integral part of each soul, for through each soul lives the one life which is humanity (the lifewave).

As the consciousness of the student is raised, it becomes possible to live through all lives simultaneously, to identify with the lifewave itself primarily, and with the individualized soul only in a secondary sense. The pulse (life) and consciousness of the lifewave are realized and the student is then able to appreciate more fully the duality and contrast of human existence. Humanity can then be seen as a single life which experiences a timeframe vastly different from that of the localized (individual) consciousness. The quality of human consciousness is improved as the various focal points of experience are improved in quality. Each extension of the whole (to the individualized soul) contributes to the consciousness of humanity, and the lessons of humanity are likewise contributed to the consciousness of the individual, especially as the individual participates directly in the consciousness of the lifewave.

The contrast of humanity, between self-consciousness and creative group-consciousness (between separateness and unity) is part of the necessary experience of human evolution. The lifewave evolves in many ways, through various perspectives, and the interaction between various facets of human

experience provides the means for progressing beyond the realm of contrast. The spiritual student should endeavor to enter into the life and consciousness of humanity (on soul levels), for it is humanity (in the intermediate sense) which provides the basis for existence in individualized form. No human being can live independently of the lifewave, and every human being has an inner obligation to that lifewave of which he is a reflection.

† Commentary No. 184

The Effects of Music

The effects of physical plane music on the human personality are many and varied. The two primary variables (factors) are the quality (and form) of the music and the quality (responsiveness) of the personality. Much depends upon the nature of the mind and the degree of independence present in the physical and emotional bodies. The whole process involves the interaction of energy (music) with energy (the aura and the personality).

The quality of music depends primarily on the purity of the tones produced and the concordance or harmony of the various tones and instruments. Music is essentially qualified vibration. On one extreme is music (noise) that is produced with many impurities and an absence of harmony. Much of the popular music today is produced with varying degrees of impurity, with many coarse and discordant notes (which are not recognized as such by those for whom that music is appealing). On the other extreme is much of what is called classical music, music noted for its purity, clarity, harmony, and constructive effects. Not all of the classical music can be considered in this category (of the highest form of physical plane music), for even classical music varies widely in form and quality. Coarse popular music carries with it a (potentially) destructive element. Refined classical music carries with it the potential for constructive interaction between the soul, the mind, and the entire personality.

The quality of the personality determines the response of the personality (on its physical, emotional, and mental levels) to the various forms of music. A coarse, discordant personality (aura) will usually find coarse, discordant music to be appealing. A refined, purified, and disciplined personality will usually find

refined (classical) music to be far more appropriate. The bulk of humanity fall somewhere between these two degrees, and the taste or responsiveness of the personality to music may vary considerably even for a particular individual. The environment or atmosphere also plays an important role, for music can sustain a particular atmosphere for quite some time.

Coarse, discordant music tends to stimulate the lower astral; other forms of popular music usually stimulate the emotional body on intermediate levels. Whenever the emotional (astral) body is stimulated by music, the physical form tends to move in response. In other forms of music, in which the mind (rather than the emotions) predominates, the emotional body is calmed and relaxed while the physical form is not normally engaged. Much of the popular music can create tension and frustration (even in very subtle, unconscious ways). By observation and consideration, the spiritual student should be able to recognize the effects of various forms of music on his own aura and temperament, and take appropriate action to improve and qualify the situation.

Physical plane music can produce quite profound effects on emotional and mental levels, and some forms of (quiet, classical) music can actually encourage and evoke the alignment of soul and mind (and heart). Loud or coarse music can be quite stimulating in the lowest sense, while quiet and refined (mostly classical and semi-classical) music can be gently stimulating in the highest sense. Meditation music (if used) should be chosen for its gentleness and purity. The higher forms of music can be participated in with interesting and constructive effects. For the spiritual student at least, the lower forms of music are distracting and unproductive (if not counter-productive) (and should be avoided or tuned out). With proper discretion the various forms of (refined) music can be utilized quite effectively, but first the student should understand himself and observe first-hand the interaction of music and personality.

Derivation of the Twelve

From one to three to seven to twelve, the derivation of manifestation is a logical process. In the beginning there exist one primary force or essence, the absolute, and two prime realities: the absolute and its absence (null universe).

From the interaction of the two precursory realities is produced (withdrawn) (created) the first ray or logos (which is life). The third ray (which is form) is produced by the reflection (in one perspective) of the first ray, while the second ray (consciousness) is produced from the mutual interaction of the first ray and the third ray, an even (mystical) ray born of two occult rays. From another (equally valid) perspective, the second ray proceeds from the first ray, and the third ray proceeds from the second ray. The two processes (perspectives) actually occur simultaneously (more properly, synchronously).

On one level, the first ray is as close to the unmanifest as is possible, and the third ray is the totality of manifestation (while the second ray is the intermediary between the manifest and the unmanifest). As the cosmos unfolds through interaction and production, the three primary rays are emerged. By interaction (production) is meant creation through induction. From unity proceeds duality, and from duality proceeds divine triplicity. The subsequent manifestation of the three (the trinity) into the seven (the seven rays) occurs through progressive and successive interaction. The first ray and the second ray interact (creatively) to produce the reflection of the (non-participating) (missing) third ray, which becomes the sixth ray. Similarly, the second ray and the third ray interact to produce the reflection of the (missing) first ray, which becomes the seventh ray. And finally, the fourth ray (the last of the seven to be produced, esoterically the first to exist) is produced from an interaction of all three (major) rays.

The lower three rays (5, 6, and 7) are actually second-order rays (each produced by an interaction of two major rays) while the ray of balance (the fourth ray) is a third-order (more complicated) ray (produced by an interaction of all three major rays). In correspondence with the two processes by which the second ray is produced, the fourth ray is also produced by the simultaneous interaction of the

first three rays and their respective reflections. In this sense, the second ray and the fourth ray are more profound (in their central significance). The three primary rays are also manifested on successively lower levels (each stage of manifestation suggests greater complexity and lower levels) but remain (more fundamentally) first-order rays. In fact, each of the rays function simultaneously on every level of manifestation for which its existence is possible (the three major rays correspond to a major level (dimension) (scope) of manifestation) (likewise, the seven rays).

The twelve are derived directly from the seven, as each of the major (three) rays interacts pairwise (permutationally) with each of the minor (four) rays (or in other words, twelve is the simple product of three and four, but the actual process remains obscure (esoteric)) (the mathematical operations are essentially symbolic). From the seven and the twelve, all of the multifarious levels of manifestation are produced. The form side tends to follow powers of seven (twelve), while the life side tends to follow powers of twelve (seven), but there is really little difference between the two perspectives (seven and twelve). In the methods (processes) through which the various rays and elements are produced are found a number of keys to understanding the nature and characteristics of each of the rays. The interrelatedness of the whole remains quite apparent, throughout the many permutations and cycles of manifestation.

† Commentary No. 186

The Past

From the standpoint of the waking-consciousness, the past exists as a field of memory, the period of time (and space in time) beginning with the birth of objective manifestation and ending with the present moment. From that standpoint or perspective the past exists only as a memory field, but in a greater reality the past has a greater existence, as an integral part of the totality of life (without time). However, for practical purposes the past need only be considered as a function of memory (history) and a matter of perception (and the extraction of useful information).

The memory of past experience and expression (in physical, emotional, and mental terms) exists in both personal (particular) and impersonal forms. The personal (individual) memory includes events perceived and recalled consciously and unconsciously. Throughout conscious and unconscious experience, the mind (and aura) takes in far more information than is consciously observed. In fact, the super-conscious memory holds within it practically all of the information relating to individual experience on every level of (human) consciousness. But there exists as well an impersonal memory of nature in which all circumstances, events, and consciousness are recorded indelibly for all of the past. Within that memory of nature the past exists as a complete historical record. Even within matter itself (on various levels) can be found many elements of memory.

The real value of the past lies in the learning of lessons and in the understanding of the patterns of life (with respect to purpose and the evolution of consciousness). Many lessons in life are not assimilated or realized consciously or in the present tense. Some (moderate) reflection or contemplation (retrospection) upon the past can help an individual to realize many of those lessons. Also many lessons are learned unconsciously or subconsciously as the mind relates past experience through analysis and correspondence. With considerable skill and training it is possible for the student to accurately view the records of the memory of nature and to assimilate the experience of the past, not simply in the individual sense (which is hardly important) but in the greater sense of life itself, the consciousness of the lifewave, and the pattern of evolution.

But two significant (related) problems exist with respect to the past (and to the waking-consciousness): perception and personal energy (glamour). The properly trained esoteric student is (relatively) free from personal energies and can easily view and properly interpret the memory of nature. For such a student there exists (virtually) no glamour or distraction, no curiosity, no personal motives that could distort the perception and interpretation of the past. But the past is usually complicated by perception. The untrained or unprepared student (relying only on superficial psychic faculties) would perceive the past through the distortion of the aura and the distortions of the reflecting ether (which is not the true memory of nature). Though the past exists as fact, the past can be perceived and interpreted in countless ways according to the consciousness of

the enquirer. Thus it is important for the spiritual student to be unconcerned by personal energies and immature interests.

The proper recall of the past (in terms of meaningful information) requires a clarity of vision and a purity (depth) of consciousness. The truth (of the past) can only be realized to the extent that the consciousness lives in truth. The spiritual student should dwell primarily on the subjective whole which exists beyond the limitations of time; beyond the past, the present, and the future; where truth lives unburdened by any concept of time or space.

† Commentary No. 187

The First Ennead 5

The fifth tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "Happiness and the Extension of Time." Happiness is considered in its two dimensions (apparent and real) with respect to time, as a present (instantaneous) quality, and with respect to duration. Apparent happiness (pleasure) is that dimension of happiness resulting from phenomenal existence and mundane affairs. Real (true) happiness is that other dimension of happiness that results from quality, virtue, and inner existence (which is being).

Happiness is usually considered as a present (current) state or quality experienced by an individual in time. Such happiness requires the presence of the emotional or mental state; it is not a matter of anything past or future, for it is only substantial in the present tense and only to the extent that it is manifested or experienced by the waking-consciousness. In the case of apparent happiness, the state (of happiness) appears and disappears and fluctuates in intensity depending on outer conditions and their relationships with consciousness. In the case of true happiness, the state is relatively constant, being the result of a depth of consciousness and a temperament conditioned by inner values and higher consciousness.

Passing (phenomenal) happiness does not really vary because of time, but it does vary according to events and circumstances in time. Eternal (inner) happiness is quite unrelated to time or to events in time. But in either case,

happiness exists only in the present tense. Memory is not happiness, but memory can affect (phenomenal) happiness in the present tense (as in the experience of memory). Felicity (the quality or state of being happy) does not of itself increase or decrease as a function of time. Greater (true) happiness is a consequence (reward) of higher virtue, notwithstanding a duration in time. Virtue (and real happiness) is simply not a time-dependent phenomenon.

However, there is a relationship between a quality of pain (unhappiness) or pleasure (apparent happiness) and the time over which it is experienced. The product of the duration of an experience with its intensity or magnitude (the integration of experience over time) may determine certain effects and processes in the personality. Experience has as its object the learning of certain lessons pertaining to the progress or evolution of consciousness. Significant pain over a short period of time is more likely to make a direct impression on the waking-consciousness than slight but malingering pain over a long period of time. Pain is essentially an attention-getting device for the purpose of learning. Thus happiness and unhappiness in time are effects of consciousness and related to learning experience. All of experience aims toward something present (at the focus of consciousness), yet much is still experienced and assimilated unconsciously (and out of time).

Moral excellence is more important than (transient) (personality-centered) happiness. True, inner happiness comes when the student has the demonstrated ability to (assimilate) experience without emotional or phenomenal involvement (absorption), when the student has risen above the purely mundane existence. Time and circumstances simply cannot deter the student who has achieved inner happiness (as a consequence of quality in consciousness). Time is the illusion of eternity, but eternity is really timelessness. Life is measured by eternity, not by time. Everlasting time is not related to eternity, for eternity exists without time. Those who live unabsorbed by the active (mundane) life attain happiness in greater depth (reality), for the good (true happiness) results from the inner disposition (wisdom) and the contemplative life.

Moderation

One of the more meaningful keywords in the everyday life of the spiritual student is moderation. Moderation is the prevention of extremes in behavior or expression (on physical, emotional, and mental levels), the observation of (adherence to) reasonable self-imposed limits, the maintenance of a calm and temperate disposition. Moderation implies a measure of conscious self-control and a degree of unconscious (programmed) self-control.

The problems of excess (extreme behavior or indulgence) are manifold for the spiritual student (who naturally and intentionally strives for clarity of consciousness and purity of disposition). Extreme behavior (indulgence) is a considerable distraction of the personality from the serenity required for rapport with the soul. The lack of moderation suggests a high degree of absorption in mundane affairs and in personality matters. Extreme behavior and exaggeration in any form breed absorption (glamour and illusion). On the other hand, moderation strengthens the spiritual disposition and helps the individual to be more aware of truth and reality. The extremes breed distortion; the point of balance (moderation) between the extremes cultivates accuracy and truth.

Both the unrestrained head and the unrestrained heart (emotions) are formidable problems. The head (concrete mind) (intellect) is naturally critical and separative, exclusive and individualistic, rational and irrational. Opinions rigidly adhered to, and the closed mind in general, are indications of the head unrestrained. Where the head is restrained (moderated) (cultivated), it becomes more reasonable and more responsive to the intuition and realization of the soul. Moderation in thinking should be cultivated in order to achieve the dynamic, creative, and contemplative mentality needed of the spiritual student. The unrestrained emotions distort and distract the focus of waking-consciousness from the clarity of emotion required of the spiritual student. Extreme emotions are highly disruptive and absorbing, in either extreme.

Actually, moderation is very much a relative concept. Many aspects of behavior that are considered ordinary and reasonable by mundane (worldly) standards would be considered extreme by spiritual and esoteric standards.

Conversely, many practices and disciplines considered to be moderate by spiritual standards may be considered extreme by worldly standards. Moderation is quite dependent on the individual circumstances and the progress of the student upon the path. Much depends on the point of view and the degree of cultivation achieved in the personality. The instabilities of worldly focus and experience cannot be tolerated in the highly organized (vitalized) (natural) and spirituality responsive instruments of the esoteric student. The standards that are natural and comforting to the spiritual student should be viewed in context and in relation to the spiritual path and the demands of higher consciousness.

The moderation of worldly distractions (physical, emotional, and mental excesses) is actually part of the process of the purification and preparation of the personality of the spiritual student. The student who commits himself to the spiritual path endeavors to transform the personality, to an instrument highly responsive to the purposes of evolution, to the soul, to life and consciousness (awareness) (rather than to material or phenomenal existence). As the student progresses, what is considered moderate also progresses. The degree of self-control (and inherent freedom) is enhanced, and the moderation of temperament and behavior is more easily inspired. The secret of moderation rests within the concept of reasonable and self-imposed limits (which results in greater freedom and truth (reality)).

† Commentary No. 189

The Call

The call of the spiritual path is the sending forth of the characteristic note of evolution with respect to a particular lifewave of souls. Relatively few souls realize, accept, and heed the call to hastened evolution and the demands of such a path. Most continue along the gradual spiral of evolution, remaining unresponsive to the call. But for those souls which heed the call, the characteristic note of evolution is incorporated within the soul and the characteristic note of the soul is changed accordingly. The call of the path to the soul is merely an invitation, but the call of the soul to its reflection (the personality) is a summons of authority and potency.

As the soul is reoriented to the subjective realization of the path, its relationship to the personality changes markedly. Normally the soul relates to its personality only in an indirect fashion, slowly assimilating the experience of life in the lower worlds and having little to do with the instrument (the personality) itself. The soul simply qualifies the lower life indirectly until such time as the personality has virtually completed the lower experience. But the soul which responds to the call of the spiritual path begins to send forth certain energies (qualifications) into the life and consciousness of the personality, not really in a direct fashion, but in relatively subtle ways.

First the soul must issue a challenge to the lower life. This is effected through the sounding of the basic note of the soul. The challenge is primarily one of cooperation with the soul, of the subordination of the personality. If the mind is strong or if the personality is not reasonably integrated and coherent, then considerable conflict follows the challenge until the personality is finally integrated and the mind subordinated to the quality (will) of the soul. Much of the conflict occurs without conscious realization. The soul sends forth the call (challenge) and the battle is on (usually) long before the waking-consciousness becomes aware of the conflict (process). When the conflict is resolved and the mind has assumed its proper place (as the link between the soul and personality), then the personality is responsive to the call of the spiritual path and conscious cooperation becomes possible.

The continuing call of the soul to the personality may take any number of forms, depending on the ray relationships (of soul, personality, mind, emotions, etc.) and the degree of development. The call generally consists of a strong inner (mostly conscious) prompting to the particular course of action (preparation and purification of the personality) in anticipation of discipleship and a life of active spiritual service. But the response of the mind (and personality) may be quite slow at first, due to the natural resistance (inertia) of the lower life. A major breakthrough occurs as the waking-consciousness decides to cooperate with the soul and as the lower self makes its commitment to the soul (and to conscious evolution).

The soul continues to be characterized by internal recollectedness and impersonal meditation, yet the energy and quality of the soul naturally flows into the responsive personality (as the lower self is gradually prepared)

according to the natural rhythm of the soul and its relationship to the path. The call of the path is transmitted through the soul to the personality and the lower self gradually withdraws from involvement (absorption) in mundane life and begins to focus on truth and reality. The energies of the path are transmitted through the personality into the lower worlds, as the summons is answered and resolved, and as the Voice of the Silence begins to dominate the life and affairs of the manifested personality.

† Commentary No. 190

Reflection

The reflection of the first three rays (of the seven rays) into the lower triad of objective experience is an important process which contributes to the development of all the three rays and all of the lives within their field of manifestation. Each of the three major rays produces a reflection of itself by enfolding or casting its light (character) through the fourth ray of balance (or the absence of the fourth ray) (which constitutes a surface of reflection between the upper triad and the lower triad).

The three major rays are transmitted (descend) into the objective worlds along with their reflections. The basic energy of each of the three major rays is incorporated in its reflection or image, but the emphasis (perspective) (character) can be quite different. Though the inherent energy of the original (major) ray is present in its reflection, the derived (reflected) ray appropriates an energy of its own that is based on its greater involvement in the lower (objective) worlds. Thus the higher rays are more subjective; life predominates and form is subordinated. The reverse is true for the lower rays. The reflected rays are more objective; matter and form predominate while life is subordinated to the form. The derived rays are simply more involved with matter and form and therefore provide a contrast with the original rays.

Each derived (reflected) ray is the product of induction (a consequence of creative meditation). The derived rays are made manifest or apparent in order to provide a domain and realm of meaningful experience and expression, without obscuring the original rays. Each of the derived rays adds a dimension of experience to its original that can (later) be assimilated by its primary. The

contrast of a major ray and its reflection provides the bulk of experience for both rays. A process of abstraction and assimilation continues throughout manifestation, but toward the end of the period of manifestation, each primary ray must fully abstract the quality of its reflection. That process is essentially synthetic, as each ray (through contrast) produces new energies.

The inherent qualities of each ray are discerned within the domain and character of the reflection. Differences between the two rays are a matter of appearance and manifestation. Similarities are recognized as inherent or subjective qualities. The first ray of life (power) (purpose) (energy) is reflected as the seventh ray of order (organization) (matter) (form). The contrast between energy and matter is quite dramatic, yet energy (power) is inherent within all matter. The contrast between the first ray and the seventh ray is greater than that between the second ray and the sixth ray (which is in turn greater than that between the third ray and the fifth ray) because the magnitude of contrast depends on the distance (separation) (spread) of the ray and its reflection from the surface of reflection (central fourth ray).

The second ray of love-wisdom is reflected into the sixth ray of devotion, aspiration, and idealism. The heart is the central theme or energy of these two rays, the second ray being more subjective and less distracted (distorted) by personal energies. Similarly, the third ray of abstract mind is reflected into the fifth ray of concrete mind. With respect to the principle of mind (and the domain of the two rays of mind), the third ray provides the abstract, philosophical, subjective, and contemplative dimension, while the fifth ray provides the concrete, scientific, objective, and analytical dimension. In each case (of the three pairs of rays), the fourth ray of balance provides the linkage (and surface of reflection) for communion of the primary ray and its reflection, through the synthetic triangles (1:4:7), (2:4:6), and (3:4:5).

The Present

From the standpoint of the waking-consciousness, the present exists only as a momentary (eternal) field of localized and immediate awareness in the objective sense. The present is therefore a focal point in time and space for the benefit of the waking-consciousness that is absorbed by mundane (objective) experience. The present tense is a phenomenon associated primarily with experience in the physical world (but also to a lesser extent with the emotional plane). The present tense is the focus of objective time (rather than subjective time and the greater reality that it represents), and for all practical purposes, it is the present tense which provides the bulk of experience and expression for the waking-consciousness in incarnation.

The present is the (apparent) frontier of experience. The present is a consequence of previous experience since the past is a considerable influence on the present. All of the causes of the past (near or distant) are projected forward in time according to the needs (karma) of the individual and the concomitant needs of the greater life. The causes exist out-of-time, but precipitate in time and space as needed, as meaningful effects (consequences) and lessons to be learned. The magic of the present tense is its dynamic place in the timestream; the present tense interacts simultaneously with the past (since it derives primarily from past action) and the future (since the present is a creative force for future consequences). One of the secrets of time (and space) can be realized in the expansion of the present tense (focus).

At the focus (convergence) (resolution) (concentration) (distortion) of time, the present is the immeasurable and elusive (exclusive) intersection of the past with the future. It is the attention of the waking-consciousness of the personality (mind) that gives meaning to the present tense. The reality of lower (objective) experience is better represented by an eternal focal point of attention through which passes the ebb and flow of an objective timestream.

Through that focal point the timestream is perceived (distorted) and forced to pass. But in the present all focal points (one for each individual in objective incarnation) exist simultaneously, each distorting (interactively changing) the

timestream at least locally. With the natural equivalence of time and space, the present exists only in terms of the immediate field of perception in time and space. That perception (participation) includes observation and creative interaction with both the past and present, the immediate environment (physical, emotional, and mental), and the stream of consciousness.

The paradox (misunderstanding) of the present tense arises from absorption in objective (material) existence. The present seems to be the only reality of time, whereas in truth the present has no intrinsic reality apart from eternity (timelessness). The eternal now (realization of being) is so unconcerned with past, present, or future, because all are seen as a single totality, out of time. It is the natural timelessness (impersonality) of the soul that provides for the expansion of consciousness and corresponding self-realization (the acceptance of reality). The spiritual adept is a master of time and circumstances, for the mind of the adept lives in the eternal (timeless) reality of the soul, and from that vantage point interacts creatively (and dispassionately) with the objective world. The truth of the present can only be realized to the extent that the consciousness lives in truth (timelessness). The spiritual student should dwell primarily on the subjective whole which exists beyond the limitation of time; beyond the past, the present, and the future; where truth lives unburdened by any concept of time and space.

† Commentary No. 192

The First Ennead 6

The sixth tractate (commentary) of the First Ennead is entitled "Beauty." Therein Plotinus considers the nature of beauty and the relationship of beauty to the soul (and to God). Beauty is considered in several dimensions (orders). The lower order comprises the beauty perceived through the senses (through sight and hearing). Another (higher) order comprises the beauty found in the conduct of life, in actions, character, and virtue. An even higher order comprises the beauty inherent within communion with the soul (and God) and the vision of truth. The lower order pertains to concrete experience while the higher orders are increasingly more abstract. In each case, beauty depends on perception and realization, and the order of beauty realized depends on the extent to which the higher levels of consciousness are involved.

Beauty is defined as the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses (in the lower aspect) or exalts the mind and spirit (in the higher aspect). Beauty depends on symmetry and (compound) unity, on the proper synthesis of components. Beauty is a matter of perceived accord and harmony, being a measure of how close the object or experience approaches the ideal form or archetype. In the higher sense, beauty is a matter of truth (goodness) and reality, perceived beyond the senses, through the participation of the soul itself. There is a superficial beauty and an inner (intrinsic) beauty. The authentic (inner) beauty stirs the soul by association (correlation) with God, through the inherent and divine grace. The greatest joy is regarded to be the perception (participation) of the soul, to see with the sight (inner vision) of the soul, and with its affinity for truth (reality) (beauty) (goodness).

The separated (independent) (unenlightened) personality is considered ugly (dull) by virtue of its association with matter (the opposite pole of spirit). The soul is seen to be beautiful by its concordance with the divine life (light). Thus the ideal is seen to be beautiful in its pattern and unity (brightness), and its reflection into matter to be relatively ugly by comparison. Cleanliness and purity of matter (the vehicles of the personality) are then seen to be necessary for communion. The distraction (and distortion) of the personality in the lower worlds must be overcome so that the higher order of beauty might be realized. The soul (personality) immersed in the world of matter is seen simply as the distant (imperfect) reflection of the soul resplendent on its own level. That which is truly beautiful draws the beholder (the mind and personality) upward in consciousness until communion (the higher realization of divine beauty) is achieved.

Beauty, then, is regarded as a potent force that draws the mind and the soul of the spiritual student onward and upward (inward) to the source of light and love (and life). Pleasure (happiness) drawn from the lower order no longer satisfies and is released. The real joy (beauty) of inner experience replaces the lower order, and increasingly the vision of the spiritual path (truth) is realized, as the focus of consciousness achieves conscious communion with the divine center within (the soul) (God). That process is one of becoming closer and closer to God in terms of quality (consciousness); thus the spiritual student is enjoined

to become Godlike in all things, that the beauty of creation and the achievement of divine humility might be consciously entered.

The nature of God (the good) can only be realized by participation. An even higher order of beauty (beyond communion) is suggested as the soul (monad) begins to participate in the principles of cosmic existence.

† Commentary No. 193

Prudence

Prudence is defined as the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason (and intuition). It suggests discretion in the management of experience, providence in the use of resources, and caution as to danger or risk. Ordinary prudence is a function of the personality, where through reasoning the individual may determine the relative appropriateness of action in the lower worlds. As the student progresses and as the intuition begins to shine through the responsive mind and waking-consciousness, prudence is realized (manifested) as a natural function of the soul.

Ordinary prudence is limited to (by) the personality and the degree of integration and stability achieved by the personality. Through observation and experience, common-sense, and the practical understanding of cause and effect, the student is able to consciously reason through any given situation to determine the (apparent) appropriate course of action or disposition. Contenance (self-restraint) based upon reason (rather than emotion or glamour) is the first real step along the path. Such prudence is a matter of individual discretion, based upon limited knowledge and understanding (and further limited by experience and mental capacity). Nevertheless, ordinary prudence (centered in the personality) is sufficient to carry the spiritual student through all of the preliminary stages of the spiritual path. As the student recognizes consciously the needed work, it can be more easily accomplished. The various aspects of preparation can then be accomplished with practical wisdom.

But as the student progresses, a greater sense of appropriateness (and timeliness) is realized. Instead of being limited by the efforts of the intelligent

personality, the student begins to realize the vast resources of the soul. The energies and clarification of the soul then guide the student (by degrees) both consciously and unconsciously. The intuition of the soul, coupled with the practical experience of the personality, provides even greater insight into life and the situations and circumstances faced. Unlimited by the personality, the enlightened student can correlate the world of causes with the world of effects. Self-realization and the deeper (inclusive) understanding of experience then provide the individual with a real sense of appropriateness.

This sense of appropriateness is simply a sense of realization (intuitive discernment) of the most suitable course of action (especially with respect to conduct and disposition). The sense of appropriateness is a subjective, intuitive, inner feeling sometimes (as appropriate) accompanied by a detailed and comprehensive understanding, but always accompanied by a knowing (recognition) of appropriateness. One simply knows (automatically and intuitively) what to do, when to do it, and how to do it properly. With increasing mindfulness (concern for the purpose of life), the sense of prudence (appropriateness) of the student becomes quite dependable and highly inclusive.

But this natural prudence must be earned, through the proper cultivation of the personality, through humility and spiritual maturity, through the practical experience of the objective life, and through the conscious correlation of experience with the esoteric (theosophical) (metaphysical) teachings. A strong (dominant) mind untempered by the soul is a formidable barrier to the natural sense of appropriateness that offers the deep but subtle encouragement of the spiritual path. Emotional weakness as well as vulnerability to glamour and illusion also serve to block the manifestation of the natural wisdom of the soul. Though prudence in its natural (intuitive) form is subtle and valuable, like all other spiritual qualities and experience, the price must be paid.

Habit

The human personality is an instrument that can be fairly easily programmed. As the physical body is developed early in each incarnation, various habits are established through conscious and unconscious learning. As the emotional and mental bodies are developed, various habits or patterns are established as a result of experience (learning) and repetition of action (feeling) (thinking).

Each habit is a consistent or recurring disposition or tendency to act (react) (respond) in a certain way, usually acquired by frequent or timely repetition (association) and conscious or unconscious programming (intention). Thus, many patterns of behavior, feeling, and thinking are established in the personality instrument throughout the incarnation (and especially during the early years). The establishment of various habits in the personality may be the result of hereditary and environmental conditioning (learning) (karma) as well as conscious (deliberate and intentional) programming.

Habits tend to be rather strong due to the nature of material existence. Physical, emotional, and mental habits are actual patterns programmed in physical, emotional, and mental matter. Through repetition or intensity each habit is imprinted (established) in form, and that form is naturally resistant to change due to the inherent inertia of matter. Habits can vary in intensity due to the degree or strength (consistency) of programming. Once an action (feeling) (thought) has been performed (experienced) it is (usually) easier to perform it again because of the pattern or path that has been created by the action. As the action is repeated, the momentum of the pattern is increased to the extent that the practice or action becomes more or less involuntary, being almost entirely dependent on the triggering mechanism. A similarity of circumstances may be all that is necessary to trigger the programmed response.

Given that the personality is a programmable instrument, and given that a great deal of programming takes place unconsciously, the spiritual student should be aware of the problems of unwanted (and unrealized) habits and the opportunity for conscious reprogramming. The student should endeavor to recognize the habits already established and selectively reprogram (cultivate)

the personality according to the needs and intentions of the spiritual path. For the experienced and mentally-polarized student (having a fully integrated personality), such programming (and reprogramming) is a simple matter of minor mental adjustment (by consciously establishing a pattern of cause and effect within the personality). Vulnerabilities can be eliminated; awareness of certain experience can be programmed; and constructive habits (patterns) (meditation, study, right thinking and feeling, virtues) can be established.

Even beliefs and subconscious habits can be reprogrammed for increased effectiveness and realization (consciousness). Throughout the incarnation the student is surrounded by mental and emotional patterns of glamour and illusion. Mostly through subconscious habit, these unfortunate patterns are incorporated (assimilated) into the personality instrument. Habits (acceptance) of glamour and illusion simply sustain their existence (in form). The spiritual student must endeavor to bring the truth (reality) of higher existence into the lower self so that the habits of illusion (the distortion or exaggeration of truth) may be eliminated. The student should be quite careful to be accurate and truthful in all things, for patterns of thinking (feeling) (speaking) are involved which may be sustained unconsciously. With wisdom and discretion, the student can experience the incarnation more effectively, with a combination of positive programming and creative (dynamic) (intuitive) interaction.

† Commentary No. 195

The Rays of Mind

The rays of mind are the third ray of active intelligence and the fifth ray of concrete knowledge. These two rays dominate the qualification of the mental (manasic) plane of consciousness. In ascending order, the mental plane is the third plane of consciousness (following the physical and emotional planes), but in descending order the mental plane is the fifth plane of consciousness. Thus both the third ray and its objective reflection (the fifth ray) lay claim to the mental plane and to mental processes.

The mental plane proper is divided naturally into two regions. The higher mental sub-planes constitute a region of abstract mind, whereas the lower

mental sub-planes constitute a region of concrete mind. The third ray predominates in the abstract region while the fifth ray especially qualifies the lower, concrete region. Since the two rays are closely related (esoterically and via reflection), the two regions of the mental plane are also closely related. The two rays provide the basis of human mental processes, as the lower mind (of the personality) is qualified primarily by the fifth ray, and as the higher mind (of the soul) is qualified primarily by the third ray.

The lower (personal) mind is the highest aspect of the personality. It is the instrument of rational, objective thinking. The focus of the concrete mind is relatively narrow, being concerned with the particulars and details of objective experience. The lower mind is analytical by nature, and is the primary instrument of the personality. The abstract mind is non-analytical and is an instrument of the soul and of subjective (intuitive) thinking. The focus of the abstract mind is relatively broad (inclusive), being concerned with the generalities of objective and subjective experience. The higher mind is synthetic by nature (being concerned with the correlation and broad unification of experience) and is the primary instrument of philosophy. Both the third ray and the fifth ray are involved with truth, knowledge, and understanding; but the focus and emphasis of the two rays are complementary.

The study of effects (appearances) and the human (objective) worlds of experience falls within the fifth ray domain while the study of causes (reality) and the world of subjective experience falls within third ray domain. Where the third ray is concerned with the creative activity (ideation) (theory) (insight), the fifth ray is concerned with the means of accomplishment (practice) and the application of insight. The scientific methods of the fifth ray (concrete mind) involve concentration and analysis, the study of processes themselves. The philosophical methods of the third ray (abstract mind) involve contemplation, reflection, and interpretation (implication). The fifth ray produces the keen, analytical thinker, the experimenter and the tactician; the third ray produces the deeper, contemplative thinker, the theoretician and the strategist.

Of considerable significance is the contribution to human (and individual) progress of these two rays properly aligned and interactive. The concrete mind is essentially a personality function while the abstract mind is essentially a soul function. As the two are properly linked, each provides the means of completion

for the other. The abstract mind (and the intuition) provide the inspiration and guidance of the soul, while the concrete mind provides the application of higher energies to the immediate, objective experience (and the purposes of incarnation). The spiritual student who has sufficiently developed and balanced both the abstract and concrete mental capacities has far greater insight and understanding, as well as greater potency for constructive experience and creative expression in the lower worlds.

† Commentary No. 196

The Future

The past is the time that has been experienced (individually or collectively), a specific and well-defined history subject only to memory, perception, and interpretation. The present is the time that is being experienced, the normal focus of the waking-consciousness in the objective world. But the future is the time that is to come, the frontier of anticipated experience. The future is inextricably related to the past and the present, for karma (creative impulse) (archetypal reality) is a thread that binds all causes and effects (consequences) together throughout (and beyond) the domain of time.

The past and the present are essentially singular, being extremely well-defined. The present exists as a point of convergence. On the one side, the past is a multidimensional field of certainties. On the other side, the future exists as a divergent field (mixture) of probabilities and inevitabilities, of certainties and uncertainties. As the student projects his vision further and further along the forward (future) timestream, the more divergent it becomes. Specific events in time and space become less well-defined (less certain), while significant generalities become (esoterically) more certain. The reason for this apparent paradox lies in the reality and supremacy of the divine evolutionary plan and the basic fallacy of time and space.

The evolutionary plan exists outside of time and space and determines the entire structure (intention) (framework) (foundation) of manifestation, in general terms. The evolutionary plan takes into consideration karma (on cosmic, solar, and planetary levels) and creative ideation (purpose). That plan precipitates certain forces (energies) in time and space which serve as guidelines, to keep the

evolutionary lives within the boundaries of intended experience. Those forces take the form of lifewaves, laws, and other principles of manifestation. The boundaries of intended experience provide room for experimentation and creativity within the scope of the general evolution.

But it is the individual lives within each planetary scheme and within each lifewave that provide the details (karma) of experience. The future thus becomes an interaction between the evolutionary plan and the karma (freedom) (destiny) of all of the lesser lives. Events (details) (actions) in the past and present are projected along the forward timestream to precipitate effects (consequences) (lessons). Individual forces (causes) are inextricably related to all other (localized) forces in time and space, as well as to the plan itself. Even the individual soul projects its plans into the future to guide and develop the experience of the incarnated life. Thus the future is a dynamic mixture of certainties and uncertainties, of particular and inevitable events within the freedom and flexibility of the creative individual (and group).

The future is essentially a tentative and creative realm of consequences. Past and present (and future) experience creates dynamic probabilities (experience) to be faced (usually) at variable times and circumstances in the future. The perception of future events is filled with uncertainties. The details of future experience are continually being revised by the dynamic present. The perception of the future is a cause in itself. And it is extremely difficult (if not impossible) for the untrained to discern between imagination (and psychic or astral impressions) and the future field. As always, the personal energy involves a distortion of perception. Fortunately, the spiritual student is hardly concerned about future events; the spiritual student is primarily concerned with the work at hand, and to a certain extent, with the principles of life and the generalities of the evolutionary plan.

The First Ennead 7

The seventh tractate of the First Ennead is entitled "The Primal Good and Secondary Forms of Good." Considered is the basic nature of the good as prelude to discussion of the nature and source of evil. The primal good is the unmoved (immutable) (implacable) essence of the central life, that to which all is bound, yet that which remains unbound (as the light of the sun is bound by the sun, but as the sun is not bound by its light). In the limited (human) sense, the primal good is the spiritual monad which remains (esoterically) detached from its incarnations (reflections) (soul and personality).

In a greater sense it is the solar logos of which the solar system is but a distant reflection (of the central sun). In an even greater sense, the primal good is some absolute good, a principle of cosmic existence. That primal good is acquired (experienced) through approach (likeness) (nearness) (resonance) and through aspiration (realization). And that primal good is evoked as the natural expression of the life (spirit) (energy) of the soul, the manifestation of the goodness (God) (life) within the form, and the corresponding movement (response) of the soul (and its personality) toward the good.

Analogous to the light of the sun, everything in the world (realm) of matter, form, and personality is aligned (in some way) toward the good by virtue of the inherent relationship of the soul (as all forms are related in some way to a corresponding soul). Likewise the soul (consciousness) is directed (directly or otherwise) toward the good (the monad), since it (the soul) is merely a dynamic correspondence of the monad. By the unity of all life (which necessarily pervades all of form and consciousness) everything shares in the image (reflection) of good. But the soul is much nearer to God (the good) (in the sense of quality), and thus, the soul is the link (intermediary) between life (the good) and form, providing the higher energies as needed (and as permitted). As the soul is oriented toward the monad (and as the personality (the form) is oriented toward (aligned with) the soul), the measure of good is shared throughout the spectrum of life. The monad (good) is life in the higher sense. Life on earth is life (expression) (experience) in the lower (objective) sense. Both the soul and

the monad freely exist beyond life and death in the lower worlds. Only the personality relates to lower existence directly.

But all that lives (in the lower sense) is not aligned directly with the source. Wherever barriers (ignorance) exist between life and form, evil is said to exist, as the obstruction of truth (reality) (goodness). And that obstruction (resistance) (evil) is inherent within form itself, through the design of manifestation. Thus opposition provides stability and balance (in the abstract sense). In a stronger sense, evil cannot reach the soul that is free from attachments in the lower worlds. Life (experience) on physical, emotional, and mental levels is a calculated investment, a temporary and necessary time (risk) of (relative) distraction in support of evolutionary purposes. Life in the lower worlds is, then, of itself, an evil (in the abstract sense of identification or involvement with matter), but the soul persists on its own level, free to participate in the primal good, without concern for objective or subjective existence.

Life in the lower worlds is good in the sense that it serves constructive spiritual purpose (evolution of consciousness). Life in the higher worlds is seen to be good in the sense that it permits far greater freedom and realization (understanding) unbound by the limitations of objective existence, and in the sense that life in the higher worlds is closer to the source (reality).

† Commentary No. 198

Personal Responsibility

One of the most potent of lessons to be learned in the lower worlds is that of personal (individual) responsibility. Every human being is responsible for the consequences of his own behavior, whether those consequences are perceived as such or not. Every waking moment is a consequent (effect) related to action (performance) (causes), personally evoked through the law of karma by virtue of thinking, feeling, and behavior. The first lesson of personal responsibility is accountability, and as the student realizes his own accountability he takes a major step forward along the evolutionary path. But the conscious acceptance of responsibility for one's own actions is not such an easy step to take.

The acceptance of personal responsibility is simply the conscious acknowledgement of the fact (of action and consequence), but it also leads the student a step closer to truth (and reality), for the student can no longer blame other persons or even circumstances for the experience that is faced. It is a difficult lesson to learn because it challenges the natural (selfish) human vanity, and because the inherent justice (balance of merit) of life is not easy to perceive. One must simply accept the reality of karma and the reality of personal accountability, and make the best of every situation and experience. As long as vanity persists, and as long as the individual is bound (limited) by desires, this lesson will be a painful one.

The spiritual student should always accept every situation as a consequence, not necessarily as a condition or circumstance that cannot be changed or improved. Actually, a significant part of personal responsibility involves the acceptance and improvement of circumstances. By improvement is meant the adaptation for constructive and meaningful purposes, as lessons are learned and work (dharma) is performed. The student must accept that which cannot or should not be changed and accept and improve that which can and should be changed. In each case, the student should accept each waking moment (and associated circumstances) as a merited consequence.

There is another dimension to personal responsibility that must likewise be accepted, but it is not as simple. That dimension is one of group accountability and group consequence. The karmic force of the individual is necessarily complicated by that of each group to which the individual belongs. Such groups include the family, the community, the race, the country, humanity, the rays, the planet, etc., as well as strictly esoteric relationships. Even the karma of form is taken into consideration, for the personality instrument (form) is made up of atoms of elementary lives on physical, emotional (astral), and mental levels. One cannot escape the consequences of any karma, whether it be individual or group karma. Furthermore, no one is an exception (in spite of the glamour of exception); each must face all of the circumstances of life in the lower worlds, realistically (through the conscious acceptance of personal responsibility) or otherwise (by denial or self-deception, and the coextensive consequences of denial or self-deception (ignorance) (fear)).

In addition to consequence and accountability, the spiritual student shares the specific responsibilities associated with his place upon the path (as well as those associated with merely being human). The student is responsible for his share of the needed activity. The spiritual student is actually responsible for evolutionary progress, to the extent that realization (higher consciousness and understanding) is achieved. In simple terms, the student is directly responsible for his own health, for his own growth, for the quality of his relationships with other lives, and for his contribution to the group (service).

† Commentary No. 199

Ashrams

Exoterically, an ashram is a group of people who are affiliated for religious or spiritual purposes. The place or center of such a group may also be referred to as an ashram. An ashram is usually a retreat of some sort, a place of withdrawal from mundane or worldly activities for prayer, meditation, and study. An ashram (in this lower sense) is the community or fellowship of an exoteric group. The membership of such a group is based almost entirely on personality relationships. A constructive rapport between the personalities usually exists either along karmic lines or along ray lines (or some combination). The duration of an (exoteric) ashram is measured in human terms (years), but the useful and spiritual work of a sincerely constituted ashram is timeless. Many of the ideas associated with ashrams in the higher (esoteric) sense can be applied somewhat to exoteric groups as well. These ashrams are, to some extent, attempts to externalize spiritual principles and energies. Furthermore, some ashrams are linked in various ways to esoteric groups (groups based on soul relationships and functioning on soul levels).

Esoterically, there are ashrams associated with esoteric groups and there are ashrams associated with more abstract lives (and principles). An esoteric group is a group of souls (not personalities) bound together for spiritual (evolutionary) purposes. It is usually organized (subjectively) along ray lines (being qualified by one or another (or particular combination) of the seven rays). Such groups exist beyond temporal space and beyond the levels of personality existence. The existence of an esoteric group depends on the continuous telepathic rapport

of highly developed and fully conscious souls. There may be karmic ties between various souls, but such ties would be of a high order (beyond limitation). The duration of an esoteric group is more or less indefinite and on the order of the duration of the soul itself.

In the esoteric sense, an ashram is the energy center of an esoteric group. Each esoteric group is essentially an energy field of particular quality and character of energy. The ashram is the inner circle (center) of selected (particularly qualified) souls who embody the particular energy of the group and transmit that energy radially outward to the (larger) periphery (the esoteric group proper) for distribution and ultimate externalization. Those members of the group who have achieved the requisite alignment and development of soul and personality (and whose souls are functional on group levels) may draw upon the energies of the ashram (group) for constructive purposes.

There may be a wide variety of grades within an esoteric group. Some groups are organized vertically and have members at practically every stage of (advanced) human evolution. Other groups (the majority) are organized more horizontally (within their ray) and have members at a few closely related grades. Thus, there is usually a progression of groups (and ashrams) within each ray structure. The members of each ashram are usually in contact with members of allied ashrams (both vertically and horizontally). Thus, a highly developed energy structure relates all of the esoteric groups (and their ashrams) together in consciousness (and beyond).

Each successively larger group exists with its own ashram. The spiritual hierarchy of the planet can be considered an ashram of considerable significance. Humanity itself (and every lifewave) exists in the ashramic sense. Each of the seven ray groups within humanity forms an ashram (each having detailed ashramic structure). And each logos on its level (and each of the seven cosmic ray lives) functions as an ashram of very high order.

The Mystical Rays

Three of the seven rays are considered to be mystical rays (rather than occult rays). These three heart-centered rays (the second ray, the fourth ray, and the sixth ray) constitute a special and potent group. That group is actually a mystical (and synthetic) triangle (2:4:6) of heart-centered energies. All three elements find their origin in the second aspect of the trinity (the second ray on higher levels), although two of the three (the fourth ray and the sixth ray) find their expression through the third aspect of the trinity.

Esoterically, the fourth ray and the sixth ray are expressions of the manifested second ray. Each contributes to the development of the second ray, and each draws considerable inner strength from that primary ray (and through the synthetic relationship of (2:4:6)). The second ray of love-wisdom provides the essential (heart-centered) quality of impersonal (mature) love, love energy in the inclusive and universal sense. The second ray also provides the aspect of consciousness. The fourth ray and the sixth ray provide more objective energies, energies that are basically more involved with manifestation. The fourth ray of harmony through conflict provides an essential balance between the second ray and its reflection (the sixth ray). The sixth ray externalizes the heart-centered energies through love in its more personal forms; through devotion, aspiration, and idealism.

While the occult (odd-numbered) (head-centered) rays provide the bulk of the work of manifestation, the heart-centered rays provide the balance and the moderation of the work of manifestation, and the assimilation (in consciousness) of experience. The second ray moderates the first and third aspects through the synthetic triangle (1:2:3). The sixth ray moderates the reflection of that primary (basic) triplicity, through (5:6:7). The fourth ray moderates all of the reflected rays, through (1:4:7), (2:4:6), and (3:4:5). Thus, the mystical rays complement the occult rays in virtually every aspect of manifestation.

The mystical rays are to the occult rays what the deva (angelic) lifewave is to the human lifewave. Throughout manifestation, the fabric or structure is

essentially binary (polarized into two modes of expression). These two modes (positive and negative) alternate throughout septenary manifestation. The odd-numbered domains (planes of consciousness, lifewaves, kingdoms, cycles) are polarized in the positive (male) (active) sense, analogously to the occult or head-centered rays. The even-numbered domains are polarized in the negative (female) (passive) sense, analogously to the mystical or heart-centered rays. The human lifewave is head-centered; the deva (angelic) lifewave is heart-centered. Many correlations between the various domains involve distinctions of polarity (male and female, occult and mystical, head-centered and heart-centered).

In the world of human experience the mystical rays provide many heart-centered energies. Emotional experience (the astral plane, the emotional body) is qualified primarily by the sixth ray. Intuitive experience (the soul, the buddhic plane) is qualified by the second ray and the fourth ray. The fourth ray also provides the link between abstract mental experience and concrete awareness. The mystical rays are fundamentally (properly) rays of balance, moderation, and consciousness. They are quite evident in the manifested realms of culture, art, religion, teaching, and healing. Wherever there are heart-centered activities or experience, mystical rays are present in various degrees to provide the essential heart-centered energies. Without the stabilizing and moderating force of the mystical rays, there would be no coherent field of human experience, nor any coherent field of universal manifestation.



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